

STEPPING STONES – FOOTBALL HOCKEY LINK



Benefitting from the Stepping Stones program at The Calgary Foundation, Football Hockey Link (FHL) aims to support culturally diverse youth by introducing them to football and hockey as a means to assist them with their integration into Canadian society.

Organized by Calgarians Krista Taldorf and Marion Christensen, FHL exposes diverse immigrant children to popular Canadian sports that they might not otherwise experience. Children are encouraged to participate in a variety of activities over the summer months; including hockey camps, the University of Calgary Dinos football camp, and a behind-the-scenes tour of the Calgary Stampeders dressing rooms at McMahon Stadium. Transportation, equipment, coaching and ice/field time are all included free of charge to the participating families.

This past summer, parents were also given the opportunity to immerse themselves in Canadian sport with an exciting first-time fieldtrip to a Calgary Stampeders game. Thanks to the Stampeders donation of 100 tickets, FHL was able to fill two school buses full of families attending the game. “Parents felt that the program was more than just giving kids a chance to try the sports,” says Christensen, “it was helping their kids be a part of Canada.” Integrating into Canadian sport proved to have its challenges. FHL organizers tell the ‘lost in translation’ tale of the children’s first experience in a hockey dressing room and the chaos of lacing skates, adjusting equipment, and taping sticks. However, the children quickly mastered the techniques and were soon ready for practices early.



Participants came from a wide range of cultural backgrounds, including Darfurian, South Sudanese, Mexican, Pakistani, Filipino, Korean, Afghani, and Tunisian and most experienced these sports for this first time. At the conclusion of the summer camp, 47 children between the ages of 8 and 16 were excited about hockey and football, and many participants went on to register in local programs in their community.



Looking to the future, Football Hockey Link has recently signed an agreement with Hockey Calgary which includes use of ice time throughout the city, and has successfully registered as a nonprofit organization. The program hopes to grow in numbers in the coming years and continue to create rewarding connections between children and sports in our city.

The Football Hockey Link received support from Stepping Stones, a program of The Calgary Foundation and First Calgary Financial, which offers small grants, from \$100 to \$600, to encourage active citizenship by helping residents undertake creative