

Kitchener Jr. Rangers thank sponsors for Japan hockey exchange

Written by Shannon Costello

The Kitchener Jr. Rangers will never forget this year's March Break. The team spent it in Japan on a cultural exchange while playing hockey against the Tomakomai All Stars in Hokkaido – a once in a life time trip awarded to them by TOYOTA.

Back in November the Jr. Rangers beat the Cambridge Hawks and Waterloo Wolves in the 2012 Toyota Hockey Challenge to earn this prize. As the winners, Kitchener became the eighth Waterloo Region team to travel to Japan for the exchange.

The Kitchener Jr. Rangers were able to represent Canada overseas: a dream many hockey players cannot even imagine let alone fulfill. But thanks to Toyota, these young men learned a new respect for the game and culture in a city they never dreamed could teach them anything about hockey.

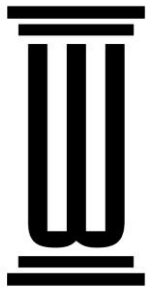
Their weeklong stay involved visiting a Japanese shrine, the homes of their opponents, Noboribetsu City, and schools where they experienced local culture by taking part in karate, zen and calligraphy activities. And, of course, the team was able to play their favourite sport halfway around the world.

Another major element of this trip was that the team of 13 and 14 year olds travelled without their parents. They were together as a team representing their country with only coaches and Toyota Representatives Natalie Weber and Tomoka Hasegaw alongside them on the exchange.

The Kitchener Jr. Rangers Minor Bantam AAA and their families would like to thank their sponsors for all of their generous support. Apart from Toyota, who awarded the team this all expense paid trip, sponsors stepped up to provide the team with uniform clothing and other needs to identify themselves as a group during their time in Japan. Without these sponsors, the boys would not understand the full meaning of representing their town, and their country so far away from home.



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And again, the team cannot thank the TOYOTA team, Natalie Weber and Tomoka Hasegaw enough for allowing the Kitchener Jr. Rangers to take part in this exchange. Without them, none of this would have been possible.