

## Dressing room Discrimination?

CITY ARENAS LACK APPROPRIATE CHANGE ROOM FACILITIES FOR GIRLS PLAYING ON BOYS' HOCKEY TEAMS

TARA JEFFREY  
THE JOURNAL

When Peyton Burgess steps onto the ice with the boys, the 12-year-old goaltender fits right in.

But it's a different story after the buzzer sounds.

While her male teammates head to the dressing room at the Progressive Auto Sales Arena, Burgess is forced to change in the referees' room, while her dad, Paul, stands outside the door to make sure no one walks in.

"I'm just a hockey dad with a daughter who is trying to play at the highest level she can," Burgess said, "and I'm really uneasy every time we have to go to that arena."

The longtime local hockey and goalie coach said the rink is the only one in Lambton County he's aware of not equipped with alternate, or gender-neutral dressing rooms for female and transgender players.

For girls playing on a boys' team, whether in Sarnia or coming from another centre, there are no appropriate dressing rooms at Sarnia's showcase arena, he said.

"It happens all winter. I've seen girls come out of the Guest Services room," said Burgess.

"It's tough when it's your own kid standing there, saying, 'Where do I go?'"

Continued on 2

## Baby it's you



YOU'D NEVER KNOW it by looking at him, but seven-month-old Dean Olver has an important teaching assignment at Sarnia's Sacred Heart School these days. Dean and his mom Sian Olver are participants in a classroom program called Roots of Empathy, which has been shown to reduce aggression and bullying among elementary school students. For more on the program, please see pages 26-27.

GLENN OGILVIE The Journal

## Life goes on after an Alzheimer's diagnosis

PAM WRIGHT  
THE JOURNAL

Randy Greer knew something was wrong but couldn't put his finger on it.

The veteran truck driver was forgetting how to do simple things, and it scared him.

He confided in wife Mau-

reen about what was happening, and she agreed his behavior had changed.

"Things were going wrong," Maureen Greer said of the sequence of events that came to a head in June 2016.

"I thought he had had a couple of strokes."

So began a barrage of testing and trips to doctor offices.

Two months later, the cou-

ple landed at the door of the Alzheimer Society of Sarnia-Lambton.

Greer was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's disease, moderate dementia on a high-functioning scale that affected short-term memory.

"I was forgetting. I'd end up not where I was supposed to be," he said. "I couldn't understand it but I could feel it."

Just like that, his life changed.

His driver licence was pulled, and the family breadwinner could no longer do a job he'd done for 40 of the couple's 42-year marriage.

"I thought it was the end of the world when I couldn't do what I had done all my life," he said.

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# Local

## Dressing:

*Continued from 1*

“It seems kind of weird,” said Peyton Burgess, who recently attended ‘AAA’ and ‘AA’ Minor Bantam tryouts at the 20-year-old arena, which is owned and operated by the City of Sarnia.

“I have to walk all the way around, through the back area where the Zamboni comes out — which is probably a health

and safety issue — to get to the referees’ room,” she said.

Her father stressed arena staff are as accommodating as possible, and Sarnia Sting assistant GM Mark Glavin has opened up the players’ lounge for Peyton to change, when possible.

The dressing room policy of the Sarnia Hockey Association, in accordance with the Ontario Hockey Federation, states that: “All players have the right to

utilize the dressing room in accord with their gender identity and gender expression and that meets their individual needs.”

It adds that, if, due to building constraints, such a dressing room is unavailable, “it is the responsibility of the Sarnia Hockey Association, with support from the Ontario Hockey Federation, to work in collaboration with the player to find an appropriate and equivalent changing area.”

Rob Harwood, the city’s Parks and Recreation director, said there are no immediate plans to invest in new dressing rooms.

“We are definitely doing what we can to accommodate everyone, and this is an ongoing problem at arenas across the country, especially in older buildings,” he said.

Accommodations also have to be made at the Sarnia Arena, where staff ‘get creative’ to

make space available, including repurposing existing rooms for girls on boys’ teams, he said.

“Typically, only one or two girls are playing on boys’ teams, at the most, so it doesn’t necessarily have to be a full-sized room.”

Nevertheless, parents have complained makeshift change rooms lack showers, washrooms and other amenities available to boys.

While the city is ‘empathetic’ to the needs of all players, it has more urgent needs like roof and air conditioning repairs, Harwood said.

Sarnia Sting president Bill Abercrombie said the need for dressing room upgrades at the Progressive Auto Sales Arena were noting in the city’s own 2015 Arena Management study, which cited ‘major renovation to change rooms to provide dedicated showers’ as a priority.

Chatham-Kent was embroiled in controversy earlier this year after girls playing out of the East Kent Memorial Arena were bumped from their dressing room to accommodate a boys AAA team. The girls were forced to change in a small room near the lobby, and then, an accessible washroom.

After pressure mounted from parents and the South Kent Minor Hockey Association, the municipality agreed to build a new dressing room for the girls.

Outgoing Sarnia Hockey Association Chair Mike Johnson said he’s seen an increase in the number of girls playing in boys’ leagues in recent years.

“Which has made it challenging for arenas across the country,” he said.

“The staff at PASA have been very accommodating... sometimes it depends on the ice rental situation and what rooms are available but they do make it work.”

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