

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 3/2/2026

Premier Athletics and Canadiana Fest Launch partnership with local school and businesses for NHL STREET Program to Bring Accessible Hockey to Kalamazoo Youth

Kalamazoo, MI — March 2026 — Premier Athletics for Youth Development and Canadiana Fest together with Tree of Life School and Nisker's Slapshot Bar and Grill, have announced a new partnership to launch **NHL STREET Kalamazoo**, an accessible, community-centered street hockey program designed to introduce the sport to local youth—many for the very first time.

The initiative grew from a simple question: *"What if we could teach kids in inner city Kalamazoo to play hockey?"* That spark, first ignited during Canadiana Fest's early programming, quickly evolved into a shared mission between the organizations. With Premier Athletics' commitment to youth development, Tree of Life School's faith and devotedness to education, Lou Nisker's storied hockey and business career and Canadiana Fest's dedication to celebrating Canadian culture, NHL STREET Kalamazoo is poised to become a vibrant new opportunity for families across the region.

"The more we share this love for the sport, the more kids we will be able to attract," said **LaTron Whitfield**, CEO of Premier Athletics for Youth Development. "This program removes barriers and opens the door for kids from every neighborhood to try something new."

Although the planning started long before the recent Olympic Gold Medal wins, Canadian and festival director Channon Mondoux adds, **"This is a dream come true. I can't wait to see young women and men feeling the love for the sport like those of us who grew up with it."**

NHL STREET is a national initiative that brings the excitement of hockey to communities without the cost or equipment demands of ice sports. The Kalamazoo program will offer:

- Fun, low-pressure hockey fundamentals
- A safe, structured environment for play
- Team-building and leadership development
- No expensive gear or ice time required

Lou Nisker has already reached out to his former teammates with the Kalamazoo Wings to help bring attention to the youth hockey initiative. **"I know a lot of players who'd love to support this kind of grassroots infusion of hockey,"** Nisker said. Through his connections, [Hockey Services of Kalamazoo](#) has committed to donating a full set of hockey nets to support the program.

"This partnership reflects exactly what our collective organizations stand for — community, culture, and creating joyful experiences for kids and families," said **Adam Sterenberg**, Head of School at Tree of Life. **"We're blessed to help bring this opportunity to Kalamazoo."**

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WHAT: NHL Street Kalamazoo Launch, skills, food and fun- wear your runners! No equipment needed!

WHEN: April 7 2026 5:30 to 7:30pm

WHERE: Tree of Life School 2001 Cameron St Kalamazoo

About [Premier Athletics for Youth Development](#)

Premier Athletics is a Kalamazoo-based nonprofit dedicated to empowering youth through sports, mentorship, and community engagement. Led by CEO LaTron Whitfield, the organization provides accessible athletic programs that build confidence, discipline, and leadership.

About [Canadiana Fest](#)

Canadiana Fest is an annual cultural celebration bringing the spirit, humor, and heritage of Canada to Southwest Michigan. Through festivals, workshops, and community partnerships, Canadiana Fest fosters connection, creativity, and cross-border friendship.

About [Tree of Life School](#)

Tree of Life is a distinctive Christ-centered school located in the Edison Neighborhood of Kalamazoo. Their purpose is to provide a transformative Biblical education to a broad range of children who may not normally have the opportunity to receive one. We also work extensively with the children's families to help them reach their full potential in Christ.

About Lou Nisker and [Nisker's Char-grill and Slapshot Hockey Bar](#)

Lou (Lawrie) Nisker built a respected hockey career as a skilled center, playing for teams spanning North America and Europe including the Kalamazoo Wings. After retiring from pro hockey, he stayed rooted in the sport by opening his restaurant in Kalamazoo with his wife Susan where fans gather to celebrate the game and its culture.

Media Contact

Channon Mondoux

Chief Canuck Officer, Canadiana Fest

canadianafest@gmail.com

269-547-0339

Channon@CanadianaFest.FUN