

Girls softball contest attracts 77 teams

McPherson Foundation tournament now in fifth year



JOE BINOYA/Acorn Newspapers COMING IN HOT- Loryn Pougé of the Simi Valley Girls Softball 8-and-under Gold All-Stars hurls a pitch against the West Valley All-Stars during the championship round of the fifth annual Amanda McPherson Foundation Softball Tournament last Sunday afternoon at Big Sky Park in Simi Valley. The team went on to win, 4-0.

The fifth annual Amanda McPherson All-Star Tournament last weekend attracted 77 teams from throughout Southern California and raised at least \$10,000 for Simi Valley's girls' fast pitch softball organization.

Hosted by Simi Valley Girls Softball on 17 fields at five locations in Simi Valley and Moorpark, the tournament was played out by nearly 1,000 girls ages 7 to 14 in nine divisions.

"It was the biggest tournament our league has ever hosted, and it was a tremendous success," said Patty Lynch, tournament director. "Besides the high level of play in the games, the event spotlights the Amanda McPherson Foundation to people from all over Southern California, which makes the tournament extraordinarily special. There were lots of hugs and tears all weekend long."

The girls' softball league presented the tournament in conjunction with the Amanda McPherson Foundation, a nonprofit organization carrying the name of a former league player.

The tournament honors Amanda, who was born with velocardiocardial syndrome, a genetic birth defect, and who died five years ago from viral myocarditis. The annual tournament helps spread awareness of both and is also a way to remember Amanda's spirit and love for the game, said foundation officials.

One way Amanda McPherson was recognized during the tourney was through awards given after each game to a player from the

opposing team's coach.

The Amanda Spirit Awards were handed to players who not necessarily played the best but tried the hardest, cheered the most or exuded great sportsmanship.

In Amanda's memory, it honors those players "who never give up, always try their best and who are genuine in their love of the game of softball and the life lessons learned by being part of a team."

"Amanda's father, Phil, personally gave out all trophies after every single championship game," said Keith Jajko, president of SVGS. "An amazing moment was when he learned that one player from West Valley had given her Spirit Award to another player on her team because she believed the other player deserved it. Phil then gave another Spirit Award to the original recipient for her show of true sportsmanship."

The tournament is hosted on the same mid-June weekend each year, because Father's Day and Amanda's birthday both occur during the weekend.

All told, the tournament raised an estimated \$10,000 for SVGS, though it will probably be more as vendor contributions come in, Jajko said.

Championship results involving local teams:

8U Gold: **Simi Valley 4**, West Valley 0

10U Gold: Rancho Trabuco 3, **Simi Valley 1**

10U Bronze: **Simi Valley 18**, Thousand Oaks 2

12U Gold: Moorpark 6, **Simi Valley 0**

12U Silver: Moorpark 9, **Simi Valley 2**