

Minnesota Disabled Hockey Report  
January 21, 2016

## **USA Disabled Hockey:**

### **USA Disabled Hockey Festival .**

USA Hockey and Michigan Amateur Hockey Association are proud to welcome and invite you to the 12th Annual USA Disabled Hockey Festival to be held April 7-10, 2016 in Fraser, Michigan.

The Festival takes place in different parts of the country each year. This year, the Festival will take place at the Fraser Hockeyland Ice Arena located at 34400 Utica Road in Fraser, Michigan which is a suburb of Detroit, Michigan.

The mission of the Festival is to provide a fun and exciting weekend of hockey in a grand event as well as promote and grow disabled hockey throughout the country.

The USA Disabled Hockey Festival is the largest disabled hockey event of its kind, bringing together all four disabled disciplines in one location. For the second year, blind / visually impaired hockey will also be a part of the event with two teams playing a three games series.

### **Applications are being accepted for Disabled Athlete of the Year**

USA Hockey's Annual Congress is the yearly gathering of USA Hockey's volunteer leaders, including members of the organization's board of directors, councils, committees and sections. At each, some of the organization's most outstanding contributors and players are recognized. One of those awards is the Disabled Athlete of the Year. This individual is honored at the awards banquet in front of the entire USA Hockey congregation.

Created in 2005, the USA Hockey Disabled Athlete of the Year Award annually recognizes the outstanding perseverance and dedication by a disabled hockey player through demonstrating the ability to overcome obstacles in the pursuit of excellence both on and off the ice.

### **Blind Hockey debuts in Chicago**

Blind Hockey is the same exhilarating, fast-paced game that gets spectators out of their seats with only one main difference – all of the players are legally blind! The sport features an adapted puck that makes noise, and is both bigger and slower than a traditional puck. Players' levels of vision range from legally blind – approximately 10% vision or less – to totally blind, with the lowest vision athletes playing defense or goal.

“We are very proud that Illinois was first to host a Blind Try Hockey For Free Event (on November 14, 2015),” said Amy LaPoe, Central District’s Disabled Hockey Representative. “Eighteen players for our first ever Blind Hockey event in Chicago is a tremendous success.”

JJ O’Connor, USA Hockey’s Disabled Section Chairperson agrees, “It’s wonderful to see the success in Chicago. USA Hockey is working with people around the country to develop our Blind Hockey discipline. We have many disabled disciplines within USA Hockey. Our motto is - no matter what your disability is, if you want to play hockey, we will find a way to make it happen.”

Blind Hockey is an excellent spectator sport as it is easily recognizable to the average hockey fan, with minimal rule adaptations to help with gameplay and player safety:

- Face-offs begin with the puck on the ice and the players may only touch it on the referee’s whistle – this makes it a competition of reaction time and does not favor the player with the most vision.
- Goals may only be scored in the bottom 3 feet of the net – the adapted Blind Hockey puck does not currently make noise in the air and it is unfair to the goalie to score in the top of the net.
- Teams must complete one pass prior to being able to score in the attacking half of the rink – this provides both the low vision defense and the goalie an extra opportunity to track the puck.
- The game is played with standard IIHF safety protocols including no-touch icing, and crease violations to ensure utmost player safety.
- All players must wear full protective gear including facemask.

“We are excited to build on the success of our Try Blind Hockey event in November,” said LaPoe. “In fact, we are starting a team on Saturday, January 23 at Center Ice Arena in Glen Ellyn. We already have 13 participants ranging in age from 5 to 43 years old.”

## **Save the Date!**

2017 Disabled Festival: San Jose, Ca, April 6-9

### **Minnesota Disabled Hockey:**

*Minnesota Warriors:* No report

*Minnesota Sled Hockey:*

- October 1- MN Sled Hockey Association was able to get used equipment donated by the MN Wild. The Hendrickson Foundation set us up with this opportunity.
- November 19-22- Wild Sled Team traveled to Florida to compete in the NHL Sled Classic. The team finished 2<sup>nd</sup> in Tier II.

- December 21-22- MN Sled Hockey Association and the Rochester Mustangs was the beneficiary of the Wild “Split the Pot” raffle. Both programs split \$6,900.
- January 10- Wild Dev team traveled to the Wisconsin Dells to play in the annual tournament against Wisconsin and Chicago. The Wild played well in every game.
- January 16- Wild/Wild Dev Teams traveled to Cloquet, MN to scrimmage their bantam team. The community donated \$1,000 to our program.
- Jan 31- 10<sup>th</sup> Annual “Lakeville Day.” MN Sled Teams will scrimmage the Lakeville South teams as well as be the beneficiary of a fundraiser set up by Lakeville South.

### *Rochester Mustangs Sled Hockey*

- USA Hockey Disabled Workshop: We sent our PR/marketing lead and player Justin McClanahan to the USA Disabled Hockey workshop courtesy of Mn Hockey.

- Grants: Labatt Blue and USA Hockey Grow the Game grant”: The Mustangs were one of 10 new sled program in the US to receive a \$25,000 grant from Labatt Blue. They also received the grow the game grant giving them 5 additional sleds for USA Hockey.

- Financial: Wild Split the Pot 50/50 raffles we did in December - \$ 6940.98

### *Minnesota Special Hockey:*

- Minnesota Special Hockey is off to a great season. We have 177 rostered players and are continuing to add players. We have a new team in Duluth, the Freighters.
- Our annual holiday tournament in Alexandria was a success and allowed our players to have the away tournament feel. They played a few games, got to hang out with fellow players and swim.

- We were also selected to participate in WCCO's Trees of Hope campaign. Volunteers were part of a phone bank and received calls for donations to MSH. Throughout the day, there were stories shared about our players and the effect MSH has had on their lives.
- Over the holidays we were also a part of Wild split the pot raffle fundraiser. The Wild fans were generous and supportive of our mission.
- We are currently planning the bus trip to Detroit for the USA Hockey National Disabled Festival. We are hoping to support more than one team at the festival.
- We are continuing to market MSH at several functions around the metro the winter. With booths set up to share MSH with potential players. As always we continue to look for ways to spread the word about MSH and continue to grow.

*Minnesota Disabled Hockey Committee:*

**General information:**

**Minnesota Hockey and Prairie Island Indian Community Continue Partnership**

*Disabled Hockey in Minnesota Continues Enormous Growth Heading Into 2016*

**St. Paul, MN – January 18, 2016** – Minnesota Hockey and Prairie Island Indian Community (P.I.I.C.) today announced the continuation of a partnership aimed at the growth of hockey in Minnesota, in particular Disabled Hockey. Over the past seven years, P.I.I.C. has been the primary corporate supporter of Minnesota Hockey's Disabled Hockey programs and teams, contributing more than \$136,000 over that time frame.

Through the generous support of P.I.I.C., Disabled Hockey in Minnesota had a banner year in 2014-15. Among the highlights:

- With the Special Hockey, Sled Hockey and Warriors program all growing over the past year, Minnesota continues to be home to the most disabled hockey players in the nation with 350 participants.
- The Minnesota Warriors now have over 80 players and are up to three teams, making it the largest Warriors program in the United States. The group will be featured during the NHL Stadium Series game at TCF Bank Stadium on February 21. There will be 75 proud veterans on hand to carry the American flag out on the ice for the National Anthem.

- In November of 2014, Minnesota's adult sled hockey team made its first-ever appearance at the NHL Sled Classic in Washington D.C. and took first place. In 2015, the team returned and moved up a tier to place second.
- The Special Hockey program increased participation numbers by 20% and will be traveling to the USA Disabled Hockey Festival in Detroit, Mich. and the International Special Hockey Invitational in Lake Placid.
- Minnesota Sled Hockey officially expanded into Rochester, thanks to the support of P.I.I.C. and Dr. Michael Stuart and the Mayo clinic community. The program is rostering its first team this year with a full schedule of practices.
- The Minnesota Hockey Disabled Hockey scholarship was awarded this year to Maxim Zlotuhkin-Ridgway from the Minnesota Special Hockey Burnsville Rams team.

"Hockey is a way of life in Minnesota and we want to make sure anyone who wants to play has that chance, regardless of ability," said P.I.I.C. Tribal Council President Shelley Buck. "These athletes are inspirational in their achievements. We are proud to be associated with them and support the program in any way we can."

The mission of Disabled Hockey is to make sure "Hockey is for Every Body." The popularity of the sport has grown exponentially over the past 10 years.

"We are so grateful for everything that P.I.I.C. has done for Disabled Hockey, and for inspiring so many people across the state," stated Toni Gillen, Minnesota Hockey Disabled Hockey Director. "Their support does so much for the confidence and attitude of these exceptional athletes."

Respectfully submitted,  
Antonia Gillen  
USA Disabled Hockey Director  
Minnesota District