

# **Information on Candidates for Sioux Falls Youth Hockey Association Board of Directors Election – March 2025**

## **Elliot Hitt - Treasurer**

Previous Involvement in SFYHA & Positions Held – Elliot Hitt is the current Treasurer of SFYHA. He has served as an Atom through Bantam coach for the Flyers and previously coached in Fargo. His leadership duties span 10 years.

Children in SFYHA for the 2025-2026 Season - Elliot's sons will be second year Mite and second year Bantam.

What is your philosophy regarding SFYHA? – To provide and support kids in our community who want to play hockey. To foster growth on the ice and off the ice for kids in our community. We have the largest organization in the state, and I will continue to work to provide the best opportunities within the community.

Additional comments and/or goals as a SFYHA Board Member - I have served as the Treasurer of the SFYHA for the last two years. I am seeking my final term for the position. Over the last two years we have had a balanced budget and managed costs to keep hockey as affordable as possible. I have been involved with the building expansion and would like to see that through completion to make sure we remain on budget and use the funds as efficiently as possible.

My professional background is a partner at a top 20 public accounting firm in Sioux Falls. I have my CPA license and have been practicing for 15 years. I deal with businesses and financials daily and help guide clients to prudent financial decisions. This skill carries over well to helping the SFYHA maintain a strong financial position, while keeping costs as low as possible for our families.

On a personal level, I have two kids in the program, a Mite and a Bantam. I have been a coach with SFYHA for 8 years and coached in Fargo as well. I grew up playing the game in North Dakota and with the Flyers.

I look forward to continuing to serve the organization and growing the Flyers organization.

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## **Justin Brenner - Treasurer**

Previous Involvement in SFYHA – Justin has coached for 9 years and will have 3 children in the Flyers program next season.

What is your philosophy regarding SFYHA? – As a candidate for Treasurer of the Sioux Falls Youth Hockey Association, my philosophy centers on three interconnected principles: fiscal responsibility, transparent stewardship, and community investment. I believe that sound financial management is the foundation that enables all other aspects of youth hockey to flourish. By maintaining a meticulous oversight of our resources, we create the stability needed for sustainable programming. However, I view the Treasurer role as more than just balancing books—it's about translating numbers into opportunities for our young athletes. Transparency builds trust. Parents entrust us not only with their children but with their financial contributions. I am committed to clear financial reporting that helps our hockey families understand how their investments directly benefit player development. This accountability strengthens our community bonds and encourages continued support. Most importantly, I see our financial decisions as investments in our youth's future. Every dollar we allocate represents an opportunity to develop not just better hockey players, but more confident, disciplined, and team-oriented young people. The skills developed on the ice—perseverance, teamwork, and resilience—extend far beyond hockey and shape character for life. If selected as Treasurer, I will bring this balanced philosophy to ensure our association remains financially healthy while never

losing sight of our core mission: creating positive, formative experiences for the youth of Sioux Falls through the sport of hockey.

*Additional Comments and/or Goals as a SFYHA Board Member* – I plan to run for higher board positions next year when they are open.

*Philosophy Statement on Youth Hockey in General* - Youth hockey is far more than a winter sport—it's a transformative journey that builds character through challenge, community through cooperation, and confidence through achievement. At its core, youth hockey creates a unique developmental environment where children learn to balance individual skill development with team success. On the ice, players discover that personal improvement and team victory are interconnected goals requiring commitment, practice, and mutual support. This balance teaches young athletes that their individual efforts contribute to something larger than themselves. The structured challenges of hockey—from early morning practices to competitive games—develop resilience and work ethic. Players learn to persevere through difficulty, manage frustration, and experience the profound satisfaction that comes from improvement earned through consistent effort. These lessons extend far beyond the rink, preparing young people to approach life's obstacles with confidence and determination. Hockey also fosters an inclusive community where diverse young people unite around shared passion. The relationships built in locker rooms, on car rides to and from games, and during team events create bonds that often last a lifetime. Parents, coaches, and volunteers form a supportive network that demonstrates to young players the value of community investment and service. Ultimately, youth hockey's greatest gift is providing a space where young people can safely test their limits, experience both success and failure, and develop the emotional intelligence to handle both with grace. The sport teaches accountability, respect for rules and officials, and sportsmanship—values that shape not just better athletes, but better citizens.

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### **Kris Long – Treasurer**

*Previous Involvement in SFYHA* – Kris has coached from Mini-Atoms up through Bantams, 4 V 4 in-house and travel teams as well. He has been involved with the sport of hockey for 18 years.

*List positions held:* Assistant Coach

*Children in SFYHA for 2025-2026 Season* – He will have a JV/Varsity player and a first year PeeWee.

*What is your philosophy regarding SFYHA?* – We need to continue to grow and develop the kids on and off the ice. We also need to keep our organization healthy by continuing to grow our members year over year and keep kids coming back to play more seasons.

*Additional Comments and/or goals as a SFYHA Board Member* – To contribute to the long term strategic goals of the SFYHA and help promote our mission within the community.

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### **John McCollister - Secretary**

*Previous Involvement in SFYHA* – John has been a Flyers player, a Flyers Coach, and on the SFYHA Growth and Retention Committee. He played hockey for the Flyers from 1992 until graduating in 2002. John has coached at all levels with SFYHA – Mini Atoms to Varsity in both assistant and head coach roles.

*List positions held:* Head Coach, Assistant Coach, Growth and Retention Committee

*Children in SFYHA for 2025-2026 Season* – John will have a Peewee and Bantam player during the 2025-2026 season.

*What is your philosophy regarding SFYHA?* – My focus would be to ensure that **all** SFYHA players receive the opportunities and valuable lessons that I received when I was a player in the organization. Among these are instilling the values of sportsmanship, learning to win and lose with grace, working together as a team, overcoming adversity, giving consistent effort in all situations, and—most importantly—developing a love for the game through the fun and growth opportunities the program

provides. I feel that as an organization, it is important to remember that we are not just developing good hockey players but that we are also developing good humans.

Additional Comments and/or goals as a SFYHA Board Member – Being part of the Flyers for the majority of my life has not only given me a deep understanding of the organization, but also a strong desire to give back and help it continue to thrive. My ultimate goal is to provide children with the opportunity to love the game of hockey as much as I do.

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### **Chris Forbeck - Secretary**

Previous Involvement in SFYHA – Chris' involvement has been Growth & Retention, Hockey Coach, Rebranding Committee

List positions held: He has served as Growth & Retention Coordinator, Rebranding Committee Member, PeeWee Coach, Mite Coach, Atom Coach, Mini-Atom Coach

Children in SFYHA for 2025-2026 Season – His children will be Squirt and Mite age next season.

What is your philosophy regarding SFYHA? – Focus on our children learning, enjoying, and participating in the great game of hockey. Foster an environment where sportsmanship, teamwork, camaraderie, and inclusivity are instilled in our youth. We can teach the game while shaping them into young men and women their parents and community are proud of.

Additional Comments and/or goals as a SFYHA Board Member – Continue growing the game of hockey in Sioux Falls and South Dakota. We have done an amazing job of supporting our youth. We have a great organization, and I want to be an advocate and voice for all families.

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### **Kyle Rogness – Director of Development**

Previous Involvement in SFYHA (or Other Hockey Associations) – Kyle's two sons have played in both travel and city leagues and across different skill levels.

Children in SFYHA for 2025-2026 Season – He will have a Bantam age ACL City League player and a Bantam Travel player during the 2025-2026 season.

What is your philosophy regarding SFYHA? – That is allows the best option for kids to learn and grow as players and individuals in the Sioux Falls area, while enjoying the sport of hockey.

Additional Comments and/or goals as a SFYHA Board Member - Grow sponsorships, potentially assisting in what could make the sport less expensive to grow membership and talent pool. Also, to learn more about the organization and what makes it what it is.

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### **Kathryn Wheeler – Director of Development**

Previous Involvement in SFYHA – Unofficially Team Coordinator

Children in SFYHA for 2025-2026 Season – Her players will be Mite and Squirt age next season

What is your philosophy regarding SFYHA? - As Director of Development, I believe that successful corporate partnerships are built on authentic relationships where both parties find meaningful value. My approach would center on understanding each sponsor's unique objectives and creatively aligning them with our mission, while also providing transparent communication about the impact of their contributions.

This foundation of mutual benefit and accountability creates sustainable support that extends beyond financial transactions. Ultimately, our most powerful development tool is our ability to share the transformative story of youth hockey—how it builds character, teaches resilience, and creates community connections.

When potential sponsors witness firsthand how their support directly enhances the hockey experience for our young athletes, they become not just contributors but passionate

advocates for our mission, creating a network of support that strengthens both our program and the broader Sioux Falls community.

Additional Comments and/or goals as a SFYHA Board Member – To grow the fundraising and partnerships by 20% in Year 1.

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### **Spencer Wrightsman – Director of Development**

Previous Involvement in SFYHA – Coached for 10 years. This includes PeeWees, Girls Program, JV Boys, and the Varsity Boys. I led and established off ice summer programs. I have been involved with team placements, went to many different level practices, and offered assistance. I have also helped with any kids who ask for extra help in their development process.

Positions Held – Over the course of 10 years, Spencer has been a Co-Head PeeWee Coach, Assistant Girls Coach, Head Boys JV Coach, Head Varsity Boys and also Assistant JV Coach & Assistant Varsity Coach for Boys teams.

Children in SFYHA for 2025-2026 Season – Spencer is a non-partial coach and volunteers with no kids inside of the program.

What is your philosophy regarding SFYHA? – The mission of Sioux Falls Youth Hockey is clear in my eyes. It is to provide a positive environment where young athletes can develop their hockey skills, build character, and foster teamwork. We are dedicated to promoting the love of the game, encouraging sportsmanship, and creating opportunities for growth both on and off the ice, all while supporting the local community and empowering our players to reach their full potential.

Additional Comments and/or goals as a SFYHA Board Member - As Development Director for the Sioux Falls Youth Hockey Board, my mission is to foster a positive and competitive environment for your athletes. I am committed to building strong community partnerships, securing resources, and creating opportunities for all players to grow both on and off the ice. Through focused development and support, we aim to empower our athletes, elevate the Sioux Falls Youth Hockey program, and instill a lifelong love for the game of hockey.