

Langford Park Hockey
30 Langford Park
St. Paul, MN 55108

12/22/2019

Dear Minnesota Hockey,

I am writing to request full Affiliate status for Langford Park Hockey with a territory covering St. Paul, north of Interstate 94, east of 35E, with all the rights and privileges afforded other Minnesota Hockey Affiliate youth programs. Langford Park Hockey has served a subset of this territory for 65 plus years. No one knows exactly when we started, but our outdoor Squirt Winter Classic tournament is entering its 60th year. There is documentation of youth hockey being played in Langford Park in the 1930s.

Through the years, our program has focused on affordable, community-based hockey, never turning kids away – and taking in kids that have been turned away from other programs. We find a home for new and experienced players alike. It is not uncommon for us to recruit and sign up 12U/PeeWee players with zero hockey experience and sometimes minimal skating experience. By the time the season is over, they leave us with new skills, new friends, increased self-confidence, and a love of the game. We develop strong skaters, too, with our alumni participating on private and public high school teams across the metro and with one recent alum also playing in the WHL.

Outdoor ice plays a central role in our program. This provides several benefits. 1) We ensure better control of our operating costs; 2) We are able to support affordable program fees [\$225 for Mites ranging to \$490 for PeeWees - Mini-Mites are free, thanks also to sizable donations]; 3) It helps create a shared purpose for our participating families, who take pride in maintaining the rinks at Langford Park. Volunteers know they're helping keep costs low for everyone and that they're participating in a decades-old tradition providing a winter resource for the neighborhood. Our adherence to sound operating and financial practices as well as our ability to rally our participating families around shared purpose and values contributes to our solvency, affordable pricing, and consistent participation numbers.

The foundation of our program is built on a strong sense of community. While we do not mandate any volunteer hours from our families, we receive over 1000 hours annually in volunteer time (not including coaches and managers) – in many instances from families who no longer have kids in our program. Not bad for a smaller program like ours.

Our recruiting and focus on family involvement feed our overall success and continues to drive girls' participation. This year, it appears we have succeeded in the ultimate goal of growing our girls' game as we intend to roster a girls 10U team.

Over the last 15-20 years and despite decreasing participation across inner metro areas, our participation numbers have been trending upward, growing from 75 to as many as 125 kids. Most recently, despite seeing a slight dip in numbers at the older ages, we've succeeded in hosting a High School house team, focused on kids that just want a place to play pick up hockey and learn a few skills. Some of these kids also participate in the Rec League, but many show up for free ice set aside for them at Langford Park. This may not increase the overall competitiveness of our teams or numbers at the younger ages, but it further imbeds our program in the community.

We understand that participation is down significantly in the 55117 zip code. We believe that our recruiting efforts and established organizational practices will help us increase it. Our goal is to continue to increase participation across our proposed service area by replicating what we've found successful at Langford Park, starting at North Dale. Langford Park would love to help grow the game and get hockey back to its neighborhood-centric roots in St. Paul.

As a full affiliate member, we think we'll be able increase participation in areas where it has declined. As we continue to grow, we will be able to offer our families the product choices (ie: competitive play levels) they may want. Given our active involvement in the community/neighborhoods we serve, when we are not able to offer those options, we will in a better position provide waivers to programs bordering the neighborhoods we serve. We've learned first-hand that when forced to choose between being forced to participate in programs they consider too far away and some other winter activity, families that come up through our program typically choose some other winter activity – youth hockey loses them.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best regards,

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