

Disabled Hockey Section Report
April 19, 2012

USA Hockey Disabled Section:

1. The 2011 USA Disabled Hockey Festival was held in Dallas April 13-15, 2012. Over 30 disabled hockey teams were represented at this event, 5 of which were from Minnesota.
2. In 2013, the Disabled Section will complete the online coaching modules required for those coaching disabled programs. Much of the videotaping occurred at the festival with support from many of the teams' present as well as family members and coaches.

Minnesota Sled Hockey

At their annual meeting Geri Anne Zubich stepped down as the president of the sled program, and Randy McGlocklin was voted in. Several positions turned over this year and the group is focusing on growing the sport across the state.

Adult team: The Minnesota Northern took home the National Championship trophy for the USA Adult Sled open division B in Dallas this year at the USA Disabled Hockey Festival. This is the second consecutive win for the Northern at the festival.

In addition during this rebuilding year, the team participated in a growth and development showcase in Rochester, MN resulting in a probable expansion of the program to that area. There are already interested players and a committee committed to fundraising and growing the sport in southern Minnesota.

Youth team: The Minnesota Ice Hawks traveled to Madison Wisconsin for the first annual youth sled tournament. The competition was fierce and the players left with a few wins under their belts and are looking forward to this annual event.

The youth team also traveled to Dallas and took on a few players from other states to support them. The team had a great time and with some very close games came away with some new skills and excitement to make another appearance next year.

Danny Lilya, youth player with the sled program, was the winner of the Minnesota Wild/Minnesota Hockey "Why I love Hockey" essay contest. After enjoying a Wild game with his family Danny's team (along with his brothers hockey team) will have an

opportunity to skate with the Wild during a practice. Here is Danny's essay. Congrats Danny!!!

I love playing hockey for the Minnesota Sled Hockey Association because I just love hockey! I am 10 and a paraplegic and have played for 4 years. I am the only student, ever, to start school permanently in a wheelchair in Moose Lake. Hockey is for everyone and my parents drive 2 hours every Sunday so I can practice and 2 hours home. Last year the Disabled Hockey Festival was in Blaine and I got to go and this spring it will be in Texas. My team is renting a coach bus and my mom is going with me! My team is AWESOME!!!

We did get to play a scrimmage during a MN Wild Game a couple months ago and I got the only goal! I know what fame feels like now. The horn blew, the lights flashed and the crowd was yelling! It was amazing! I would like to scrimmage against the MN Wild! We maybe wouldn't win but that would be fun!

I would like my essay picked so I can let my brother's team go instead though. He plays for the Moose Lake Area Hockey Association. He is on the PeeWee team and they are really good players! The MN Wild game is on January 10th and that is his 12th birthday. He would be so excited if I could win this for his team on his birthday!

Thank you,



Danny Lilya

Minnesota Sled Hockey Association – Youth Team – MN IceHawks

Minnesota Warriors

At their annual board meeting, Heidi Pierson stepped down as president as Al Lindgren was voted in for a 1 year term. Al is also a player and goalie for the team.

The Warriors traveled to Dallas this year for the Disabled Festival, this being the first time that 4 Warriors teams from across the country participated in the event. In addition to the USA and Minnesota teams, the USA Stand Up Amputee team was their and the newly formed Buffalo Warriors.

Minnesota Disabled Hockey is working with the VA administration in Washington to work on a program out of the Minnesota VA hospital. This would be a therapeutic sled hockey program to coincide with the therapy our injured vets receive at the hospital, and a possible area for those players interested in competitive hockey to get an introduction to the sport before committing to a team.

Minnesota Special Hockey

Minnesota Special Hockey was able to take 2 teams to the festival this year and had some amazing hockey on display. In addition to the games that they played the teams were also involved in an on ice skills program that was filmed for the disabled coaching modules due out next year. With a trip to Dallas Cowboys stadium and a real Texas rodeo, they took full advantage of the location and made all of us in Minnesota proud.

Minnesota Disabled Hockey

1. The Duluth area was introduced to Sled and Special Hockey in January through the support of Minnesota Hockey, an affiliate of USA Hockey, and through The Hendrickson Foundation. The organization is forming in partnership with Courage Center Duluth and has continued to grow with hockey clinics scheduled throughout the spring.

The inaugural event in January was filled with immense energy and excitement as over 50 participants and spectators filled the Amsoil Arena in Duluth, MN. The hockey clinics, coordinated locally by Kelly Erickson, Assistant Professor in Occupational Therapy at The College of Saint Scholastica and Christian Koelling, the Minnesota District Coach-In-Chief for USA Hockey, have hosted an average of 20 skaters at each of the three clinics. The clinics are focused on providing hockey opportunities for individuals with physical and developmental disabilities. The turnout told the coordinators Erickson and Koelling that there is a huge interest in the Duluth area for special and sled hockey. Mike MacMillan (head coach of the U.S. National Developmental Sled Hockey Team), Susie Miller (board member of Minnesota Special Hockey), and Larry Hendrickson (chair of Hendrickson Foundation) shared their expertise and support along with on-ice skating from members of the Minnesota Northerns Sled Hockey team. Courage Center Duluth generously stepped forward to provide their sled equipment that the organization has had for several years. “All Courage Center Duluth programs are partnership based and until recently there have been few interested partners willing to help support sled hockey here in the Twin Ports. We are thrilled that MN Hockey is interested in supporting local opportunities for people with disabilities to experience the benefits of skating and hockey participation,” stated Eric Larson, Program Coordinator for Courage Center Duluth. “This partnership will increase meaningful winter recreation opportunities available to people with disabilities here in the Twin Ports.”

Erickson and Koelling are amazed at the community support that has been shared at the events through organizations such as Courage Center Duluth and Special Olympics. Numerous individuals have provided support as well from individuals with past experience as high school hockey players and students from the Occupational Therapy Program at The College of St. Scholastica. Volunteers at the event have been essential in providing equipment set-up including fitting participants in sleds and skates and providing one-on-one ice assistance for new skaters.

At the most recent clinics in March, 10 adult and children were introduced to sled hockey with sleds provided by Courage Center Duluth for the events. In addition, another 10 adults explored special hockey through typical skating. The stands at the Duluth Heritage Sports Center erupted with cheers as the sled participants were organized into a scrimmage and the hockey game got underway. The special team left the ice dripping with sweat and exclaiming “that was great!” and “I’m so tired.”

Both special and sled hockey will finish out the spring with two more clinics scheduled at the Duluth Heritage Sports Center: Saturday March 31 starting at 1:30pm and Saturday April 21 starting at 3:15pm. Erickson and Koelling plan to move forward with organized special and sled hockey teams starting practices and games in the Fall of 2012.

1. Focus for 2013: grow the program. Mn Disabled Hockey will be focusing on the following areas for growth.
 - a. VA Hospital
 - b. Courage Center
 - c. MSHSL

Respectfully submitted;
Antonia O’Brien
USA Disabled Hockey Representative
Minnesota District