

Minnesota Disabled Hockey Report
April 19, 2021

USA Disabled Hockey:

USA Disabled Hockey Festival Goes Virtual

USA Hockey hosted the Toyota-USA Hockey Virtual Disabled Hockey Festival, April 12-17, in place of the in-person event that was scheduled to take place April 8-11, 2021, and April 15-18, 2021, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

“We’re certainly disappointed to not be able to host the Festival in person this season,” said J.J. O’Connor, chair of USA Hockey’s Disabled Section, “but with safety concerns surrounding the pandemic, it’s the best decision for all involved. We’re excited, however, to host a fun virtual event.”

USA Hockey intends to stage the 2022 Toyota-USA Hockey Disabled Hockey Festival April 7-10 and April 21-24 in Pittsburgh, while the 2023 event will be hosted in St. Louis, Missouri. More information, including a full schedule of events, will be available in the months ahead.

Minnesota Disabled Hockey:

Minnesota Warriors:

MN Warriors held our annual meeting today at 2 Stogies Sports Bar in Fridley MN. With Proxy voters and attendees in person we had over 50 Warriors represented and were able to hold the meeting because we met Quorum! (largest gathering of MN Warriors at a non-ice event in our history)

Tim Loney was reelected as Vice President of Business Operations. Jeremy Koelln was Elected Vice President of Hockey Operations. Pat Moes was reelected and Marketing Director. Daryl (Butch) Hathaway was reelected as Recruiting Director, Chris Ewald was elected White Team Captain, Nick Leach was elected Green Team Captain, Eric Reetz was elected Black Team Captain, and Cheryl Kelly our Maroon Team Captain. Our current Treasurer, Cari Jashka has purchased a home in Phoenix, AZ and our President Derek Kottke has Appointed Todd Goetze as Treasurer.

Our Green and Black Teams played in the AHA this last Winter. The Green team finished 4th in their division (C1) and the Black team had a tough year winning less than 5 games and playing many with short benches because players did not want to play in masks. Our St Cloud Program has broken the sixty (60) person threshold and has 20-25 players at practice weekly. Duluth has a full C Level team and 75% of a B level team.

Our black team and St Cloud are heading up to play a few hours in Duluth early in May and then we will again be playing in St Cloud later in May. These are " Tune ups" for the Hendrickson Festival.

In giving back to the community, our St Cloud team has bought three hours of Ice which we donated to St. Cloud Special. We have Players then helping them on the Ice. All players Assisting special have completed Safe Sport Training before stepping into the arena.

We sent two teams to a tournament in Dallas last month and the black team to a tournament in Nebraska.

We are sending six(6) teams to the Hendrickson Festival this June and are Hosting a 16 Team Tournament we are calling Fish and Skate in Shakopee in August. The concept is to get 3-4 boats to guide each team on the Lakes and rivers when the players are off the ice.

Currently we have 150 USA Hockey registrations.

We continue to try to build the Maroon (Women's) team and are setting a goal of placing them in a tournament in September.

Minnesota Sled Hockey:

MN Sled Hockey is concluding an unusual (to state the obvious!), but very successful season.

We didn't have the "normal" tournaments, but to make up for the lost ice and competition we started our monthly MN Sled Weekends. Once a month during the season we rented ice at Tria Rink St. Paul Friday evenings for two hours of skill development, then Saturdays again at Tria three hours of games, and to conclude the weekend on Sunday three more hours of games. All Minnesota sled hockey clubs and players were invited. The idea was to generate more ice and competition for our sled players...and it sure did! Many hard close, hard fought games were played. This especially worked well for our players that live out-state or are now going to college outside of the Twin Cities. If you they are going to travel, let's make it worth the trip. This is something we will definitely continue in future seasons...and open invites to neighboring state associations in an effort to be a leader in the growth of sled hockey.

Our youth novice, youth intermediate, and adult teams recently competed in a weekend sled jamboree in Fargo on March 19-21st. All teams had successful weekends competing and most importantly improving. Both our youth teams will be competing on April 24-25th in Brookings, SD at the Siouxland Sled Hockey Spring Freeze.

We have added practices in April - May...in preparation for our final tourney for the year, the annual Hendrickson Foundation Hockey Festival, June 4-6th. On the sled side, 12 adult teams and 8 youth teams from around the country will be attending. Thank you Hendrickson Foundation for continuing to support our game even in the most difficult of times...so much appreciated!

Our summer will again be highlighted (after one year off due to Covid), but the 3rd Annual Boundary Waters Sled Hockey Combine in Ely. Our camp combines hockey training, holistic self-improvement seminars, and fun activities (i.e. fishing tourney), with the week concluding with our day long portage into the BWCA.

We learned a lot this year about overcoming challenges in creative ways...and are already looking forward to a better next year!

Rochester team update:

We ended our season two weeks early due to a COVID case. We are planning to do the Hendrickson Tournament with an adult team.

Minnesota Special Hockey:

While this season was challenging for our athletes, Minnesota Special Hockey persevered and had a great season. Our season has not officially ended yet.

In early June, MSH will be participating in the Hendrickson Festival being held in Blaine. To prepare for this event, teams will have a few practices in May. This event will officially close our season.

We are currently planning our annual summer picnic and annual meeting. We are hoping to have an event in Edina and St. Cloud. If we are unable to have our picnics in person, we will hold the annual meeting virtually.

We are grateful to be recipients of the Legacy Grant fund. The funds will be used to pay an ASL interpreter to assist our player(s) with hearing impairments.

Our athletes will have a few summer skating opportunities to continue to work on their skills.

Minnesota Special Hockey is so excited to announce we are starting a team in Rochester. This team start playing in the 2021-2022 season. Welcome Rochester!

Minnesota Blind Hockey

We are in the process of establishing the 2021/2022 schedule to include for the first time, travel for regional play and representation at the inaugural USA Hockey Blind Hockey Classic in St. Louis, MO.

The Edina Bantam A team will be hosting a fundraising event at the Braemar Golf Course in mid-May. We will have a MWBH booth at the event and provide an autographed stick for auction.

In recognition of Gender Equality Month for the NHL and focus on Disabled Hockey in March, the MN Wild created a special flagbearer opportunity for their game on March 24th. The Blind, Sled and Special programs combined forces to shoot the flag bearer video at TRIA Rink, with Rosie (Sled), Ruby (Special) and Nina (Blind) stealing the show!

MWBH will also be partnering with Sled and Special to present at the virtual “Adaptive Hockey for All MN” presentation at the 2021 Discover Abilities Expo on Saturday, April 24. The event is hosted by the Sports & Recreation Department at Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute.

We look forward to participation at the upcoming National Hendrickson Foundation Hockey Festival on June 4-6, 2021. In addition to ice time for MWBH, there will be opportunities for Blind Hockey players from around the US (advanced, intermediate and beginners) throughout the weekend.

Minnesota Disabled Hockey Committee:

Our Minnesota Disabled Hockey scholarship winners!

Minnesota Warrior Hockey

Jeremy Koelln, Assistant Captain of the St Cloud Red MN Warrior team, to be recognized for his exemplary leadership and dedication to the mission of MN Warrior Ice Hockey. Since the inception of the St Cloud team in 2018, Jeremy has been instrumental helping with recruiting, organization of practices and games, planning, player support and public outreach. In addition to his dedication off of the ice, Jeremy has earned the Assistant Captain title on the ice sharing his knowledge of the game and helping to make all of the players better.

Jeremy has earned the respect of the other players, not only in Minnesota, but other Warrior organizations around the country. Jeremy is always willing to volunteer his time on and off the ice to further the St Cloud team and the MN Warrior organization as a whole. Being a good leader isn't where Jeremy's excellent personal traits stop; he is also a good person and MN Warrior Ice Hockey is a better organization with him being a part of it.

Minnesota Wild Blind Hockey

Evie Jones, Minnesota Wild Blind Hockey Youth goalie. Evie is nominated for reasons that even go beyond hockey. She faces a barrier in her life of not being able to see at all. That's not easy for anyone, let alone someone so young. She has the most positive attitude I've ever seen. Not only is she focused on being a great hockey goalie, but she also excels at playing several musical instruments.

Evie has shown up to every practice and is determined to get better each time. She also has the most equipment (and the most difficult equipment) to put on, yet she's always the first one on the ice. Sometimes it's tough to pry her away from the net when it's time to go home.

Over the last year, Evie has grown quite a bit. The arm protection on her chest protector does not fully cover her arms. There's a gap between the bottom of the arm protection and top of her blocker/glove. Might hurt a little to take a puck off the forearm! It's time she gets some new, properly fitting pads. It probably won't be long till she needs new leg pads, too. With the goalie position being the most expensive position in all of sport, I think she & her family could use the \$1,000 for pads and maybe even a summertime goalie camp to further her goalie skills.

Respectfully submitted,
Antonia Gillen
USA Disabled Hockey Director
Minnesota District