

From the Glass column – December 2010

Find time to thank a minor hockey volunteer

By Andy Bryan

If you're reading this publication, chances are you have a son or daughter in minor hockey. If you do, then your life and the life of your child is most definitely impacted by several of the thousands of individuals who volunteer their time for the betterment of the sport of hockey each year in the Ottawa District Minor Hockey Association (ODMHA).

The list of volunteer positions is long, and if you're not personally involved at the executive level in a minor hockey association, you may not have a clue about how many people are needed to keep things running smoothly for your child's team.

Let's start with the ODMHA executive. There are 11 individuals who sit on the executive and give countless hours of their time in the areas of discipline, risk and safety, finance & administration, officiating, and the general day-to-day supervision of all things related to minor hockey in our region.

I can speak from experience that these individuals are a very dedicated group who often receive little credit, yet they can be quick to draw the ire of parents or coaches who from time to time may disagree with their choice of action on any number of issues. As a 15-year veteran of the ODHA/ODMHA's officiating body, a minor hockey coach, player, and tournament convenor, I can tell you that the job these individuals do is tough and far too often, thankless.

They each sit on countless committees, spend hundreds of hours a season in meetings, and ensure that your child has a safe and fair environment to play in. Many of them also make themselves available seven days a week for other volunteers who have urgent questions.

Next, let's move on to one of the hundreds of association executives. This list is a long one; presidents, ice schedulers, league reps, development coordinators, coach mentors, house league convenors, referee-in-chiefs, referee schedulers, discipline committee members, just to name a few.

Again, they are all looking at hundreds (and in the case of the ice scheduler, thousands!) of hours of volunteer work each season.

Finally, there are the team officials themselves, including coaches, trainers, managers, treasurers and others. The hours these individuals spend on details is incredible. Details that many parents probably don't or can't appreciate without having filled the roles themselves. Coaches are busy building season plans right from the moment they are awarded their positions, and the work continues with specific practice plans, communications with players and parents, pre-game preparation and the actual time spent behind the bench or on the practice ice.

All in all, the commitment is massive.

If you are a minor hockey parent, you too give of yourself to your children. From the moment you sign them up for hockey you are writing cheques, spending many hours in the rinks, and many dollars on travel, equipment and more.

You're all to be commended for the commitment you make in allowing your children to take part in the greatest game in the world. This said, the commitment you make is small in comparison to that of the volunteers in all of the positions I've outlined above. The next time you are even remotely frustrated with a coach or executive for something you perceive to be a transgression on their part which in some way has negatively affected you or your child, **please** stop, take a deep breath and remember the relatively thankless job they do for you and your children.

They are doing this work over and above everything else that you are doing in your role as a parent. Help us all keep great volunteers in the game and instead of heading home to fire off an email in frustration, instead, stopping at a local drug store and pick up a thank-you card.

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