

REAL PROGRAMS:

FLOOR HOCKEY
OUTREACH

+

HELMET
RENTALS

CROWD PLEASER:

HOW TO
PREPARE FOR THE INFLUX
OF PEOPLE THIS SEASON

RINK

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MAGAZINE

THE MAIN EVENT



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**REAL PROGRAMS:
Floor Hockey
Outreach**

→ Get your community to the rink through outreach programs.



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Floor Hockey Outreach

by CRAIG PETERSEN, CIRM

SOCCER, BASKETBALL, CHESS, HORSEBACK RIDING, DANCE; YOU NAME IT, families have probably looked and locked into it. With such an increase of fun and competitive opportunities, us rink managers need to make sure that ice activities are in the shuffle. It's paramount to get out into the community and mingle with potential new customers.

But how do you do that? What do you use to promote your facility? And how do you promote your facility and all that you house within it in a fun and engaging way?

As director of operations at Mullett Ice Center in Hartland, Wisconsin, I wondered the same thing. That's when we introduced—and found success in—our floor hockey outreach program.

I've personally been involved with floor hockey for the past couple of years. I began volunteering at our local YMCA

as a guest floor hockey instructor, where I would take my two sons and teach a four-week floor hockey unit. Soon, the YMCA class evolved into me visiting area schools to be a guest phy-ed teacher. And thus, our floor hockey outreach program was born.

A floor hockey outreach program doesn't take much. A basic practice plan, some patience and a lot of energy is all you really need to get a lot of kids excited about hockey in a short amount of time.

WHY IT WORKS

You probably don't need much convincing that getting out into the public to promote your rink is a good idea. There's no question that getting in front of as many potential customers as possible will also benefit your arena. Here's how we've found our floor hockey program to be increasingly successful:



→ Floor hockey classes get your facility's name out in the community.

- **No "Maybe" Joiners:** In our outreach program we primarily target elementary schools. By going into schools and getting in front of kindergarten, first and second graders, you take out

waiting for parents to “maybe” have their child come to a public skate.

- **Connect them to a current school course:** Floor hockey units in schools are great, but they often miss the connection to your facility or skating programs. You get to be that person to draw the connection and remind students that they can play real hockey down the road at your facility.

HOW IT WORKS

When I guest teach, I introduce my helper and myself as former college hockey players and gain instant credibility with the young students. The phy-ed teachers love having some help with the class and the students have an extra level of excitement having someone new take the lead for the day. I take the local girls' varsity hockey coach with me to increase our ratio of coaches to students (and so the students can see that hockey is not just for boys). The young girls especially make a connection to a female role model.

One trick I have learned to grab the students' attention the second they walk into the gym is to use a hockey stick and ball to juggle as they enter, or do simple stick tricks with a puck. I have also been known to sink some full court shots with a puck into a basketball net before we even start—let me know if you want tips on how to accomplish that feat. A fun aspect to instantly engage your class is to encourage them to take photos and videos as you showcase your skills. Heck, you might even gain yourself and your facility some extra online exposure—maybe you'll even go viral. All jokes aside, the photos and videos are great ways for the students to show their parents.

After all the students are seated, quickly move onto the introduction. Some schools may require a more complex curriculum. Base each introduction and session on the age level of students you are teaching.

You may also need to consider incorporating reading a book to the students to further educate them. I suggest the *Brady, Brady* series of hockey books or discussing the science behind how the ice is frozen. They'll leave the day learning



A BASIC PRACTICE PLAN, SOME PATIENCE AND A LOT OF ENERGY IS ALL YOU REALLY NEED TO GET A LOT OF KIDS EXCITED ABOUT HOCKEY IN A SHORT AMOUNT OF TIME.

more about hockey, skating and ice than they ever realized.

PRE-VISIT CHECKLIST

- Check available equipment at the schools. Some schools use balls vs. pucks and foam sticks vs. plastic. Know what's available and what's being used before you go.
- Some schools require background checks before working with students, see if you need to complete one and do so before heading to class.
- Be sure to bring plenty of coupons, flyers, hockey cards or team photos to hand out to the classes.

PRACTICE PLAN (for a 30-min. class)

- Intro and review rules. The main rule is to keep two hands on their stick and the stick blade on the floor.
- Split the class into two groups.

- Group one should work on passing at three different distances (close, middle and long range).
- Group two works on ball/puck control around cones with a shot into a net at the end.
- Switch the groups after about eight minutes.
- A game of “clean out your backyard” is a great way to end the class with full participation.
- Be sure to save time for the students to clean up and to meet with you so you can promote an upcoming event at your facility or hand out coupons/flyers.

“CHANGE LIVES”

One thing I tell my staff before any on ice programs in my facility is to “change lives.” That's the attitude you need during your on ice programs and during a floor hockey outreach program. Stay persistent and always have a questionnaire for new members on how they found out about your on ice programs. See how much your community outreach really affected your numbers.

Remember, just one new member can translate in to thousands of dollars of revenue over a customer's youth and adult hockey careers. 🌟

Craig Petersen is the director of operations at Mullett Ice Center in Hartland, Wisconsin. He also serves on the RINK Magazine editorial board.