

A RINK MANAGER'S GUIDE  
TO SEASONAL STAFFING

REAL PROGRAMS: SLED  
HOCKEY LEARN TO SKATE

# RINK

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into Upper Peninsula landmark

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**RINK**  
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PROGRAMS



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SPECIAL INSERT  
2016 Regional  
Training Programs





# Mullett Ice Center Offers Hockey For Everyone

The Hartland, Wisconsin rink and Wisconsin Adaptive Sports Association team up for Sled Hockey Learn to Skate events

**I**t had all the makings of any other Learn to Skate or Learn to Play event. At Mullett Ice Center in Hartland, Wisconsin, participants wore smiles underneath their helmets and moved across the ice after the puck. There was one noticeable difference that separated this event from the others, however: sleds.

Organized and promoted by Wisconsin Adaptive Sports Association (WASA),

Mullett Ice Center hosted two Sled Hockey Learn to Skate events this season. Modeled after USA Hockey's Try Hockey For Free Day, the event aimed to give adaptive athletes the opportunity to experience the greatest game on earth.

"The first Learn to Skate at Mullett Center was more popular than we imagined, with every sled filled," said Sam Gracz, WASA program director. "We have had such a great experience planning this event,

ordering equipment and working with the different rinks to make this happen."

A lot of people came together to help make it happen, too. U.S. Paralympic Sled Hockey team members Kevin McKee and Erica Mitchell were in attendance to help out on the ice and promote their sport. Kevin won gold with Team USA in Sochi, and Erica is the captain from the U.S. Women's National Sled Hockey team. Dr. Mike Uihlein, physician for Team USA, and Brad Roethlisberger, head of the USA Hockey disabled section in Wisconsin, also played key roles in the success and organization of the Sled Hockey Learn to Skate.

And while the big names were great to have, it was the participants trying sled hockey for the first time who really shone. In total, 25 adaptive athletes from age 7 to 65 were able to make use of sleds provided by WASA and USA Hockey's Sled Lending Program. Fifty

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➔ More than 25 adaptive athletes tried sled hockey for the first time.

more able-body participants also had the opportunity to experience sled hockey for the first time.

The events were such a success that the arena will be home to a sled hockey team next year.

"Sled hockey has been one of my favorite adaptive sports since trying it during my internship two summers ago," Gracz said. "I was thrilled and honored to hear WASA had the opportunity to start our very own team that I would have the privilege to be the program director for.

"I look forward to working with our newly formed team come October!"

"It was great to see the smiles on the participants' faces," said Mullett Ice Center director John Wardman. "We even had our employees and volunteers try it out, too. We were thankful that we had the opportunity to host this great event and look forward to growing community awareness of sled hockey with our friends at WASA."

Also making the event—and a sled hockey program—possible were USA Hockey and Labatt Blue. WASA was one of 10 recipients to receive a \$25,000 grant from the two groups. The grants were

### Sled Hockey 101

Sled hockey was invented at a Stockholm rehabilitation center in the early 1960s by a group of Swedes who, despite their physical disability, wanted to continue playing hockey.

Sled hockey follows most of the typical ice hockey rules with the exception of some of the equipment. Players sit in specially designed sleds that are attached on top of two hockey skate blades. There are two sticks for each player instead of one, and the sticks have metal picks on the butt end for players to propel themselves. Goalies wear basically the same equipment but modifications are made to the glove. Metal picks are sewn into the backside to allow the goalie to maneuver.

*Information courtesy of USA Hockey.*

awarded to organizations to help start sled hockey programs across the nation in an effort to increase awareness of sled hockey. To do its part, WASA plans to open the 2016–17 season with a sled hockey team for all ages and abilities.

To learn more about these or future events, or to see how you can start a program at your facility, contact Sam Gracz at [sam@wisconsinadaptivesports.org](mailto:sam@wisconsinadaptivesports.org) or 414-430-6543. ★

➔ Thanks to a \$25,000 grant from USA Hockey and Labatt Blue, Mullett Ice Center will host a sled hockey program in 2016-17.



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