

2024 BOD Candidate Bios

Matt Adams

Hello Buffalo Hockey. My name is Matt Adams and I'm interested in joining the board for Buffalo Hockey. My family & I moved into the area about 18 months ago, and we have enjoyed building relationships with many of you in that short period of time. My wife Holly & I have 3 boys in the association from Mites to Peeewe's to Junior Gold, so we have experienced the gamut of youth hockey over the past several years. Along the way I've held many roles in supporting them and association hockey which include coaching, mite coordinator, travel coordinator, etc, and prior to them coming along I was a coach, referee, and tryout evaluator. In my time in Buffalo, I've enjoyed coaching peeewe's and mini-mites. Outside of hockey, I've worked in the financial industry for over 20 years and I've volunteered on a few different boards as a director, treasurer, and Board President of a Hockey Association. As Board President, I helped support the organization in a variety of ways, but in my tenure, we focused mainly on recruiting, gambling operations, and hockey operations management. My hope is that I can utilize my prior experience to help continue to foster growth and development of Buffalo Youth Hockey. Please support my candidacy for the board and I look forward to getting to know many more of you over the years to come.

Thank you
Matt Adams

Kent Baker

I have been involved with the BYHA for the past 10 years. Currently we have 2 Bantam skaters and a 10U skater in the association. In previous years I have been a Coordinator on our Buffalo Hockey Operations Committee (HOC) - serving as the Squirt Co-Coordinator and previously, the Mite Co-Coordinator. In addition to the HOC, I have also been a Head Coach and Assistant.

Three years ago, I switched to the Buffalo Hockey Board of Directors (BOD). Since serving on the BOD I have redesigned jerseys for all traveling level skaters, developed and maintained our hockey equipment vending machine, as well as being the coordinator for our Bison Shop and Concession Stand.

I will continue to bring insight from different viewpoints (Coordinator, Parent and Coach). My hope is to use these different viewpoints to continue the overall development of the players and our BYHA programs. When coaching, I always try to communicate with the other coaches to make sure that I get their input in our practices and games. I also communicate well with the parents on my team - I am very positive and a good listener.

My goal is to make sure that all the kids have a great experience when they come to the rink. For those of you that know me, I am very passionate about the game of hockey and youth development for all the kids in our association.

Professionally, I am the VP for Stewart Plumbing, Inc. I work a lot with project management and providing estimates to our customers. Our company's goal is not to simply meet our customer's expectations, but to exceed them. My work role transitions well into the BYHA. We have a great association filled with awesome parents and kids. I would like to continue being a part of the solution in helping our association grow and ensuring those positive experiences for every kid in our association.

#It'sForTheKids

Skaters: Alex (Bantam), Gavin (Bantam) and Bri (10U)

Deb Blaeser

Hi! My name is Deb Blaeser and I would love to continue to serve on the Buffalo Youth Hockey Association Board. I have had the opportunity to be part of the BYHA Board over the past six months as I finished out an existing term of a Board Member that stepped down. I feel that I have the skill set, work ethic and a broad range of knowledge that will contribute to the improvement and ongoing success of BYHA.

My husband, Tom, and I have lived in Buffalo for seventeen years. We have six children and several pets, so our house is a zoo most of the time! Our 12-year-old twin boys, Zach and Will, are just completing their first year as PeeWee's and have played hockey in Buffalo since they were Mini Mites. I have been a team manager within the BYHA for seven years on their teams; most recently for the PeeWee AA team. The team manager position has helped me gain 'feet on the street' insight around what players and parents are passionate about as it relates to process, transparency, and communication within the organization.

I have over 15 years of corporate senior leadership experience managing large teams, negotiating large dollar vendor contracts and creating/managing multi-million-dollar budgets. I love the outdoors and spend many hours fishing, boating, and swimming with our family in the summer. I also love growing flowers and gardening. Many winter hours are spent at the rink where I have had the opportunity to watch our boys develop their hockey skills and form lasting relationships.

I ask for your vote so that I can use the experience that I have gained through my career and life experiences to continue to make a positive contribution to the BYHA Board.

Thank you for your consideration.

Deb Blaeser

Jennifer Eystad

Hi, I'm Jennifer Eystad and I have a kiddo who just finished up his 2nd year as a Squirt. He has been part of BYHA since he began skating in Mites. My husband has helped coach each year as we know it takes a village to have a solid hockey program. Hindsight is 20/20. When things go wrong, it's easier to see after rather than before the decision is made. However, it takes a team of leaders to have the courage and leadership to listen to the people, admit mistakes and make corrective actions. In my day job, I lead a team of 160 people where we are always making decisions then pivoting to the economy, mother nature, and everything else the world throws at us. We build vision. We plan. We have roles and are accountable for them. We listen to what isn't working and pivot. When we choose to stand by our decisions, we do so with as much communication and transparency as we can. This association is responsible for the development of your players to be coachable, skilled and competitive using your hard-earned money. As a Board member, I will use my day-job skills to represent your dollars, your interests, and your player(s) the same way I do my employees. We need your support to make the changes noted below to become part of the BYHA culture with a focus on development, growth, and community.

Your Voice Matters: Vote for Change

Do you believe our Youth Hockey Association can be more transparent, efficient, and focused on solutions? I do too, and that's why I'm running for the Board of Directors. I'm passionate about this organization and its potential, but I believe we need change and fresh perspectives to unlock it.

Unleashing the Potential of Our Association:

Clear Goals and Plans: We currently lack defined goals and a long-term roadmap. I will champion the creation of clear, measurable goals and develop short- and long-term plans to achieve them.

Empowering Change: We need a culture of innovation and collaboration. I will work to make submitting ideas easier and more accessible for everyone. This includes streamlining the review and execution process and tracking progress towards shared goals.

Modernizing Communication: I recognize that voting often happens after the season ends, making it inconvenient. While I advocate for more timely and convenient surveys and voting, your participation now is crucial. Your vote is the key to making these changes possible.

Transparency and Openness: I believe our Association should function with an open door. I will work to ensure your ideas are heard and discussed.

Transparency in Decision Making: You deserve to know how decisions are made. I will push for a clear process and increased transparency around how the Board arrives at its choices.

Meeting Agendas and Minutes: Everyone should have the opportunity to be informed and involved. I will advocate for publishing meeting agendas in advance and ensuring all decisions, whether made in meetings or not, are documented in publicly available minutes.

Focus on Solutions and Action:

Positive Mindset: We need to shift our focus to finding solutions instead of dwelling on obstacles. I will promote a culture of “can-do” and encourage creative problem-solving.

Regular Voice of the Association: Regular polls and surveys will be implemented to gather your input and ensure your voices are heard in our discussions.

Empowered Subcommittees: I will advocate for the creation of subcommittees tasked with researching problems and proposing solutions. This fosters collaboration and empowers members to contribute their expertise.

Sustainable Solutions: While I will continue to support the pursuit of acquiring another sheet of ice, I believe in finding creative solutions using the resources and facilities currently within our control. This ensures immediate progress while we work towards long-term goals.

One person can't make big changes. It takes a team. **I urge you to get out and vote for me and other candidates who share these same commitments to change.** This is how we ensure success and a positive experience for all players.

Let's work together to build a better future for our hockey community!

Chris Hammer

Hello. I am Chris Hammer, my daughter has played the last 2 years in 8u, and I have helped coach. We both really enjoy spending time at the rink, and on the ice. She played her first mite year in OMGHA, so coming to BYHA was a bit of a shock seeing the difference in numbers.

Professionally I have been in the IT industry for 25 years mostly in management and leadership. I am interested in joining the Board to help continue the success of the Association. I plan to continue to coach for as long as the jalopy of a body I have holds up. My daughter however is in it for the long haul.

My perspective has always been about the kids, ensure they have fun, which leads to better engagement, and that is when their skills grow. I intend to approach a role on the board in a similar manner. Keep the focus on how this benefits/impacts the kids, the coaches, and the parents and weigh that against the needs of the initiative.

Thanks in advance for your vote,
Sincerely,
Chris Hammer

Adam Hennen

Hello! My name is Adam Hennen and I would love the opportunity to be a part of the BYHA Board. My wife Kristen and I live in Annandale with our two children Evan and Ellie. Evan will be a second year Peewee and Ellie will be a second year Mite. As a family we share the love of the game! Many of you have probably seen me running around the rink, working the concession stand, playing music for games, and of course my loud choppers! I am looking to help grow our association stronger with my different views and ideas. As an association we have to do what it takes to keep us growing and moving forward. This takes strong communication, precise decision making, setting big goals, effective practice plans, strategic coaching, proficient player development plans, and retention. Our association can positively grow with the right mindset, motivation, and passion! My favorite quote to live by is, "nothing changes if nothing changes."

Vote for Adam Hennen

Ashley Kleist

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- **Voice of the Association:** Regular polls and surveys will be implemented to gather your input and ensure your voices are heard in our discussions, including the mite levels.
- **Empowered Subcommittees:** I will advocate for the creation of subcommittees tasked with researching problems and proposing solutions. This fosters collaboration and empowers members to contribute their expertise, ensuring we are focusing on building a strong program that benefits all skaters, not just those of individual members with influence on decisions.
- **Sustainable Solutions:** While I will continue to support the pursuit of acquiring another sheet of ice, I believe in finding creative solutions using the resources and facilities currently within our control. This ensures immediate progress while we work towards long-term goals.

Together, we can create a thriving Youth Hockey Association! I urge you to vote for me and other candidates who share my commitment to change. This is how we ensure success and a positive experience for **all** players.

Let's work together to build a better future for our hockey community!

Hey parents! My name is Ashley Kleist, married to Mike, and we have three skaters who will be moving up to 12U, Squirts and 8U next year. Our kids have been a part of BYHA since mini-mites, where Mike has coached each of them and I fulfilled the role of team manager in my early years. Please help us to make the changes noted above to become part of the BYHA culture with a focus on growth, development, and community.

Jennifer Kurth

Hello BYHA parents. My name is Jennifer Kurth and I am running for one of the open spots on the BYHA board. My youngest of 3 children, Gentry, is just finishing up his 2nd year as a squirt in hockey. Over the last 6 years I have dedicated more time each year to learning about our association. I have attended board meetings, been a team manager, and am currently the Rock on Ice Coordinator. I want to be an advocate for all the kids, on and off the ice. I'd like to help parents find answers to their questions and concerns. I like to find creative solutions to things and always try to think outside the box.

In my career I've been on committees to work on growing the business, making each place a better place to work, and continuing training. I'm a firm believer you should never stop learning. I feel I could apply these assets into our association. I feel we should be looking into our player development and consistency in the coaching. Not only should we be working towards individual growth but team growth as well. I'd like to work on ways to encourage the kids not only during the hockey season but off season as well. I am currently working with our board to expand the Rock on Ice to events year round. I am excited for the opportunity to learn more and help grow the association.

Matt Rickheim

Vision for the Board of Directors Position:

It's important to keep in mind that there's more to being a part of community-based youth hockey than just the sport itself. Organized youth hockey allows all of our kids to grow life skills such as leadership, accountability, working as a team, and developing communication skills at a very young age. If given the opportunity to be one of the BYHA board of directors, I promise to be an advocate for your youth hockey players at all levels on both the boys side and the girls side regardless of their current skillset and where their passion for the sport of hockey lands. I personally have skaters on both sides and am equally passionate about both girls and boys hockey. With your vote on the ballot, I guarantee I'll be an unbiased, reputable voice for everyone equally.

Professional Background:

I'm a 2004 graduate of Lake Superior College in Duluth, Minnesota with an education in Mechanical Engineering Design. Since 2005, my work experience entails an extensive background in project management, navigating customer facing communication, problem solving, critical thinking, and reimagining outdated company visions. Currently, I'm employed by a custom fireplace manufacturer in Big Lake by the name of Acucraft Fireplaces in an engineering support role to our sales team. My professional background is not limited to the custom fireplace world, it also includes the aviation, power generation, & water treatment industries.

About Me:

My family includes: my wife Angie, our 13-year-old son Blake (first year Bantam next season), 10-year-old daughter Megan (second year 10U next season), and 6-year-old daughter Amber (second year mite next season). We currently reside at our lake home on the Long Lake & Crooked Lake chain by Clearwater.

In my free time I enjoy fishing, lake days on the pontoon, traveling the world with my wife, and doing home projects around our property that will never end. In addition to these things keeping me busy, I can be found in my garage during the winter months watching hockey as being around the game, regardless of who's playing, is something that I've found very comforting and calming for me over the years.

For those of you that do know me I've been told (not sure it's true or not) that I tend to be a bit sarcastic, fun loving, and humorous. In actuality, that is 100% me and I thoroughly enjoy putting a smile on peoples' faces. Getting a laugh or two out of people makes my day better by seeing a smile I helped create.

Conclusion:

As a team manager for the last 6 years for BYHA at both the Mite and early competitive levels, I have a firm understanding of our association at the team level. At this point it's time for me to find another avenue to assist with the day-to-day operations of this association hence why I'm hoping for an opportunity to fill one of the open BYHA board of directors' positions. There are approximately 140 community-based hockey associations in the great state of Minnesota, but the one in Buffalo is my family's home away from home & I hope to have the opportunity to represent all of you.

Bob Schroden

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Hi, I'm **Bob Schroden** and I have two skaters who will be a first year Pee Wee and second year Squirt next year. Both boys have been part of BYHA since mini-mites and my wife and I have held various positions from tryout co-coordinator, manager, and manager coordinator. Please get out and vote this election. We need your support to make the changes noted above become part of the BYHA culture with a focus on development, growth, and community.