



# HERSHEY JR. 'BEARS'



## NEWSLETTER

### A Message From Our Club President

On behalf of the Hershey Junior Bears Board, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the 2024-25 hockey season!

This will be my first full season as President, and as previously mentioned, I have been involved, for many years, helping the Hershey Junior Bears and Hershey Bears organization. My passion to get involved is driven by believing in a Program that will foster the love of hockey in the community. My commitment is also driven by giving players an opportunity to play in a historical setting. My son Gavin has been in the program since Bear Bites and is now currently on the A National Peewee travel team.

My main goal as President, for this upcoming season, is to continue to enhance the overall experience for all players, coaches, and families – by focusing on our Mission Statement – Promote, Encourage, and Govern hockey for boys and girls in the Central Pennsylvania region. We will strive to teach the coaches, parents, boys and girls respect for the concepts of sportsmanship, fair play and ultimately foster a love for the game of hockey, for life.

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**OCTOBER 2024**

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# A message from our Club President *(Continued from front page)*

To achieve this, all of us together – board members, coaches, players, and parents – have certain responsibilities, both to the organization and to each other. The Hershey Junior Bears organization is only as good as its members. My hope is that all members will strive to set good examples and model positive behavior on and off the ice. Second, without volunteers willing to step up and loyal families willing to commit to helping, we cannot live up to our mission. Finally, we must continue to manage its operations and plan for its future in a way that is true to its mission, but is also flexible, adaptable, and economically responsible.

The main objectives of any youth sports organization – should be having fun, making friends, exercising, learning about values such as teamwork and responsibility, and improving skills in the sport of hockey. It is incumbent on the adults – board members, coaches, and parents – to ensure that the entire experience is a positive one for our kids – filled with teaching, encouragement, and developmentally appropriate opportunities, and free from negativity, bullying, and harmful speech or conduct. It is critical that each coach models such positive behavior to his or her teams, specifically by preparing players for success on and off the ice and communicating information and expectations clearly to families.

Without committed volunteers and loyal families, we simply can neither offer nor support programming that will live up to the goals of the mission.

As President, I take responsibility that we as a Board will do a better job communicating throughout the season, but to demonstrate that without the time, energy, creativity, and passion of our volunteers to lead our organization, and the commitment of our families to participate in programs, there can be no Hershey Junior Bears.

The Hershey Junior Bears are fortunate to remain one of the longest running youth hockey organizations in Pennsylvania. It is the responsibility of the Board to continue to manage in the best interest of the association and to adapt to the challenges we face to accomplish our goals. The Board devoted considerable time and energy this off-season to plan short-, medium-, and long-term strategic goals.

I hope all of our players have fun on and off the ice this season. Let's do our best to make it an overall positive and worthwhile experience for all members.

Sincerely,  
Michael Schmelz  
Hershey Junior Bears President



# J. Bruce McKinney Scholarship Fund

It is no secret that youth sports, and hockey in particular, have increased in price. We at Hershey do not want any player to be denied the chance to play because of finances. Through the kindness of J. Bruce McKinney and other donors, the Hershey Jr. Bears Organization is able to offer limited financial assistance to families who are experiencing financial difficulty. Scholarships are awarded solely on the basis of financial need. This year, we are awarding \$8,325 to be shared amongst 10 applicants, the most we have had in the past 4 seasons.



*J. Bruce McKinney, retired President, CEO and Chairman of the Board of Hershey Entertainment & Resorts Company. He is a member of the Hershey Bears Hockey Club Hall of Fame Committee.*

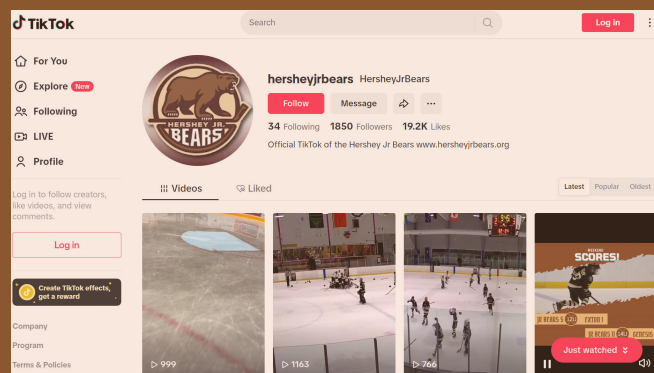
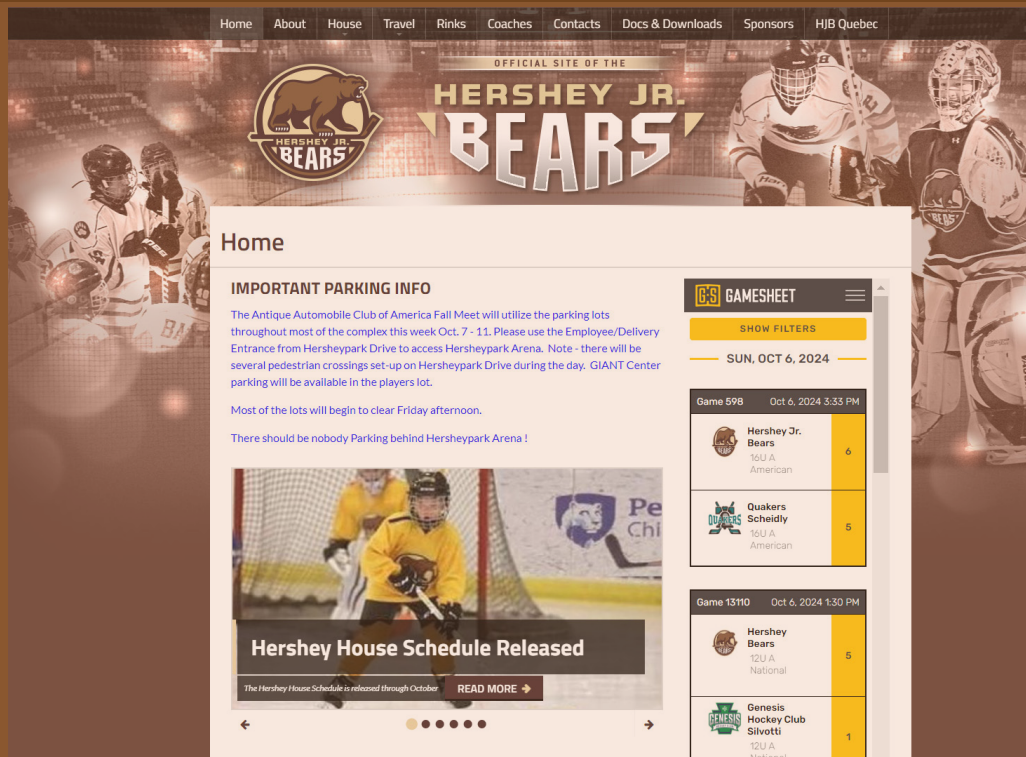


## HJB Director of Scholarship and Finance: Jake Thomas

Jake grew up in central PA, and played for the Jr. Bears in 2009 and 2010. He played five years at Lebanon Valley College, while earning his Bachelors Degree in Accounting and his Masters Degree in Business Administration. Jake has coached for the Hershey Jr Bears, Capital City Vipers, and Hershey Cubs. He and his wife welcomed a healthy boy to their family earlier this year.



# Web Site and Social Media



Be sure to check our website and follow the Hershey Jr. Bears on our social media pages! Stay up to speed on organizational news, photos, and videos! Our website has updates on the latest scores and links to the official HJB merch and apparel store. If you have news, photos, and videos you would like to share, contact John Hrabovsky (jhrabovsky@hershejrbeats.org) and Thad Kocuba (thad.kocuba@gmail.com).

## HJB Director of Public Relations and Social Media: Thad Kocuba

Thad has been coaching for the Jr Bears since 2015, coaching both house and travel, from Bear Bites to PeeWee hockey. He joined the Jr. Bears board in 2019. He has also coached Palmyra's Middle School team for the last 4 years, and coached Lacrosse for the last 2 years. He has 3 boys that have all played in the Jr. Bears program. He has lived in the area since 2004, after growing up in Pittsburgh, and attending Penn State University.



## Club Tournaments and Webmaster: John Hrabovsky

John Hrabovsky has been involved with HJB hockey since 1998. He put 2 boys through the program from mites through midgets and served as team manager, coach and joined the Board of Directors in the mid 2000's. During his tenure as a BOD member, he has served at many various BOD positions including 2 terms as President and currently remains active on the Executive Committee while overseeing tournaments and website.



# Sponsorship Opportunities!

Greetings from the Hershey Jr. Bears!

Not for profit programs like ours would not exist without support from our families and members of the community like you, and we sincerely hope you will consider supporting us now.

It is no secret to members of the hockey community that youth sports, especially hockey, are becoming very expensive. Large corporations are being formed to take over youth sports, trying to capitalize on players and parents' desire to play the game they love, sending prices even higher and leaving the average players' experience lacking. Through generous support, the Hershey Jr. Bears can continue to operate in the Central PA area while keeping costs down and expanding our organization's programs.

We kindly encourage you or your company to look at our sponsorship opportunities this season. If you have additional questions or would like to offer alternative ways of helping our organization, please do not hesitate to contact Eric Esser at [eesser@outlook.com](mailto:eesser@outlook.com).



## HJB Director of Fundraising: Eric Esser

Eric is currently the Director of Fundraising for the Hershey Jr Bears. Eric has coached for the Hershey Jr Bears the past three years, with the past two resulting in DVHL championships. Eric grew up playing hockey in Erie, PA (Home of the Erie Otters, OHL) and prior to coming to the Jr. Bears, Eric coached Gettysburg College's program for 10 years. His goal is to make hockey as affordable as possible for all players who want to play the game and continue to expand the Hershey Jr Bears program across all of Central PA. "The key to a successful youth hockey program is to make every decision about the kids. Youth sports should not be a business but an outlet for anyone who wants to enjoy the game."- Eric Esser



# Fundraising

**IT MAKES A LOT OF ¢ENTS**  
FUNDRAISING WITH  
**PRIMANTI BROS.**



 **Hershey Jr. Bears**

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**20%** OF EVENT SALES GET DONATED

**Wednesday, October 30th**  
**11:00 am to 11:00 pm**

Hershey  
131 W Chocolate Avenue, Suite 121  
Hershey, PA, 17033

Order online here and use code **DINE2DONATE** →  
or show this flyer in the restaurant.



**PRIMANTI BROS.**

For online orders to count towards the fundraiser they must be placed for pickup only from the restaurant location and during the hours of the fundraiser. Delivery orders and gift cards do not qualify. \$25.00 minimum event sales required to receive any donation.

**SCAN ME**



On October 30, support the Hershey Jr. Bears by having lunch and dinner at Primanti Bros! Go to Primanti Bros. in Hershey and show this page when you order and 20% of the sales will be donated to the club. Share this with all your family and friends!

If ordering online, use the code "DINE2DONATE" (October 30 only)

# Our Sponsors

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**DEBERNARDIS**  
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