

programs will benefit me the most. I have applied to both and have been accepted into both of their criminal justice programs. I am currently planning on attending Husson University for the fall semester of 2013. This, in its self, is a giant step forward.

Gardiner Youth Hockey Experience:

Please describe your youth hockey experience with Gardiner Youth Hockey and share any special learning experiences from your time with the organization. Why would you recommend GYH?

I was two years old when I first stepped onto the ice. My parents guided me into hockey over basketball because they knew of the camaraderie that is found on a hockey team. When I was three I joined the Gardiner Youth Hockey Atoms Program. I learned to play hockey with a whole new group of individuals who wanted to reach the same goal as me, to be a professional hockey player. As I grew up in the Gardiner Youth Hockey Program I have come across some great people who I have been able to call my teammates. Not only did I have great teammates, I had an unbelievable coaching staff. We teammates because the best of friends. We saw each other two to five times a week and shared the ice. We learned together and became more than just friends, we became a family. I played ice hockey through Gardiner all the way up through to my senior year of high school. This past season was my last year every PLAYING in the program. I have learned throughout the years that my hockey family means the most to me. At school, the little boys and girls that I played with as an atom grew up with me and are now some of my best friends. This group of individuals, I would travel through the gates of Babylon with.

The Gardiner Youth Hockey Program did not just teach me the skills needed to play hockey, it also left me with some of my greatest memories. I remember as a squirt, traveling at five o'clock in the morning to go play a hockey game on Saturday. We got real used to the early morning games and became, what I would say, the most dangerously good morning team in the area. In the squirt years we would road trip down to Rhode Island. We went down there and played teams all across New England. I remember we made it to the championship game. It was the Tigers verse the Lions. The Lions ended up winning two to one. I scored our only goal that game from the goal line. Sometimes it is better to have a lucky shot then a good shot. When I graduated to a peewee, our team won the Maine State Championship. We worked our butts off to get there and earned that title as champions. The game went into a double overtime with a shootout. It was phenomenal. When I became a bantam we had a huge upset in the program. Gardiner Youth Hockey was forced to combine with Kennebec Youth Hockey because a travel team, CDS came through and took the majority of the players from both teams. The combine team became the Junior Moose. We Junior Moose players were left for the dead with no goalie and players who never spoke with each other. It was a rough season but we had lots of fun and got to meet new kids. I then entered the high school level and played with everything that was taught to me throughout my hockey career. The players that were on my high school team played together ever since I was two. We really knew each other and knew how to play with each other. The camaraderie never went away.

This past summer of 2012 I participated in the Gardiner Youth Hockey Day of Play. Some teammates and I volunteered our time as referees, score keepers, and activity staff. I had a fantastic

time there. It was not only fun because I was with my teammates, it was fun because I got to meet some great kids who look up to me and are the future players for the varsity high school team. I think that the best part of participating in the Gardiner Youth Hockey Day of Play was that I was able to give back to the program that built me into the young man that I am today. The seven hours that I gave that day will never be enough to pay back for all the time that was invested in me. I would very much like to continue participating in the Gardiner Youth Hockey Program in the future. Perhaps I will try to come back as a coach when I get out of college and get my career in line. Lots of people talk to me about their children playing hockey when they get older or starting them in a program. I always tell everyone I talk with about the great experiences that I had in the Gardiner Youth Hockey Program. I let them know that my parents were right when they told me about the camaraderie that was found in the program. I can tell them with all honesty, that playing for Gardiner was the best experience that I have ever had growing up and will hold the greatest of memories.