



COACH OF THE MONTH



SCOTT LONG

Age: 36
Des Moines, Iowa

With the Minnesota Wild's AHL affiliate and five USHL teams calling Iowa home, hockey is growing in the Hawkeye State. And with Cedar Rapids boasting the highest enrollment at a recent Try Hockey for Free event, it's only getting bigger.

Scott Long, the hockey director for the Des Moines Youth Hockey Association, has seen that growth first hand, and has played a huge role in the process.

"I started for the love of the game," said the Level 4 coach. "It was adopted at an early age when I started playing at age 5."

After graduating from college, the then 20-year-old joined the local youth hockey association and has never looked back.

In addition to coaching the Des Moines Oakley High School squad, Long continues to coordinate the 6 & Under and 8 & Under programs.

"Seeing the new faces that start and their smiles at each ice session," he said. "I'm lucky to do something I love and I can't imagine my life without hockey."

THE HOCKEY MOM | By Christie Casciano Burns

Dedicated Volunteers Don't Quit The Game Even After Their Kids Do

WE'VE ALL SEEN THE FAMOUS PICTURE of Bobby Orr flying through the air like Superman.

Then just 21 years old, No. 4 had just potted the game-winner in overtime—clinching the Stanley Cup for the Boston Bruins—before tripping over goalie Glenn Hall's stick and into the history books.

But here's a piece of trivia for hockey heads: Who set up Orr from behind the net on that score?

We all remember Bobby Orr, but his iconic moment doesn't happen without an assist from Derek Sanderson and Don Awrey.

While it may not be the Stanley Cup Finals, it's not a stretch to point out that our own young skater's moments in the sun don't happen without an assist here or there, or plenty of hustle behind the scenes.

I'm sure your local team, like our Syracuse Nationals Girls' squad, wouldn't run as efficiently without our team parents—such as Jennifer Thieben, John and Angela Cipullo—booking hotels, coordinating travel, team dinners and fundraising ideas.

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Still, there's another team that is integral for all teams to succeed, and they're not in it for their kids. In fact, many no longer have kids who play hockey. They're members of the wonderful world of volunteers.

For my son's former coach, it's all about giving back to the game that has given so much to him and his family.

After Mike Zandri's children went off to college, he was asked to coach an initiation program. I spotted him on the job one day at the rink and was caught by complete surprise to see a familiar face

among the fresh new faces of the littlest skaters in the rink. Bending down, smiling and laughing.

It was in sharp contrast to my memories of the intense Bantam coach who led practices and was always ready to draw something up on his white board.

"It is very different without my own child," Zandri admits. "I don't have to get anyone home to do homework or chores or anything else. This leaves time to share all aspects of the game."

The same holds true for Chuck Gridley, who wears many hockey hats within the USA Hockey family. In addition to coaching three teams, he is the New York District coach in chief, serves as an instructor for the Coaching Education Program and is on several other committees.

A love of the game and a desire to share that with the next generation keeps Gridley in the game.

There are plenty of volunteer opportunities, Gridley says, who believes it's an asset to have experienced coaches and administrators who are not connected to a child on the team.

The hockey season can take a lot from us—time, warmth, money and even a little bit of our sanity. But if we look at how the game rewards our families with lessons and friends will last a lifetime, it's easy to see why volunteers are so eager to give back. ☆