

The Western Connecticut Youth Hockey Association (WCYHA) is a non-profit organization that offers boys and girls of the Greater Danbury area the opportunity to learn the sport of hockey, and improve their skills through practices and competition. The organization seeks to promote sportsmanship and fair play, while developing players' characters and athletic abilities. WCYHA strives to be a top-notch hockey program in the state of Connecticut.

Athletes will have equal opportunities to participate, and will respect their teammates, opponents and coaches. Parents will be encouraged to promote their children's development, and to assist the organization in meeting its mission.

WCYHA is affiliated with The Connecticut Hockey Conference (CHC), which consists of 38 youth hockey organizations throughout Connecticut. These local organizations make it possible for between 10 and 12,000 hockey players, between the ages of 5 and 18, to enjoy amateur hockey. The CHC provides the structure and the means for boys and girls to learn necessary hockey skills, and supplies training for coaches and officials. The CHC structures Connecticut's teams into levels, by age group. These teams compete during the season in their appropriate levels and are ranked by a staff of CHC officials.

WCYHA is also part of the USA Hockey program, which adopts the American Development Model (ADM) approach. The ADM utilizes Long-term Athletic Development (LTAD) principles as its framework. Developed by internationally renowned coach educator Istvan Balyi, and adapted to ice hockey by USA Hockey, the principles of LTAD are rooted in successful programs throughout the world. LTAD principles can be used to make our existing WCYHA systems and structures more consistent.

The trend in today's youth sports is to push athletes to "specialize" in a single sport. Limiting these young athletes to the repetitive motions and demands of a single sport is a fundamental problem. Players are not yet fully developed physically, and their bodies are more prone to injury. USA Hockey, and the ADM model, helps address these issues. In reality, most young athletes will not play youth sports past 8th grade, and only a very, very small handful will make it to the professional level. As a society, we have lost sight of the fundamentals of youth sports, which is to have fun, and build confidence in a team environment.

Recently WCYHA became a NY Rangers Youth Hockey Affiliate Program. This relationship means the WCYHA will receive guidance by the NY Rangers on how to run an effective youth hockey program. It will include providing education to the entire organization from the board members and coaches, down to managers and schedulers. It will also help increase access to the game of hockey, and keep hockey growing in our communities, by breaking down barriers to entry, and introducing more new players to the sport of hockey. The NY Rangers Youth Hockey Affiliate Program will also provide an opportunity to raise funds by providing a charity hockey game with alumni players.

There is no doubt that hockey is an amazing game that can play a tremendous role in helping to build confidence in a young athlete. However, it is also one of the more costly sports. Hockey parents can be expected to pay more than \$5000 per player for development, ice-time, practice, games, tournaments and equipment. With a median household income of approximately \$65,000 per year in the Danbury area, this can quickly become a huge financial burden (and obstacle) for families. Especially for those with multiple players (of which there are many).

WCYHA has made a lot of strides in the past few years, and continues to get recognition as an up-and-coming organization:

- Became a NY Rangers Youth Hockey Affiliate program and NY Rangers Assist Program
- 70% towards getting an ADM designation with USA Hockey.
- Brought a regional director of USA hockey to the organization
- Attracting a retired NHL veteran to potentially coach one of our teams
- Taking part in charitable giving
- Begin WCYHA girl's hockey team and a Midget program

However, to reduce tuition costs for families, maintain high-quality standards, and become the top-tier organization we can be, we need help from sponsors and donors to raise roughly \$ 100,000 annually.

The money is needed to:

- Increase marketing reach into the local community
- Hire paid coaches with years of experience
- Develop scholarships for families that need financial aid
- Supplement uniform and tournament cost
- Create a Training Center for players
- Support a development program for becoming a USA HOCKEY ADM Designation Organization.
- Fund programs like camps, skills for player development and education for volunteers in the organization
- Offer risk enhancements and leasehold improvements to better our exposure in the hockey rink