

MWRA



Markham Women's Ringette Association
Annual General Meeting Report
2008 – 2009 Season

Markham Women's Ringette Association – Annual General Meeting Report

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

INTRODUCTION

With great pleasure I submit to you the MWRA 2008-2009 season report. Coming out of last year's AGM there was much work to be done given our declining numbers and necessary fee increases to keep the league alive. As you read these pages I trust that you will be impressed with the results of the work our members have accomplished. It has been a hugely successful year for us, and we plan on continuing the momentum going forward.

KEY SUCCESSES

The major success this year is tied to acquisition. This year the league had 29 registered players - 10 of these players were new to MWRA!

In the summer of 2008, we began a very serious recruitment campaign which resulted in a 33% growth in the league. This will allow us to not only continue, but hopefully expand the league. Jackie will go into further detail on this, but this is due largely to our online presence. In the age of technology, it is important that we have a useful website – we have accomplished this. The website is full of amazing information that is updated regularly. When doing a Google search for “Ringette Markham” we are 2nd to Southern Regional Ringette. This is due to all the hard work and dedication of Jackie. Thank you Jackie and way to go!

It is important to mention the very successful hockey pool fundraiser (Jackie will elaborate more on this in her report so read on!). The benefit of this fundraiser is that with the weekly online results, it provides fun and anticipation for how you are doing throughout the season.

We wanted to ensure the needs of the membership were understood and addressed. We sent out a survey and had a tremendous response rate - 25 people responded. This insight was very useful as it will help guide us going forward. From that survey it is very clear that the league membership is very happy with the level of play. Most of you are here for the exercise but friendship is an added bonus. Exhibition games on nights other than Friday seem very popular, so we will look to see if this can be incorporated. We have also identified that you, as a membership, would like to see us bring back paid referees.

FINANCIALS

Sharilyn will present the Treasurers Report. It clearly outlines how the league's funds are allocated in order to keep us, a non-profit organization, running smoothly. There is more good news to report in this area as well – we are back on track financially and fees will not increase this year. We have funds in the bank to cover initial ice payments for next year, so no one will be funding the league out of pocket as was the case this past year. Tied to the financials are plans for next year league operation, please read on for more details.

OPERATIONS

The executive believes strongly in accountability and transparency. To that end, this year's AGM will provide much more information than in the past. We believe that our membership needs to know how and why decisions are made so we remain in a positive position when it comes to league satisfaction. The executive welcomes comments and suggestions from the membership.

We have embraced a league motto this year “**fun, fitness and friendship**”. We have tried to live up to this throughout the year. I feel we are creating a positive experience for our membership, as evidenced through survey results. However, if we miss the boat on something, we encourage feedback to ensure we can meet the membership needs to the best of our ability.

We must recognize that MWRA's success this year is due to the dedication and hard work of our members. Harnessing such talent and dedication brought us to examine how MWRA should be structured. Our revised constitution has been distributed to all league members. The Board of Directors positions that will lead us forward in the coming years include:

- We have a total of six directors (President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Equipment Manager, Marketing and Fundraising)
- We have reassigned the Registrar's position and added new positions.
- We will have a new director focusing on Equipment as we strive to apply for a Trillium Grant
- There are three non-voting positions (Cougar rep, Pylon rep and Past President, when in term) that provide us with insight and diversity to the league.

2009 – 2010 SEASON

Planning is already underway! Our ultimate goal is to ensure the membership's needs are being met. We believe these things can be accomplished through a more structured set up – a league rather than a Friday night pick up. We have listened to your survey results and one of the first things we will be doing is bringing back the paid referees. As the 2009-2010 season progresses we will build on existing ideas to continue enhancements to the league in order to meet the needs of the membership.

A big undertaking for us over the summer months will be drafting a Trillium Grant proposal. If we are successful, we will use the funds for league jerseys and equipment for new players to use for the season. Ideally, we would source new goalie equipment as the current stuff is very old. We want to encourage women to come out and try Ringette, so we need to make it as easy as possible for them.

New initiatives are occurring such as the welcome kit for all members, bring-a-friend discount, an on-ice skills clinic and a family fun day in the summer. We will bring back old favourites like the hockey pool and the Christmas social. Stay tuned for more details!

IN SUMMARY

As you read through this annual report, I am certain that you will be impressed by our collective achievements. Personally, I think three key words sum up 2008-2009. **Growth** – We have grown not only in our membership but also each one of you has increased your talent and skill level on the ice. **Leadership** – Our volunteers have taken the league to new levels this year – with the help from your feedback! **Results** – We are continuing to adapt and understand the needs of our membership and I think we have started to show results in what we are doing. Let's be proud of our achievements and celebrate the 2008-2009 season as we prepare for another exciting season in the fall!

Thanks everyone for a great season! Looking forward to seeing you all next year!

TREASURER'S REPORT

This year the league had 29 registered players, many of which signed up to play a full 2 hours every Friday. Some of the players that signed up for 1 hour per Friday ended up joining us for the additional hour (at an additional cost) With the registration fees and the online hockey pool, we will finish the year with money enough in the bank to cover the ice costs which are always due before the first fall cheques are cashed. This will be the first time in a few years where no one from the league will have to personally cover the initial costs of the season.

BUDGET

CASH IN

Total Registration Fees	\$10,030.00
# Registered Players	29
Extra Hour Fees	\$130.00
Trial Players	\$200.00
Fundraising	\$805.00
TOTAL	<u>\$11,165.00</u>

CASH OUT

ICE	\$7,405.44
Ice Cost per Hour	\$194.88
ORA FEES	\$1,061.00
REF'S \$50/night	\$150.00
BANK FEES	\$48.00
TOTAL	<u>\$8,664.44</u>

PLUS/MINUS

\$2,500.56

SECRETARY'S REPORT

During this past year, the Executive met officially nine times with monthly meetings occurring from June of 2008 to March 2009. I documented each meeting with a set of Minutes, which are available to all members on our league website.

One of the first items on our list of things to do this year was to compile an accurate email list of our members, including possible future members. As the Secretary, this job fell under my jurisdiction. As an Executive, we felt it would be a more convenient way to communicate with members regarding league issues, important upcoming dates, ice times, etc. Each member was asked to enter their email address on their registration form and anyone who emailed the Markham Women's Ringette website was also entered into the contact list for future marketing strategies. Right now, the potential player contact list has 20 names on it. Six of these are past players who did not play this year; the rest are contacts who have requested information about our league from our website.

Placing players onto teams also falls under the role of the Secretary. This year we had enough players to fill two teams. Each player was designated as either belonging to the dark or white team based on their position and their skill level. There was some disparity in teams during the first part of the year but that seemed to disappear as a few new players registered after the Christmas break. Overall, player placement was successful and teams were relatively even. Discussions are already underway regarding player placement and team dynamics for next year. Obviously, many of our decisions are affected by our player numbers.

MARKETING AND FUNDRAISING MANAGER'S REPORT

MARKETING

We had a great year in the Marketing and Fundraising department! The biggest asset we use to distribute information to current, past and potential league members is our website: www.markhamwomensringette.org. With the amount of information on the site, including a calendar, game reports, executive minutes and photos, it's no surprise we had a lot of site traffic. Between September 1st 2008 and March 31st 2009 we had 936 visits to the site, which is about five visits per day. About 30% of our site traffic came from people finding us with a search engine and 17% clicked on a link on another webpage's link to get to ours. We hope that you've been using the site a lot this year and plan to use it more through the summer and next season.

We were very successful this year with our awareness and recruitment campaign. We posted ads on Craigslist, Facebook, Get Out There Magazine, Kijiji, and SNAP Newspapers. We were able to put a weekly calendar item in the Get Out There Magazine which was also searchable on their website, www.getouttheremag.com. We posted calendar items in 15 different SNAP magazines and also invited Markham SNAP to our registration night resulting in a small article on the league in their October paper.

Through all of this exposure we received 17 emails asking for more information on the league. This is a 400% increase over the three emails received last year. Of the 17 people six came out to play our first night and five continued with us for the season. That is a conversion rate of 29%. A 2% return is considered successful for a direct marketing campaign and we shattered that number! Further, we increased league membership by 33% overall. We are hoping to continue this success in the 2009 – 2010 season by contacting the ten people that expressed interest previously but were unable to join us and by continuing the various web initiatives used last season. We are also going to be asking our members to help us. We have created MWRA cards that are the same size as a business card for our members to keep on hand and give to anyone that they think might be interested in joining us.

A few members have suggested to the executive that something we should consider is print advertising. While it's a great idea, it is a very expensive venture. A very small spot in a local paper is about \$150, which doesn't include the creative cost of developing the advertisement. With such a small sized ad we are unlikely to stand out on the page, and a larger size would be far too expensive for our limited resources. For the short term we are going to continue to work on finding free publicity and increasing our web presence to compensate for lack of print ads.

FUNDRAISING

The fundraising project we did this year was very successful as we managed to raise \$805. The hockey pool was a lot of fun and easy for everyone to sell entries. We plan to run a similar venture next season with a few tweaks to make it easier to understand for those that don't follow the NHL. Entry forms will be ready at the fall registration night.

NEXT SEASON

Moving into the 2009 – 2010 season we have a few new event ideas in the works as well as some returning favourites. Be sure to mark these dates on your calendar:

- Family barbeque – July 19th
- Fall registration – September 25th
- Games start – October 16th
- Curling Funspiel – November 14th
- Holiday Social – December 18th

The last project to tell you about that we're undertaking for next season is MWRA clothes. We plan to offer sweatpants, long-sleeved t-shirts and hoodies. More information on this will also be posted on the website when it becomes available.

I hope you've all enjoyed the different aspects of marketing and fundraising for our league this past year, I look forward to a bigger and better 2009 – 2010!

TRILLIUM GRANT

BACKGROUND

The Ontario Trillium Foundation was established in 1982 as an arm's length agency of the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. Annually they allocate \$120 million in grants from the Ontario Government. 80% of the available funding goes to community initiatives. The eligible sectors are: Sports and Recreation, Arts and Culture, Environment, and Human and Social Services. Within these sectors, Trillium funds: operating grants, project grants and equipment/renovation grants.

Available funding:

- Single or multi-year grants of up to \$75,000 for up to 5 years.
- 1 year grants of up to \$150,000 for renovations, repairs and equipment purchases.

Successful applicants will be required to sign a formal letter of agreement with the foundation. Unsuccessful applicants can reapply.

MWRA ASSIGNMENTS

Andrea and Sharilyn are the project leads. Andrea will manage content and the relationship with John Pugsley, Regional Program Manager, at the Ontario Trillium Foundation. Sharilyn will be responsible for ensuring all the financial documentation is available and accurate. Another key player in this grant proposal will be the Equipment Manager, as they will need to provide cost estimates for all required equipment. All executive members will be involved in drafting segments of the proposal and reviewing for accuracy.

ONTARIO RINGETTE ASSOCIATION'S ROLE

MWRA must involve them as we are a member of ORA. ORA must review and approve our proposal prior to submission. We will also be using their letter of incorporation in our application. ORA may also need to provide references for us.

OUR ROLE IN THE COMMUNITY

One of the key messages in our proposal will be the importance of women in sport. Women getting out and being active is tremendously important for both their mental and physical well-being. Through sport and exercise women in theory should be healthier and have better mobility. This is very important given our aging society. It should also help keep healthcare costs down. Being part of an association exposes women to a social network which is also important to their overall well-being. We want to motivate women to get out, be active and have fun doing it.

OUR NEEDS

In order to increase our chances of success we must be very specific with our plans for any granted funds.

MWRA has identified the following areas as key needs:

- **Two sets of standard equipment** – this is known to be a big hurdle for women coming out and trying the game/league. They aren't sure they want to commit to the cost of equipment up front without know what they are getting. Often women have been out of the sport for a while and feel nervous about returning, the main concerns are 1) skill level, and 2) personality fit. Through trial we can often address these concerns.
- **Two sets of goalie equipment** – our goalie equipment is vey old and too small for adult goalies. We want to ensure our goalies have proper protection on the ice.
- **League jerseys** – it is important that we re-establish the feeling of a proper league. Our members want to feel like they are part of something. Bringing in team jerseys will connect people and provide a sense of belonging.

TIMING

There are three application deadlines each year: March 1, July 1 and November 1. It is a 120 day decision period – all decisions are final.

Task	Date	Responsibility
Initial draft/ doc skeleton	March	Andrea
Exec Meeting re proposal next steps	Apr 10 – TBD	All
Segments due	Apr 17	All
Andrea to compile segments into complete document	Apr 24	Andrea
Exec Quick Review	Apr 25-26	All
Revisions	Apr 27-28	Andrea
Draft Due to ORA	April 29	Jackie
ORA Board Meeting	May 1-3	ORA
Executive to continue with draft	w/o May 4 and w/o May 11	All
Exec Meeting – doc feedback	May 15 - TBD	All
Contact OTF	w/o May 18	TBD
Revisions	w/o May 25	All
Collection of support docs	w/o May 25	All
Exec review	w/o June 1	All
Feedback	w/o June 8	All
Exec Meeting	June 12	All
Revisions	w/o June 15	All
Final Review	w/o June 22	All
Final Revisions	June 29 – 30	All
Submission deadline	July 1	

COUGARS REPORT

The 2008-2009 Markham Cougars participated in four tournaments, achieving two gold and two silver finishes. The season began in Waterloo on January 19th. Despite a slow start to the tournament we played well and reached the finals. However, a close but well fought 5-4 loss resulted in a second place finish.

Our next challenge was the Ajax tournament on Valentine's Day weekend. This was a significant tournament for the team as we were playing in the Open B division for the first time. After completing round robin play with two wins and one loss, we secured a spot in the finals. We may have fallen short on the scoreboard, but played an outstanding game which brought our coach, Wendy Nye, to tears of joy during her post game speech! This tournament was also unique because we were able to use a male goalie for the first time.

The following weekend we went to Newmarket on a high and won the event with great skating, passing, and overall teamwork.

On the second weekend of March, we attended the Hamilton tournament with an injury shortened bench and managed achieve another gold medal finish.

We are concluding our season Easter weekend in the Adult Challenge in Hamilton, and are looking forward to defending our 2007-2008 title.

PYLONS REPORT

The 2008-2009 Markham Pylons entered two tournaments this season. Tournaments with the Rec division have been fairly limited in the past couple of years. We were very happy to have two tournaments available to us.

For the first tournament, the Pylons travelled to Ottawa on March 27th for the annual Silverspoon. In the past, the Pylons have played in the Rec division. However, we were asked to play up a division this year, this meant we were placed in the lower of the two Open C divisions. The Pylons worked hard throughout the tournament right to the final buzzer, but unfortunately lost their three games. What was notable about this season was that for many of the Pylons, this was their first experience playing with a shot clock. There were several times, that we prevented the other team from shooting within their 30 seconds, resulting in a turnover.

The Pylons are looking forward to their second tournament, next weekend, in Hamilton. We will be playing in the Rec division.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING MINUTES – 2008

Held: May 23, 2008, 7pm - 10pm

Location: Shoeless Joes – Markham

ATTENDEES

Mary Blair, Beth Crichton, Jackie Deschenes, Sandra Fahey, Andrea James, Sheri Krauss, Joanna Kubasta, Michele Lawson-Peacock, Anne Mamye, Joanne Moore, Wendy Nye and Linda Shully

Meeting began with President's (MLP) opening comments, highlighting the past season and itemizing key topics to be covered. As 50% of the league attended, we had solid representation for capturing the majority point of view.

EXECUTIVE FOR 2008-2009 SEASON

President Elect: Sheri Krauss

Past President: Michele Lawson-Peacock

Vice-President: Andrea James

Secretary: Anne Mamye

Treasurer: Sharilyn Dyck

Registrar: Linda Shully

There was much discussion around the role of President. MLP communicated that at some point she plans to move north. With this in mind, the 2008-2009 season will represent a time of transition. Sheri will be the new President, Michele will be present in sharing past learnings to help the league move forward efficiently.

LEAGUE FINANCIALS

Discussion surrounded the financial report MLP distributed to the league via email on May 23. The spreadsheet highlighted various scenarios, based on cost/player and ice allotment. The spreadsheet brought clarity to a couple of key issues:

Funds are problematic - significant adjustments must be made in order to avoid a short-fall for the upcoming season.

Need to attract new players - to keep the league going and manage costs. Numbers of players decline year over year - we aren't replenishing at a fast enough rate.

There was a great desire to maintain the 2 hours. Given the drive for some, 2 hours makes it more worthwhile. Also, we don't want to give up the extra hour in case we can't get it back.

Ice needs to be based on 1 or 2 hour time slots. Due to books and the fact there isn't cost savings by going with 1.5 hours.

DECISIONS SURROUNDING FINANCIALS

Based on the pricing and ice options presented the league voted to raise fees to \$430/player for the 2008-2009 season. Couple of notes:

In reviewing other league pricing - this adjustment merely brings costs in line and was deemed to be fair.

This assumes based on current numbers that league members get 2 hours of ice every Friday.

With this increase - this eliminates fundraising. That being said, we might revisit this if it is deemed to be beneficial to the league and we can find something that appeals to a majority.

If recruitment initiatives are successful - this could bring down the cost person. However, this may also affect how/when members get 2 hours - a more formal schedule will need to be employed.

Recruitment Incentive - for new players for their first year only, a special offer of \$250 for the season will be extended. However, they will only get 1 hour of ice - they have the option to pay the full \$430 for 2 hours. The thinking is - this price is attractive to come out and try, and hopefully build a long-term relationship. Going forward they follow the regular fee schedule.

RECRUITMENT

We all benefit by adding players to our team, so it is important that we all try to find new members and make them feel welcome both in the changeroom and on the ice.

Wendy/Sandra - to follow up and see if any players on the Pickering "waiting list" would be interested in playing in Markham.

Website - needs to be updated and re-posted by July. We did see a few inquiries last year via the channel, but we need to actively manage responses.

Flyers - old layout and updated dates to be shared with Dana for creative updates and printing. Distribution to begin in August. Michele and Sheri will cover off some key locations. Others will also get flyers to distribute.

Community Newspapers - Linda to follow-up with local papers to confirm pricing, someone thought there maybe the potential for free listings in some locations.

LEVEL OF COMPETITION

The priority is that everyone come out and enjoy themselves to keep the league going. Everyone also recognizes that at times the level of competition can be frustrating - too competitive for some, and not enough for others. Given numbers and the desire for 2 hours of ice time - this means skill levels must be blended the majority of the time. That being said, the league is considering options to rotate level appropriate games into the schedule - about 1 time/month.

Sheri to contact Kevin Sweeney to find out details of B loop rotation - to see if Cougar level players could incorporate this into Friday night rotation.

Pylons to considering inviting teams like Newmarket out on their nights.

If we do incorporate these changes - detailed/well established schedules will need to be developed so things are clear to all members.

OTHER

Men can continue to come out and play goal. However, the league will continue with women only in all other positions.

Friday night goalies play for free - they are doing us a favour.

Still cannot afford weekly referees given financial situation. If we do incorporate exhibition games - teams will need to fund a minimum of 1 referee.

Timekeepers were happy with the situation this past season - recommendation is to continue with collected donations every Friday.

Please let us know of any errors or omissions so everyone has the most up-to-date and correct information.