

AMERICAN HEARING IMPAIRED HOCKEY ASSOCIATION ~ AHIHA



Irv Tiahnybik had a dream for his son Lex, who is hearing impaired. He envisioned a hockey school where hearing impaired youngsters could learn about hockey without being hassled by hearing people who couldn't deal with the needs of deaf and hard of hearing athletes.

So, in 1973, Irv, a Chicago businessman, went to his good friend, Stan Mikita. He asked Mikita, then playing for the National Hockey League's Chicago Blackhawks, for help launching the school. The rest, as they say, is history.

These determined and dedicated men formed their own team and began to organize the effort in earnest. They found others...volunteers like themselves...who were willing to give their time and talent to organize a first-ever hearing impaired hockey clinic. They followed a gut feeling that what they were doing was right – and sorely needed.

Stan and Irv quickly discovered that they were right on target. The first Stan Mikita Hockey School for the Hearing Impaired was a tremendous success. Thirty-one deaf and hard of hearing boys from several states ventured to Chicago for a week's worth of instruction and fun.

Over the years, the hockey school has continued to attract new players with many of the early team members returning to the ice as well. The first benefit game between Mikita's All Stars and the AHIHA Varsity Squad was held in 1975, the second year of the school, and has become a crowd pleaser every year since. In fact, Bobby Hull and Stan Mikita skated together again at the 1983 benefit game.

The U.S. Deaflympic™ Hockey Team, comprised mainly of members of the Hockey School's Varsity squad, has won two gold, two silver and a bronze medal at the last five Winter Deaflympic games. A number of AHIHA "graduates" have gone on to successful playing careers at high schools, colleges and have played in tier one and tier two junior hockey leagues.

AHIHA is now a self-perpetuating organization with many of the original hockey school students assuming AHIHA administrative and coaching positions. As a result, they are guiding and teaching the school's second generation of students.

AHIHA is totally supported by donations and no fees are assessed to participating hockey players for our summer camp and other programs. Participants are responsible for accommodations, meals and transportation to and from the camp.

"Make sure we take care of the AHIHA family. I hope it will continue for many, many years to come because it means so much to so many." ... Uncle Irv