



🏒 St. Albans Skating Association 🏒

Newsletter #7

A Year of Growth, Community, and Championship Hockey

Letter from the President

This season has been nothing short of extraordinary.

Looking back, one thing is clear—this program is powered by people who care. From our players and coaches to our families, volunteers, and community partners, SASA continues to grow because of the time, energy, and commitment poured into it every single day.

Our focus this year was simple: strengthen development, improve communication, and elevate the overall experience. What followed was meaningful progress across every area of the program.

Over the course of the season, we:

- Expanded development opportunities both on and off the ice
- Improved communication and accessibility for families
- Enhanced the overall player experience
- Continued to build a stronger organizational foundation
-

Through it all, we remained grounded in what matters most—a community built around the game and the people in it.

This was a year of regrouping and rebuilding—and it's safe to say we did that, and then some.

We are incredibly proud of what was accomplished together, and even more excited about where we are headed next.

Thank you for being part of it. Thank you for showing up, stepping in, and continuing to build something special here at SASA.

With gratitude,

Kevin Smith

President, St. Albans Skating Association

A Championship Season: Depth, Development, and Results

This was a defining year for SASA hockey.

Across every level, teams competed with confidence, discipline, and a clear commitment to improvement—leading to one of the most successful seasons in program history.

Highlights from the season:

- 🏆 **4 Vermont State Championships**
- 🏆 **8+ Tournament Championships**
- 🏒 **Success across 10U through 18U levels**
- ♀ **Strong performance in both girls and coed programs**

This wasn't isolated success—it was program-wide.

🏆 **Team Accomplishments: 2025–2026 Season**

The results speak for themselves.

🏆 **Vermont State Champions**

- 10U T2 – State Champions
- 12U T2 – State Champions
- 14U T2 – State Champions
- 18U T4 – State Champions

🌐 **Tournament Champions**

- 12U T2 – New England Sports Center Challenge Cup Champions
- 12U T3 – New England Sports Center Challenge Cup Champions
- 14U T2 – Nickel City Hockey Comets Cup Champions
- 10U T4 – CSB Winter Classic Champions

🏆 **Additional Tournament Success**

- 14U Teams – Battle of Saratoga Division Champions
 - 14U Girls – Rail City Challenge Champions
-

The Road to Nationals: 14U T2

After winning the Vermont State Title, our 14U T2 team advanced to the USA Hockey Tier II National Championships in Dallas, Texas.

They battled their way to the semifinals in a tightly contested 2–1 game.

★ **Final Four in the Nation**

An incredible accomplishment—and one that reflects the work, preparation, and support behind this group.

Girls Hockey: Growing the Game

Girls hockey continues to expand across nearly every level at SASA. The program is also navigating the balance between girls-only and co-ed participation as players pursue higher levels of competition.

Priorities moving forward include:

- Expanding opportunities
- Strengthening roster consistency
- Supporting long-term development

A major milestone for that future is the recent announcement of a **16–19U girls split-season team**, launching in the 2026–2027 season—providing critical continuity as players transition into high school. We are thrilled to announce that Toby Alexander, Shane Lamos, Chelsea Forsyth and Dani Roberts have signed up to coach!

We will also continue to grow the game at the grassroots level through events, outreach, and mentorship from our older players—creating a strong, supportive pipeline for the next generation.

The future of girls hockey at SASA is strong—and it's something we are building together.

Young Blades: Where It All Begins

The Young Blades program introduces players to the game—often marking their very first experience on the ice.

Nearly 130 skaters participated this season, building confidence, friendships, and foundational skills in a fun, structured environment led by **Melissa Bocash Viens, Jason Leahy and Rachel Berthiaume** and dedicated volunteers.

There were lots of laughs, smiles, a few tears, countless potty breaks, one visit from Santa and a ton of fun!

Mite Program: Building Skills and Love for the Game

The Mite (8U) program continued to be one of the most active parts of SASA.

Players participated in jamborees, tournaments, and cross-ice play while developing core skills, teamwork, and game awareness.


The energy at this level is unmatched—full of enthusiasm, growth, and a genuine love for the game. Thank you to Mite Directors **Chris Heald** and **Kevin Leahy** for your dedication to the growth and development of this program!

More Than Wins

SASA continues to make an impact far beyond the rink.

Our partnership with the Leaf's Special Hockey Program created meaningful shared experiences rooted in inclusion, kindness, and connection. A huge shoutout to our SASA players who stepped on the ice with the Leaf's weekly to support them in their development. Another shoutout to the teams that played side by side with the Leaf's in some epic scrimmages.

These moments remind us that hockey is about more than competition, it's about people.

 Hockey is for everyone.

A Program Powered by Community

This season was supported by a strong network of sponsors and fundraising efforts.

Fundraising Initiatives

- Gold Athletics
- M&R Raffle
- SASA Calcutta
- Road to Nationals Fund Raising-Go Fund Me, Bottle Drive, Back Country Sports Raffle

Sponsors

Aldrich & Elliott • Baker Distributing • Ben & Jerry's • Bootlegger Bikes • CCR • Dickinson & Branon • East Rise • Handy's • Maplefields • Maquam Barn & Winery • Luc Gates Foundation • Mathieu Enterprises • New England Chimney Supply • Northwestern Medical Center • O'Grady's • Peoples Trust • Shaw's • Siligent • Stewart's Shops

Building a Better SASA

This season, several key improvements were introduced to enhance the overall experience for players and families, while continuing to strengthen the foundation of the program.

Key improvements included:

- A new website
- Newsletter rollout
- Crossbar integration
- New Sound System sponsored by Mathieu Enterprises
- New Scoreboard sponsored by Handy's
- New Jerseys, Shells and Socks sponsored by Peoples Trust Company
- Revamp of equipment in Snack Bar as well as new doors for aesthetics and security
- Redesign of Skate Shack

Just to name a few!

Early Morning Skills: Commitment to Development

One impactful addition this season was the introduction of early morning skill sessions—bringing players together at 6:00 AM for focused, high-quality development.

Led by **Toby Alexander**, **Scooter Desmond**, and **Adam Routhier**, these sessions quickly became a cornerstone of our development approach.

Despite the early start, participation remained consistently strong, reflecting the commitment of both players and families to improving their game.

Each session emphasized:

- High-tempo, efficient practice design
- Small-area games and skill-focused repetitions
- Age-appropriate development aligned with the American Development Model (ADM)
- Structured planning using Innovative Hockey Systems (IHS) methodologies

The result was purposeful, engaging practices that maximized ice time and kept players active, challenged, and improving.

Coaches: The Foundation of Our Program

Our coaches are all volunteers and play a critical role in development and culture.

Led by head coach **Tommy Waltz**, the program continues to build consistency across teams.

Tommy will be stepping away from the Board of directors to focus on strengthening coaching structure and support systems moving forward. He is an invaluable member of our organization and his commitment to our kids and program is greatly appreciated.

Thank you Tommy for your time on the board and we are so thankful to have you as Head Coach!

Friday Night Hockey: A New SASA Tradition

Friday Night Hockey brought a completely new energy to the rink—turning a standard game night into something players, families, and the entire community looked forward to.

Led by **Adam Routhier** and supported by an incredible group of volunteers and contributors, these nights transformed the atmosphere at Collins Perley.

Lights dropped. Music filled the rink. Players were introduced through a backlit, smoke-filled entrance—creating a true game-night experience.

Friday Night Hockey featured:

- Lights-out introductions with music and smoke
- Lighted puck warmups
- Live Stream on You Tube
- Live announcements from **Ben Marlow**
- National Anthem performances by **Norah Gates**
- Packed stands and high-energy atmosphere
- Player of the Game recognitions

Each team experienced the excitement and energy of a big-stage environment.

Capturing the Moments

A heartfelt thank you to **Gavin Putzier, Katie LeClerc, Stina Booth, Seth Banyea, and Jason Guerino** for capturing the incredible moments that defined this season.

From Friday Night Lights to championship celebrations, your work has allowed us to relive the energy, emotion, and pride of SASA hockey again and again.

We are so fortunate to have you behind the lens—freezing these unforgettable moments in time for our players, families, and community.

Vermont State Championships: Hosting the Biggest Stage

This season, SASA had the honor of hosting the Vermont State Championship Tournament at the Collins Perley Sports Complex—welcoming teams, families, and fans from across the state for one of the most important weekends in Vermont hockey.

Hosting an event of this scale requires extensive planning, coordination, and execution—and our community delivered at every level.

From scheduling and logistics to game operations and hospitality, every detail was thoughtfully managed to create a seamless and high-quality experience.

Throughout the tournament weekend, SASA:

- Hosted teams from across Vermont competing for state titles
- Delivered a fast-paced, well-organized schedule across multiple divisions
- Created a welcoming, high-energy environment for players and families
- Elevated the overall tournament experience through presentation and atmosphere

The energy inside the rink was undeniable and it was truly an incredible event for our community at large.

SASA Hosted Tournaments: Building the Experience

SASA hosted multiple tournaments this season in addition to the State Tournament, welcoming teams from across Vermont and beyond.

Hosted Events

- Rail City Challenge
- Maple City Faceoff
- Andrew Irving Mite Jamboree
- Robert Ashton Memorial Tournament
- Connor Roberts Memorial Tournament
- Vermont State Playdown and Championship Games

These events showcased competition, community, and tradition—while honoring important members of our hockey family.

Looking Ahead: Expanding Development Opportunities

As we look toward next season, SASA is committed to continuing to evolve and strengthen our development model—both on and off the ice.

A key focus will be the expansion of **off-ice training and development opportunities** to better support our players at every level.

Planned additions include:

- **Consistent dryland training sessions** focused on both physical development and fun, engaging movement
- **Chalk talk sessions** to build hockey IQ and understanding of systems and game play
- **Video review and analysis** to reinforce learning and help players see the game from a new perspective

Developing the Complete Player

These additions are designed to:

- Enhance overall athletic development
- Improve game awareness and decision-making
- Create more structured and consistent development opportunities across all teams

Strengthening Our Foundation

The organizational structure and supports of SASA have taken a significant step forward this year. With nearly a complete transition of our board, we have embraced new perspectives, renewed energy, and a shared commitment to strengthening the future of our program.

With this change has come a clear focus on:

- **Communication**
- **Transparency**
- **Collaboration**

We are committed to ensuring that our membership feels informed, included, and connected. From more consistent updates to open dialogue and shared decision-making, our goal is to build trust and alignment across all levels of the organization.

In addition, SASA completed updates to our bylaws this year—further strengthening our organizational framework.

These updates help to:

- Clarify roles and responsibilities
- Support effective governance and decision-making
- Ensure alignment with best practices as we continue to grow

★ **One Program. One Standard.**

As part of this evolution, the Board has taken a thoughtful and intentional step to better align our program structure with our values.

After careful consideration, the Board has voted to level set fees and access across tiers, ensuring a more consistent and equitable experience for all players and families.

This alignment will also support more consistent schedules, routines, and development opportunities, in line with USA Hockey recommendations for practice structure and ice time across age levels.

We believe these steps position SASA for long-term success—creating greater alignment, consistency, and opportunity across the program.

We understand that change can bring questions, and we are committed to open communication as we move forward together.

📄 **Clear Expectations, Stronger Program**

SASA has been actively developing and refining clear protocols and policies to support a consistent and positive experience across the organization.

These efforts include focused work around:

- Discipline
- Attendance
- Social media use and misuse
- Player and parent codes of conduct
- And other key areas that impact the day-to-day experience of our program

💚 **Why It Matters**

Establishing clear expectations and policies that help ensure:

- Consistency across teams and levels
 - Accountability for players, families, and coaches
 - A respectful and positive environment for all participants
-

★ **One Program. One Standard.**

The Board has taken a thoughtful and intentional step to better align our program structure with our values.

After careful consideration, the Board has voted to level set fees and access across tiers, ensuring a more consistent and equitable experience for all players and families.

This alignment will also support more consistent schedules, routines, and development opportunities, in line with USA Hockey recommendations for practice structure and ice time across age levels.

We believe these steps position SASA for long-term success—creating greater alignment, consistency, and opportunity across the program.

We understand that change can bring questions, and we are committed to open communication as we move forward together.

Volunteer Commitment Reduction & Appreciation

After thoughtful analysis of the hours worked across the season and the operational needs of our program, we are proud to share that **the required volunteer commitment has been reduced to 15 hours per family** for the upcoming season.

Recognizing Our Coaches

In recognition of the significant time and commitment our coaches dedicate throughout the season:

- **Head Coaches and the first two Assistant Coaches will have their volunteer hour requirements FULLY waived**

This is a small but meaningful way to say thank you to those who give so much of themselves to our players and our program.

Stick Tap for Dan Ellis

After 30 years on the St. Albans Skating Association Board, Dan Ellis will be stepping away.

Dan has given years to this program. He is synonymous with St. Albans hockey—a constant presence who truly personifies the game.

Over the years, he has coached countless teams and made an impact on every one of his players. Behind the scenes, he has helped develop the program into what it is today.

Thank you, Dan, for your commitment to SASA and the contributions you have made to our hockey community. We wish you all the best in your future endeavors.

You will still see Dan around the rink and on the ice officiating—so when you do, be sure to thank him for everything he has helped build here at SASA.   

Closing

The 2025–2026 season marked a significant step forward for SASA.

Through continued development, strong leadership, and a committed community, the organization has positioned itself for sustained growth and success.

We remain focused on building a structured, consistent, and high-quality experience for all participants.

Thank you for your continued support and commitment to SASA.