

MCYH celebrating 50th season

Proclamation dubs Saturday MCYH 50th Anniversary Day

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Saturday is Mason City Youth Hockey 50th Anniversary Day. MCYH will host an event to celebrate the occasion at Mason City Arena at 11 a.m.

On Monday, Chairman of the Cerro Gordo County Board of Supervisors Casey Callanan signed a proclamation that officially dedicated March 25, 2023, to Mason City's youth hockey program.

MCYH has been serving the community since 1972. Mason City Administrator Aaron Burnett said the organization's impact on the county and surrounding areas stretches beyond pucks and taped sticks.

"As far as the broad impact over their 50 years and what it means ... You know, you have opportunities for kids to do all sorts of ice sports, whether that's hockey or figure skating and so many other chances for them to just enjoy ice sports," Burnett said. "Frankly, in the state of Iowa, there's only so many places you can do that. So, a community of our size, you know, a micropolitan community, being able to offer that experience in such a nice facility, I think that's really unique."

MCYH serves a number of towns outside of Mason City. The Mason City Mohawks' varsity roster featured athletes from Mason City, Clear Lake, Manly and Spirit Lake last season.

The Mohawks are one of nine Iowa clubs in the Midwest High School Hockey League. Mason City is the smallest market that has a MHSIHL team.

Burnett said MCYH and Mason City Arena can help attract people to Mason City. A new ice rink and successful youth hockey program are amenities Cerro Gordo County can tout.

"I think that's really unique and a recruitment tool for people to come live and visit North Iowa," Burnett said. "That's a big impact. Also, just the fact that the city would not have ever gone down the road of constructing something like the multipurpose arena had it not had great partners like youth hockey to work with."

Mason City Arena was completed during the Mohawks' 2019-20 season. The facility can seat over 2000 people for hockey games and about 4000 at concerts.

Mason City Arena served as a big upgrade for MCYH, which used to play its games at the North Iowa Events Center — a multipurpose agricultural and ice sports venue affectionately

Hockey

From B1

known as The Barn.

MCYH played at The Barn for 37 years. During its inaugural season in 1972, MCYH's contests were held on outdoor sheets of ice. MCYH played games outside for its first 11 years.

The Mason City Exchange Club provided physical and financial support to assist MCYH's launch 50 years ago. The program went on to double youth enrollment in hockey over a 40-year period without any public aid.

"I think the opportunity to go watch hockey games, whether it's the (North Iowa Bulls or Mason City Toros) or our local youth hockey teams, I think that's great on the entertainment side," Burnett said. "It brings people together. It gives them an entertainment option when it's cold outside."

Mason City Arena is attached to the Southbridge Mall. The venue is a remodeled JCPenney and a reflection of the progress MCYH has made. After 50 seasons of existence, MCYH went from playing games outside to competing in a state-of-the-art facility.

"As somebody who was on the leading edge of that," Burnett said, "I will say, the first time I walked into that JCPenney and looked through the front doors, I was kinda like, 'I don't think an arena fits in there.'"

"I think it's been a concept that was probably a little tough for people to wrap their head around at the beginning. We've had so many different places that have malls that are struggling actually come and visit Mason City to see how we executed that project because they seek to emulate it in their own spaces."

MCYH's 51st season will kick off in October when its varsity and junior varsity teams begin their 2023-24 campaigns.