

Goulbourn Rockets

Submitted by the Goulbourn Girls Hockey Association
 Photos courtesy of Leon Switzer,
 Front Page Media Group

In 2011, Stittsville resident Cathy Bureau realized her goal of establishing a local girl's hockey team. As a mother to three daughters, she had experienced the challenges of having to travel to other districts in order for her girls to play organized hockey. With the growth of Stittsville and surrounding areas, the need for a league catered to girl's learning to play hockey was also growing. It didn't take long for Cathy to find like-minded people to help her start building what would become the Goulbourn Girls Hockey Association (GGHA). Ultimately, Cathy's greatest support in starting the league came from an unlikely and unexpected source.

Around that same time, Joan Thorneycroft was a Stittsville resident reflecting on how she wanted to mark her 80th birthday. Joan had grown up playing hockey in Quebec and was keen to help a girl who couldn't otherwise play organized hockey. In her efforts to find one girl to help, she connected with Cathy and found an entire organization of 24 girls in need of support. For two years prior, Joan's family put aside money they would have otherwise spent on Christmas gifts to each other and attempted to find the ideal recipient. She found the perfect match in Cathy and the GGHA.

The first donation of \$5000 helped the upstart organization purchase much-needed, but hard-to-find, ice time for the girls, as well as light blue

jerseys, emblazoned with the Rockets logo. The team name is an reflection of Joan's legacy with the team. Joan's childhood nickname was "Rollie the Rocket." The GGHA continues to grow and thrive in no small part thanks to Joan and the generosity of the entire Thorneycroft family.

The GGHA found fortune again in 2013 when its president, Cathy Bureau, was nominated for prize money as part of the \$1 million Kraft Hockey Goes On contest. Cathy was nominated as a women's hockey pioneer in the Ottawa area. She served as a past president of the Ottawa District Women's Hockey

Association; helped organize the 1990 Women's World Championship in Ottawa; was the first Canadian female hockey player to play in the US on a scholarship; and was the first female level 4 referee in Ottawa. Cathy made it to the group of finalists and was a runner-up winner of \$20,000 for the GGHA.

These two experiences were pivotal in solidifying the GGHA. An organization that started with 24 girls eager to play hockey, became one atom team, one novice team, and an initiation group of girls in 2012. 2013 saw another meaningful increase in girls joining the GGHA. Today, the organization consists of over 100 girls who make up a full initiation program, two novice teams, two atom teams, one peewee team, and one bantam team.

In 2014, the GGHA is even offering a women's learn to play program, geared toward women who want to gain confidence and skills needed to play hockey at a recreational level. It is safe to say that Cathy has achieved her goal of bringing girl's hockey to the community of Stittsville. Given the drive and commitment of its members, and the enthusiasm of the players, the GGHA is off to an impressive start!

For further information, please visit our Website at ggha.ca.

