

Great Blizz hockey program continues to grow

Charity hockey game for The Great Blizz will bring the Boston Bruins alumni team to The Bog in Kingston on Sunday, Nov. 21

David Wolcott Jr.

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KINGSTON – It's been around for three years now, but the start of The Great Blizz special hockey program still feels like it was just yesterday, Plymouth resident and the group's executive director Steve Nearman said.

The Great Blizz is a special hockey program for people of all ages with physical and social disadvantages. They practice early each Saturday morning during the season at The Bog in Kingston. From the small group that first hit the ice in September 2019, they have blossomed to a roster of 30 players who love the game of hockey as well as the coaches and other supporters who make it all work.

Players come to The Bog each week from as far away as Lynn, Gloucester, and Medway, but most live on the South Shore.

"I really do get emotional when I think about how far we have come with this. It started just as an idea, but to see it actually happening is amazing," said Nearman. "This means so much to each of the players as well as all of the incredible coaches and other supporters who have taken this program to heart."

One of Nearman's top goals has been to introduce hockey to this special group of people and give them all an experience that is something like what a player would experience on a youth hockey team. A big step was taken in that direction last month when the group traveled to West Orange, New Jersey, for Frankenfest, their first tournament as a hockey program.

"That tourney was so much fun for a first trip for the team," Nearman said. "The New Jersey Dare Devils special hockey program puts together a great event every year."

The game is on

Coaches, players, and other members and supporters of The Great Blizz organization have a huge circle on the calendar for Sunday, Nov. 21, when they will step on the ice against the Boston Bruins alumni team.

The charity game will be played at The Bog starting at 11:30 a.m., and tickets can be bought beforehand on Eventbrite or at the door on the day of the event. Proceeds from the event will benefit The Great Blizz of Massachusetts Special Hockey as well as the Boston Bruins Foundation.

Between periods of the game, there will be a special exhibition scrimmage with the members of the Great Blizz hockey program. Fans will also have an opportu-



The Great Blizz special hockey program has grown each year since starting in September of 2019. COURTESY PHOTO

nity to get autographs from all of the players.

"We've done this for a couple of years now and formed an awesome relationship with the Bruins," Nearman said. "They love meeting with our players and we love having them around the rink."

Potential skaters for the Boston Bruins alumni team include local favorites Mike Mattau and Dan LaCouture, as well as veteran players and familiar names from the trading cards of your youth like Reggie Lemelin, Bobby Carpenter, Shawn McEachern, Joe Mullen, and Bruce Crowder.

"When I was growing up in the '70s as a hockey fan, my guy was Rick Middleton," Nearman said about the

retired NHL star, whose #16 has been retired by the Bruins. "He is heavily involved with the Bruins alumni team and the chance to play against him still blows my mind a little bit."

Scituate native Dave Silk, a member of the 1980 gold medal USA men's hockey team, will be on hand Sunday to drop the ceremonial first puck.

"Dave has been an incredible friend and supporter of the program. He's brought his gold medal around the rink and let our players wear it," Nearman said.

Find out more about the Great Blizz program at www.thegreatblizz.org or on their Facebook page, The Great Blizzards of Massachusetts Special Hockey Inc.