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SERVING KENDAL, KIRBY, LESKARD, NEWCASTLE, NEWTONVILLE, ORONO AND STARKVILLE SINCE 1937 **YOUR LOCAL NEWSPAPER FOR 83 YEARS**

NEWCASTLE ARENA OFFERS MANY RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

By Bev Caswell

Bryan Wiltshire has been perfecting the role of Facility Manager of the Newcastle Arena for the past fifteen years. He is responsible for the day-to-day operations and maintenance of the facility and the contracts for users.

Gord Lee, former Chair of the Arena Board for twenty years, remembers Wiltshire as a seventeen-year-old "who served as a rink rat," before subsequently hiring him as Facility Manager fifteen years ago. Lee goes on to speak highly of Wiltshire. "He's a very loyal man and conscientious," says Lee. "Bryan has made himself available for any and every emergency. We've had fire alarms and burglar alarms, and he always appears at the door. He is always very reliable."

"We are a self-sufficient arena," says Wiltshire and he is grateful for the support of the municipality. He says, "The municipality helps us out with large projects such as replacing our roof seven years ago. They help us out with the envelope of the building, major mechanical and structural work, they're all there for us for that," he says.

The Newcastle Arena's floor (underneath the ice) is about forty years old, which usually has a lifespan of twenty-five to thirty years. "So, we are living on borrowed time," says Wiltshire. "But we are also a six to eight-month operation, so we're not using the ice year-round, so that kind of helps." The Zamboni is fifteen years old and Wiltshire says, "We are in the process of looking into getting

a new one."

At some point in the future, a new arena will be built at the site of the recreation centre. For now, the arena board waits respectfully in a holding pattern, deferring to the municipality for direction. The arena's last renovation was 2002 when the lobby was opened up.

Wiltshire rhymes off a list of teams that use the arena during the winter season. "We have the Clarington Girls Hockey Association, our own Newcastle Village Minor Hockey Association, and various older men's groups who have been with us for twenty plus years." He highlights the Newcastle Hockey League which he says, "is one of the most competitive around." Tara Watchorn, New-

castle's Olympic gold medalist, played minor hockey here.

Wiltshire is a fan of the Men's Town Leagues on Sunday nights. "Bryan Bickell plays in it," he says enthusiastically, "and there's a bunch of other guys who have played high level hockey who play in it." Wiltshire encourages the public to take advantage of these entertaining Sunday night games. "It's free of charge," he says. "Come down at 6:30pm. There are three games a night." He adds, "They don't play on Superbowl Sunday, but they do play the week after that."

Wiltshire played goalie on juvenile and midget teams in Newcastle but says, "I wrecked my knees doing it." He also used to play on the men's' league, but says (in his charming, self-deprecating style), "I got older, and they got younger and faster." Now he is happy to play pick up hockey with a group of friends who rent the ice at the arena. Bryan's son Jackson, who is thirteen years old doesn't play hockey. According to Bryan, "That's the curse of the arena manager," he says.

The arena is also active during the summer months. "We have the Gift of Art show that Anne Harley puts on," says Wiltshire. "We do the Newcastle District Chamber of Commerce Trade Show, we have the Sea Cadets with their end-of-year review for the last at least ten years. And we have the Newcastle Men's Ball Hockey league."

The arena also offers rental for

lacrosse, ball hockey, or roller skating. "We've had birthday parties where they let the kids play on the pad and burn energy."

Wiltshire bemoans the fact that they can't find volunteers to run a children's ball hockey league. "Young people aren't volunteering the way they used to," he says. The arena board is also looking for two more volunteer members, with meetings once a month every second Tuesday for one to two hours. Wiltshire looks forward to "youthful energy to come in to be a volunteer." As he points out, "I would always look forward to a board member who has kids at the arena, because they are using the facility and they see the day-to-day things that need to be accomplished or fixed, so they can have a say."

The arena also hosts public skating. "We have public skating every Sunday 1:30 pm to 3:00 pm with a cost of \$2 for child \$3 for adult. Then every Tuesday, we have a parent tot free skate from 10:00 am until noon," says Wiltshire. He elaborates, "Sometimes it's moms who go out for a little skate with their child in a stroller." Following that is a 12:00 pm to 2:00 pm skate for adults 55 or older.

The season is over on March 31 and will resume on October 1.

The job has allowed Wiltshire to make a lot of friends, many of whom have children who are playing hockey. "I just love the small-town atmosphere. I couldn't ask for anything more," he says. "I've been in the town



Bryan Wiltshire has been the Newcastle Arena Facility Manager for 15 years. Wiltshire can be found in his office at the arena to answer questions or address your concerns.

for so long, going to the rink for so long, and it's very welcoming."

For anyone interested in volunteering as a board member, the job entails "overseeing the operation of the arena, reviewing the financials of the building and making sure everything is running on par with where it should be, putting up policies and procedures for the staff, and making sure I'm doing my job," says Wiltshire with a grin.

Volunteers meet once a month every second Tuesday for one to two hours. Currently there are seven people on the board, including local Councillors Marg Zwart and Granville Anderson.