



# TEAMSTERS JOINT COUNCIL 25

AFFILIATED WITH THE INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF TEAMSTERS

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## NEWS >>

### CHICAGO TEAMSTER SHARES LIFELONG LOVE OF HOCKEY WITH AT-RISK KIDS

**Local 727 Member Working at Rollex Has Spent 25 Years in the Teamsters**

Teamsters Local 727 member Mark Truty loves his family and he loves his job at Rollex, but his first love was hockey.

“I love this sport. I love the smell of the ice, I even love the smell of the locker room,” said Truty, 48. “When I’m on the ice, I don’t think about any problems. For that hour, I feel free, like I’m on a cloud, like I’m flying. After 40 years of skating, that has never gone away.”

Truty began playing hockey at age 6, and it changed his life. Which is why he now dedicates his free time to bringing that life-changing joy to people of all ages as a coach and as a volunteer for the Hockey on Your Block program.

About five years ago, Truty and a few friends, including Ray Lilja, started volunteering to teach kids to play hockey, and it kept growing from there. In 2012, Lilja and Congressman Mike Quigley officially formed the Hockey On Your Block program, a non-profit organization that provides Chicago-area at-risk youth access to the game of hockey. More than 400 kids, many of whom had never even put on ice skates, have now gone through the program.

“It’s remarkable seeing these kids transform,” Truty said. “We don’t push them to be the best, it’s all about having fun. They don’t even know they’re learning how to skate or play hockey because we make games out of it and then all of a sudden, they realize they’re skating, they’re really doing it.”

Three Chicago facilities — McFetridge Sports Center in Irving Park, Morgan Park Sports Center and Johnny’s Icehouse, where the Chicago Blackhawks practice on the city’s Near West Side — generously donate ice time to Hockey on Your Block, and sponsors and community members donate equipment, money and time to keep it completely free for participants.

The Blackhawks also will be donating ice time at their new Community Training Center, which broke ground this summer two blocks south of the United Center.

Some former participants are playing college hockey and one was just drafted by the Philadelphia Flyers. But Truty said even if they don’t go on to play at higher levels, they’re going to remember the experience.

“It’s not only about the team on the ice, it’s about their team at home and their team at school, and helping them excel socially and academically,” Truty said. “These kids are very impressionable. They’re getting bombarded from all angles, but this program and time on the ice gives them a break and lets them feel free, even if just for an hour.”

Truty, a 25-year Teamster, is a maintenance worker at Rollex. About 100 Local 727 members work at the Rollex facility in Elk Grove Village, where all of the company’s pre-finished soffit, siding and accessories are fabricated and warehoused. Truty said when he retires from Rollex, he wants to coach hockey full-time.



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But for now, he'll continue squeezing in ice time whenever he can – "I always have my equipment in my car, and I skate any chance I get" — coaching kids and adults, and of course, working with Hockey on Your Block.

"The real heroes aren't us volunteers. It's the kids that come back week after week and the parents and aunts and uncles and grandparents who come every week and see what these kids are doing," Truty said. "I don't get paid for any of this, but it's worth it to see the smile on a kid's face. That, to me, is the ultimate reward."

Teamsters Local 727 is an affiliate of Teamsters Joint Council 25, America's premier labor union for Chicago, Illinois and northwest Indiana.