



SUPPLIED

From left, Murray Allan and Don Kuryk of the Manitoba Hockey Hall of Fame and Clearwater Skating Rink's Perry Russell and Mark Sloane.



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Replacing plywood with safety glass above the boards is the priority, rink president Perry Russell says.

The folks in Clearwater, population 65 (give or take), have been tending to their hockey arena as a community for 46 years.

Pretty much everyone in town volunteers. They have to.

And upgrades are the result of fundraisers and sweat.



So when the Clearwater Skating Rink became the first-ever winner of the annual Manitoba Hockey Hall of Fame's \$10,000 Community Award, word spread quickly.

"Yeah," noted arena president Perry Russell, "I told everybody."

Clearwater is a farming community about 200 kilometres southwest of Winnipeg along Highway 3, known for the Harvest Moon Festival (Sept. 16-18), a music and organic farming event that attracts 1,200 to 1,500 fans annually.

Russell said the money will be used for much-needed Plexiglas around the natural-ice arena, a cinder-block structure built by volunteers in 1970.

"Everything is volunteer, right from the lunch counter to cleaning to putting in the ice," Russell said, adding that minor hockey teams in the area are formed by combining kids from a handful of nearby towns. "So that's a lot of money that will go a long way."

MHHF president Don Kuryk said the organization established the award, open to all Manitoba rinks, to assist grassroots programs and projects — anything from registration assistance for players who need it to scoreboards to artificial ice plants.

The MHHF will put up \$5,000 annually and attempt to find a sponsor to supply an additional \$5,000. This year's sponsor was Sigfusson Northern Ltd.

"It's a small part, but we're doing what can we do to help out," Kuryk said.

The inaugural award attracted 22 applications from across the province, all but one from rural communities.

The applications were judged by an independent three-member panel.

Rob Haithwaite, one of the judges, said Clearwater's dedication to keeping its rink operating was one key in the decision.

"What really stood out for us, even though it's a small community, they've done a lot on their own to try and keep it going," he said.

The alternative, Russell said, is simply not an option.

"I don't know what it would be like not to have a rink in town," he said. "It would make for a long winter."

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