



AMERICAN SPECIAL HOCKEY ASSOCIATION
WHERE EVERY PLAYER IS A STAR

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

American Special Hockey Association Receives Gift from UAE Women's National Hockey Team and UAE Embassy to Make Hockey More Accessible to Everyone

- Gift provides equipment to local ASHA teams in DC, NYC, Boston, and beyond -

- UAE Women's National Team to conduct clinics with ASHA teams during tour of US -

February 04, 2019 (Washington, DC) – The American Special Hockey Association (ASHA) today announced that the organization received a generous contribution of new equipment from the United Arab Emirates' Women's National Hockey Team and UAE Embassy in Washington, DC.

The UAE national team is touring US cities for the second consecutive year, and has partnered with ASHA to support the growing community of hockey players with intellectual or developmental disabilities. The equipment will be used to help ASHA launch new teams in Florida, California and Las Vegas, in addition to supporting established teams in Washington, DC, New York, and Boston and the wider ASHA community.

"The UAE's support of the American Special Hockey Association is nothing short of amazing and comes at just the right time," said ASHA Executive Director Jennifer O'Brien. "This incredible gift and support will help us grow the sport and welcome new players and teams across the country."

In addition to its gift of equipment, the UAE national team will conduct on-ice clinics with ASHA in each city they visit. Today, they will host a clinic with Washington, DC area special hockey players at MedStar Capitals Iceplex.

US Women's National Team player and Olympic gold medalist Haley Skarupa will join the UAE women to lend her support and experience to the clinic.

Dana Al Marashi, Head of Heritage and Social Affairs at the UAE Embassy in Washington, stated, "In the UAE, inclusion is a way of life, so it is a natural fit for the UAE Women's National Hockey Team to partner with ASHA. Both groups of players are trailblazers on and off the ice. When you watch them skate together, it is obvious how much hockey means to them, and we are thrilled to help ASHA grow special hockey across the country."

The UAE Embassy in Washington, DC organized the team's visit in collaboration with ASHA. The program is part of its ongoing sports and cultural diplomacy initiatives in the US.

The UAE team's visit also aligns with Hockey is for Everyone (HIFE), the National Hockey League's initiative dedicated to celebrating grassroots hockey and the game's growing diversity. The program offers people of all backgrounds opportunities to play hockey and leverages the sport as a catalyst to teach essential life skills and the core values of hockey: commitment, perseverance, and teamwork.

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ABOUT ASHA

The American Special Hockey Association (ASHA) exists for the enrichment of athletes with a developmental disability. In addition to physical hockey skills, the program emphasizes the development of desirable individual characteristics such as self-advocacy, self-reliance, concentration, working with others, and personal accountability. ASHA uses the game of hockey to develop within each player the characteristics that will help the player to be more successful both inside and outside the arena.

ASHA proudly serves over 80 special hockey teams across the United States and represents over 4,000 registered members. Its member programs provide a variety of play levels for special hockey teams, which welcome individuals with intellectual, developmental and physical disabilities the opportunity to enjoy the sport of ice hockey in a safe and welcoming environment.

ABOUT THE UAE WOMEN'S NATIONAL HOCKEY TEAM

The United Arab Emirates Women's National Hockey Team is a member of the International Ice Hockey Federation and competes globally. The multi-tournament-winning team traveled to Washington, DC, Chicago, and Ottawa in 2018. This year, they have come back to the US to give back to local communities, share their love of the sport with kids, and help make hockey more accessible. The team will visit Washington, DC, New York, and Boston.

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