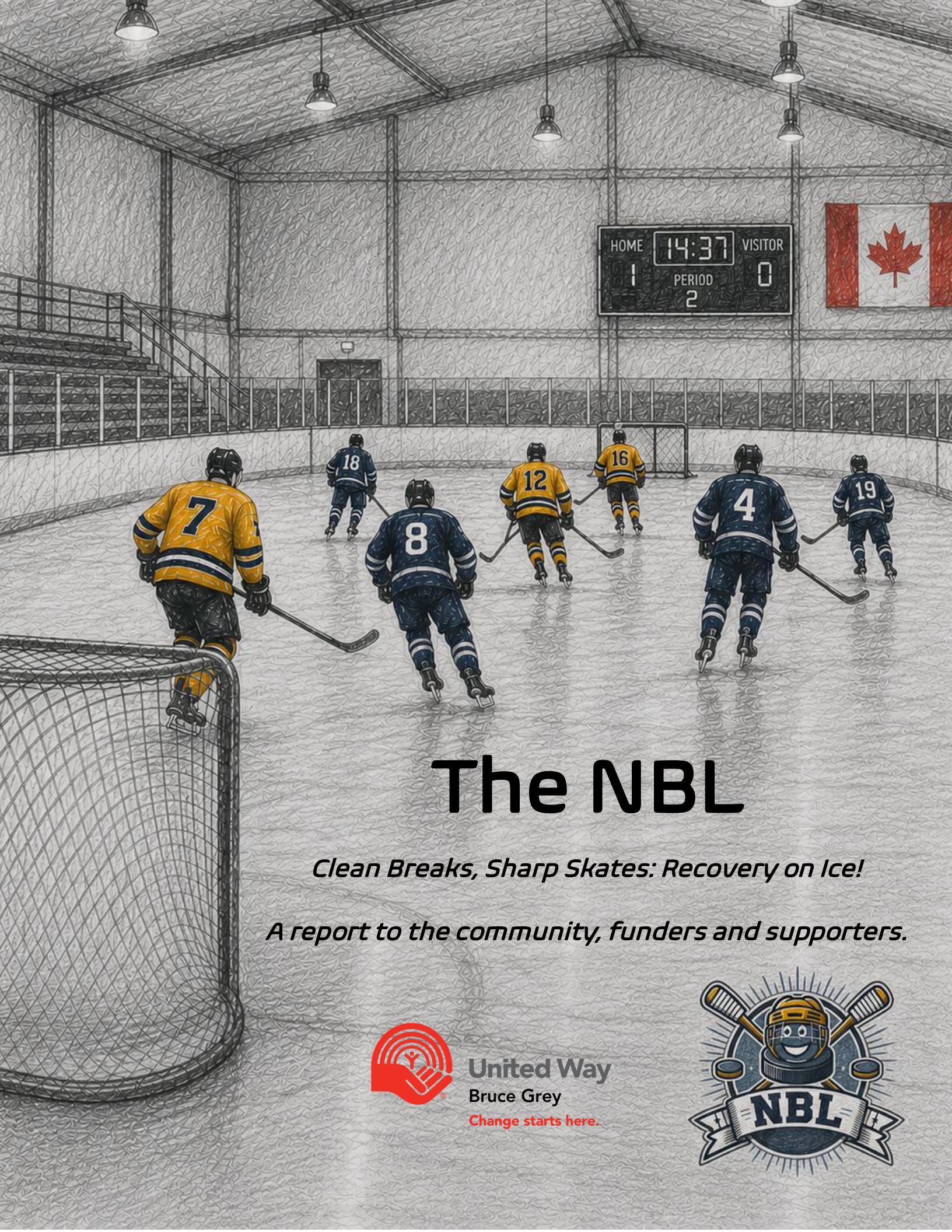




The NBL

Clean Breaks, Sharp Skates: Recovery on Ice!

A report to the community, funders and supporters.



United Way
Bruce Grey
Change starts here.



The NBL – The Non-Beer League

Clean Breaks, Sharp Skates: Recovery on Ice!

The NBL is a league with just 2 teams, who play each other from October to April, except for the final game of the season, when they play each other.

In 2023 the United Way became the primary funder for the program.

Player management is undertaken by Brightshores Health System (Brightshores) and Canadian Mental Health Association Grey Bruce (CMHA). Players pay an annual fee (\$25) to CARHA Hockey which provides insurance coverage for the players and the teams.



Games are played at the Julie McArthur Regional Recreational Centre in Owen Sound, Tuesdays at 3:30 for Puck Pigs and Thursdays at 3:30 for Ice Dogs.

Puck Pigs – founded in 1989, the Puck Pigs have a legacy of hockey for people managing mental health and addiction concerns. (gold shirts)

Ice Dogs – founded in 2024, the second team was requested when Brightshores opened its Wellness and Recovery Centre. Players on the Ice Dogs must be sober and in active recovery. (black shirts)

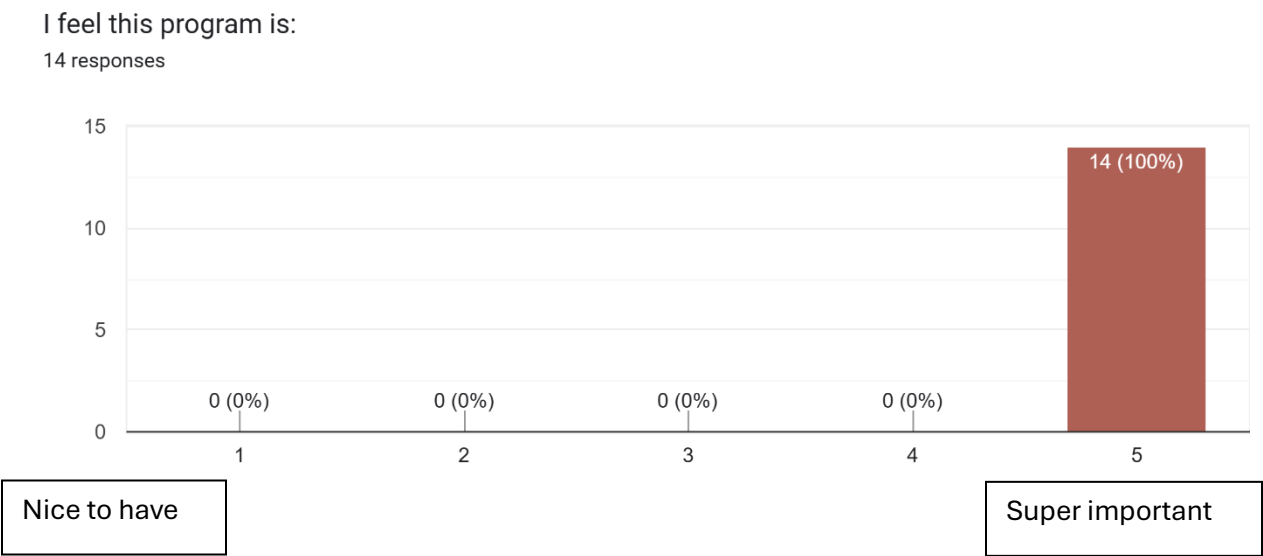
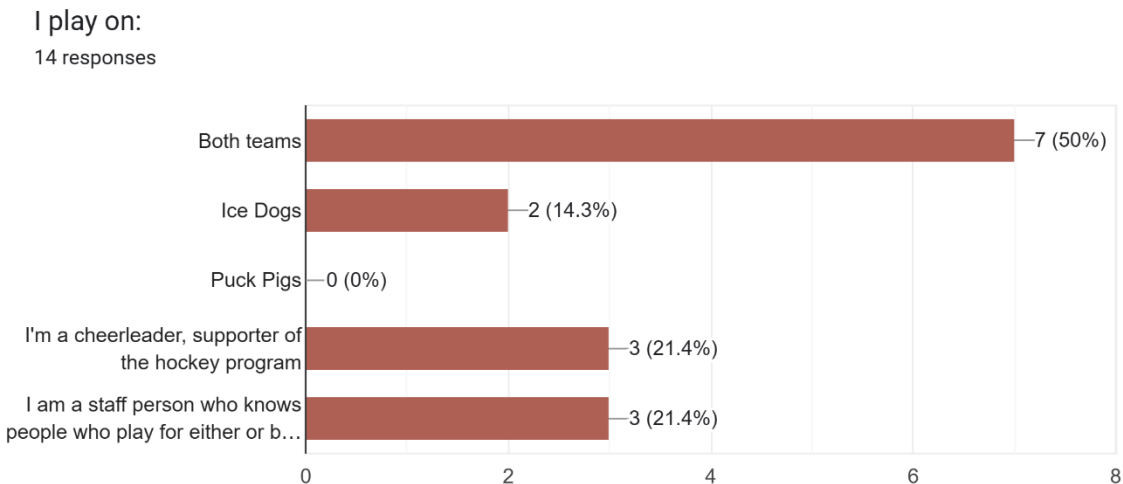
At the end of the 2023-24 season, the United Way of Bruce Grey assumed full responsibility for covering the cost of the ice time, so the players and the staff of Brightshores and CMHA could focus on playing hockey and not worry about the finances or paying for ice time.

The United Way has been successful with grants from the **James Goreski Private Foundation** has covered ice time, some after-game snacks and the end-of-season banquet. **The Community Foundation Grey Bruce** has funded equipment. The Ice Dogs were named when a volunteer was able to buy a set of “home & away” shirts for a full team, with 2 different “Ice Dog” logos.

In 2026 grants have been applied for to fully replace both sets of goalie equipment along with Ice Dog shirts, after the Ice Dogs formalize their logo. Currently the home and away shirts have a different ‘dog’ design on them.

Player and supporter voices

Players and supporters were invited to provide feedback on the program through an anonymous online survey.



What is your favourite part of the program?

This program saved my 20-year-old son from suicidal thoughts after he was discharged from hospital with a diagnosis of Bipolar 1 in early January of this year (2026). The program allowed him to start playing in late February when he was well enough and welcomed him with open arms. The program also gave my son the opportunity to make and be surrounded by new friends focused on recovery right when he needed it most. It provided hope that he can feel good again and a lifeline during the darkest days of winter. With the amazing support of his nurse from the Owen Sound hospital (Mark) who invited him to play and the experienced leadership of Fran, he was surrounded by a safe and caring team that has greatly fostered his recovery thus far. Thank you God for this team and opportunity.

Getting out and playing some hockey and socializing with great folks.

That it exists for people like myself to participate and have the joy of the game and team members to look forward to each week.

It's gets ppl united with others not only in recovery but in the community and it's all the clients talk about is how fun it was and how they feel like a kid again. Even if you can't skate no one is there to judge they are there to help each other

Players being cheerful and friendly

playing the game

The fellowship/community connection

Not getting called for my penalties :D

Getting together with all the staff and clients, also getting some great exercise

Laid back attitude

The love and comradery created amongst the players themselves and the healing power and self-confidence it develops

Special thanks to Brightshores and CMHAGB staff for their support of this program and its participants



What I want people to know about this program:

This program saves lives it really does and it grows bonds between others and they all stick together so many ppl look forward to hockey it's all they talk about

This program allowed me the opportunity to take part in a childhood dream of playing hockey, which I could not afford to do so as a child. It gave me the ability to make new friends and connections surrounding the recovery world that I look forward to being involved in for many years to come.

This program is the best idea to foster recovery that I have ever seen. I am a High school teacher with the Bluewater school board and I feel this well thought out and obviously time proven program is the perfect culmination of a positive environment, positive and safe space and real community to help heal. I don't want to even imagine how this winter would have gone without this opportunity for my son. The team has been so supportive and accepting of him as a new member. Though my son is sad it has ended for the summer, he is looking forward to continuing with baseball and other CMHA opportunities. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for funding and supporting this program. Go Ice Digs & Puck Pigs!!!

It was such a highlight for my core program duration, organized very well, and had no problems with anyone, everyone was really nice and encouraging!

I believe this is an awesome program and it helps people out more than words can express. This program is what people look forward to each week

It's something everyone looks forward to

Dig deep and give from the bottom of your hearts and souls.....you have no idea the invisible and visible healing and love you are spreading

What would you change?

- The community needs to know this amazing team exists. The incredible CMHA programs and opportunities could be better communicated to parents and caregivers before leaving hospital.
- The only thing I would ever consider changing would be to be able to play more than just once per week
- More ice time
- competition
- Try to make it all year long. Once a week all year.
- Try to make it all year long
- Make the second longer
- Nothing!

Final thoughts

There aren't the words to express how grateful our family is for this program. What an excellent celebration at the Harmony Center also to end the season. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

I personally think this program helps in saving people's lives, in many different ways. It allows all of us that participate to build new skills, have a sense of pride, make new friends that help support our recovery Journey and gives all of us a sense of belonging and being part of a team. Thank you to every single person that is involved in making this all happen. Thanks again

I need you to truly understand this program saves lives and keep ppl clean and sober

Keep this going

thanks too all the fundraiser's

This program encourages players and cheers them on regardless of skill level.

Look forward to playing after I graduate core if I'm able to!

I'd recommend this to everyone in recovery, regardless of skill level

Thank You from the bottom of our hearts and souls for being a huge part of our Son's journey to recovery



For questions and comments related to this report, please contact:

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