

## // YOUTH CORNER

# Get kids curling young

By Dave Jensen,

USCA Youth Committee Chairman

As I write this, people across the country are held captive by the drama and tragedy of Hurricane Sandy, whose images of power and destruction are emblazoned in our minds. As the days of the aftermath wear on, small shoots of inspiration begin to appear. Hundreds, then thousands, of people reaching out to help the affected, stories of generosity, and neighbor standing with neighbor to comfort and support. To me, these are the most powerful and inspiring images. With memories of last year's flooding in North Dakota still fresh, I am again reminded of the power in people and the inherent desire to band together for a common good.

That power is also present from within the USCA. Hundreds of volunteers across America donate their time and talents in an effort to improve a sport that they love. Kim Nawyn's article on Page 6 outlines the efforts of a group of coaches and instructors to rewrite the training and instructional manual. When completed, it will be a world-class program complete with presentations, including embedded video for deliveries and fault analysis. At the same time, people are being organized to bring this material to clubs throughout the country.

If you are a little rocks or junior curling coordinator at your club, here's what's in it for you. When we merge this training material with the existing Junior Merit Program, the result will be a comprehensive junior training program complete with weekly lesson plans and activity guides. Because it is being built by curlers with expertise in a variety of areas, you will have confidence that the program will work for you, will be fun, and will result in junior curlers who are ready to succeed at the next level.

## Bantam Curling

Regional Bantam bonspiels are a natural progression to a club's youth curling program. The Bantam program consists of two age levels – 13 and under (U14), and 17 and under (U18). Both age groups are as of December 31 of the current curling season. The U14 group plays as an open format, while the U18 group will have a separate boy's and girl's format.

The goals of the Bantam Program are to:

1. Encourage younger kids to try competitive curling where they would be hesitant to play at the junior level.
2. Give these kids a chance to win at a younger age and, hopefully, to carry an optimistic curling spirit into the junior level.
3. Ensure a pipeline of experienced curlers feeding the junior age group.

North Dakota currently has a Bantam tour in place, along with a state championship for each division. Northern Minnesota has started a Bantam challenge with some clubs in eastern North Dakota.

Even the best program in the world can't be successful without you. Volunteers at the club and regional levels are needed to implement these programs. If you are passionate about curling and passionate about kids, don't miss this opportunity to make a difference. If you are interested in how you can start a Bantam program in your region or need help in the implementation of new programs, feel free to contact me at 701-226-8481, or contact Kim at the USCA office at 1-888-CURLERS.

## U18 Optimist International 2013

Get your team together now! This season's U18 Optimist International will be held in Surrey and Langley, British Columbia, March 27-April 3. Application information and forms can be found on the USCA website. The application deadline is Dec. 31. This is an event you don't want to miss. It's a chance to curl against Canadian as well as Asian teams in a fun, educational, and competitive event. Through the generosity of Optimist International, teams are required to pay only their expenses to and from the event. Rooms and meals are covered by Optimist International.

## Camps set new attendance record

A record camp season concluded in late October with more than 200 junior curlers attending camps in Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, North Dakota, and Washington. Although the camps vary slightly in their structure, they all provide the most up-to-date information, presented by the best coaches and instructors in the United States. If you missed a camp this year, make a point of attending next year.

During the Green Bay and Bucks County, Pa.,



Recipients of the Katie Beck Memorial Awards from 2012 camps include (top, l-r) Chase Sinnett, Andrew Dunnam and Jenna Burchesky from the Bucks County Junior Camp and (bottom, l-r) Joey Sipzner, Alex Vorpahl and Sarah Anderson from the Green Bay Junior Camp.

camps, the family of the late Katie Beck, a 2002 world junior champion, gave six awards in Katie's name. These camps were selected since they were the junior camps that Katie attended and were instrumental in developing her competitive curling career. The camp coaches presented these awards to campers who are coachable, show good sportsmanship, have a positive attitude, and have a commitment to junior competitive curling. This year's recipients are:

**Bucks County Camp** – Chase Sinnett (Broomstones), Andrew Dunnam (Philadelphia), Jenna Burchesky (Broomstones).

**Green Bay Camp** – Joey Sipzner (Albany), Alex Vorpahl (Portage), Sarah Anderson (Philadelphia).

Congratulations on your awards, and a big thanks to the Beck family for their continued support of junior curling. ■