



Celebrating 20 Years of Excellence

FDIA Friends & Family



This season we are celebrating 20 years of operations under the direction of the non-profit organization Friends of Fort Dupont Ice Arena (FDIA), Inc. and our Kids On Ice® (KOI) programming. Each month this publication will highlight some of the many people, young and old, that have contributed to the continued success and growth of the organization.

In this first edition of **FDIA Friends & Family** we are pleased to highlight the contributions of someone that has been a coach and mentor to area youth at the rink for nearly four decades. "He has done an incredible job developing not just hockey players, but future citizens that will have a positive impact on society," says FDIA Executive Director Ty Newberry. He is the founder of the nation's oldest minority-oriented youth hockey program that begins its 39th season at Fort Dupont Ice Arena this year. Join us in celebrating the great work of a great member of the FDIA Family.



Coach Neal Henderson

In 1977 Neal Henderson founded the Fort Dupont Hockey Club and has been coaching the FDHC Cannons ever since. Raised in Canada, Neal grew up playing hockey.

When he relocated to the DC Area he wanted to pass the love of hockey onto his son. Around the same time, the Federal Government built Fort Dupont Ice Arena as part of its bi-centennial celebration. His impact on the neighborhood, our children, and the sport of hockey continues to impress us each season. Neal currently holds the position of Hockey Director for FDIA. He has been instrumental in building our KOI Learn To Play Hockey Program and provides the opportunity for our Kids to transition onto a Cannon's team once they have learned the basics of the game.

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Celebrating 20 Years of Excellence FDIA Friends & Family



One Man Making A Difference in Thousands of Lives

Breaking Barriers For Nearly 40 years

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Fort Dupont Ice Arena is so lucky to have Coach Neal Henderson and the Fort Dupont Cannons call this place home. He provides tremendous opportunity and leadership for the rink and its skaters. He sets high expectations of himself and his players, commanding respect and self-discipline along the way. Neal is assisted by his team manager, Betty Dean, who has been working with the team from early on. A former teacher, Betty organizes things, preparing schedules and generally keeping kids and parents on track.



Photo Credit: gettyimages®/The Washington Post

Improving Lives Through Hockey

Throughout its history, hockey has been seen as a predominately white sport, accessible only to those affluent enough to afford the expensive equipment and ice time required to excel at the sport. Partnering with FDIA, Neal has been able to break down the financial barriers, outfitting kids in gently used equipment and providing free instruction and ice time to thousands of kids. His objective is to build young boys and girls into model players and successful adults. He checks report cards and insists his players maintain good grades. Alumni of the Cannons have gone on to become doctors, police officers, computer analysts, and military leaders. "Everything I've become today is because of what Fort Dupont made me" says recent high school graduate Katherine Baker, who heads off to college this month.



Photo Credit: Fort Dupont Ice Arena



Those That Receive Give Back

Former Cannons players often return to the rink to pay forward the opportunities Neal gave them. FDIA Board Member John Cotten, the parent of a former Cannons player says, "Over the years, Coach Neal has provided hundreds kids an affordable opportunity to learn and play a non-traditional sport for our community which has led to many life experiences that they may have never experienced otherwise and for that, families like mine are forever thankful". Another Board Member, Billy Bryant, played for Coach Neal years ago and is now FDIA's Kids On Ice hockey coach. Says Bryant, "Coach Neal trusted me with a lot of coaching responsibility at a young age. That's just one of many reasons I'm still involved in coaching hockey at Fort Dupont today."

Well Deserved Recognition

Coach Neal doesn't seek out recognition. It's watching the kids develop into competitive players and good citizens that keeps him coming back year after year. But recognized he is, both locally and nationally. In 2007 he was presented with USA Hockey's **William Thayer Tutt Award**, given annually to a volunteer who displays a selfless dedication to the enhancement of ice hockey at the grassroots level in America. In 2010 he was awarded the **Bridgestone Mark Messier Youth Leadership Award** given to players or mentors for their leadership and contributions to youth sports and education.

"Who would have thought that one man, based out of a little old rink in Southeast DC, would have been able to accomplish so much over the years?" ponders Ty Newberry. "We should all be so lucky to have the passion and energy that he has at his calendar age! We hope we have the pleasure of working with him for many more years to come."



Photo Credit: gettyimages®/Patrick McDermott

For more information about Coach Henderson and the Fort Dupont Hockey Club visit their website at www.fdihc.org



Photo Credit: USA Hockey Magazine