



FACE OFF

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE
ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN HOCKEY LEAGUE BOOSTER CLUBS

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2017 AAHLBC Convention - Old Friends, New Memories

By Tom Mara...Hershey Bears Booster Club...

Though a number of events happen each year, mostly in the same order, every Convention has its own personality. Such was the case with the 2017 event, hosted by the Bridgeport Sound Tigers Booster Club.

This year's unofficial start was on Wednesday, as nearly 40% of our total attendees made it in early. The staff at the trumbull Marriott was ready with a separate check-in line just for our group, and the standard hugs and kisses among the group was joined by a voice from the past – one Chris O'Shea, long time Booster from Worcester who has battled a severe voice problem for a long time.

I was walking from the hotel entrance to my car when I hear my name being called several times. I turned, and she was the only one there with a HUGE grin on her face. It was the most pleasant surprise of the weekend, but it wouldn't be the only one.

Wednesday night brought the newest Convention tradition – the "Jeremy Hall Memorial Room Crawl". This is a tour of a number of rooms, with a short card game in each room. Each player puts in \$5, and the winner gets half the pot (many winners put some or all of their money back into the fund). By the end of the night, the fund had reached a record \$900. The money is then donated in full to a "family member" in need (a regular Convention-goer with financial problems).



The gang on the room crawl

It's become a great way for the group to get re-acquainted, and to help out one of our own. The best parts of these nights are the reactions of the recipients. It makes for a great start to the Convention.

Thursday brought another 40% or so of the people in, and the lobby was jumping. Most people went out to do some touring, visiting places like the Barnum Museum and the Pez Museum (a surprise hit), while others did some sightseeing down by the waterfront. In the afternoon, the annual Pub Crawl took off to downtown Milford, where people sat around enjoying the good weather, cold beverages, and at the last stop, a very tasty dinner.

After that, most people made their ways to the hospitality room, joining those who had found their own dinner places (lots of great new ideas for the Bridgeport area!). The evening came to a great end as the group prepped for a very special Friday.

Two full buses, carrying over 110 people, headed out Friday for the 70-mile trip into Manhattan to see the 9-11 Memorial. Not one person who made the trip came away unaffected. The memories came to life with the exhibits, the names and the pictures of that day. Due to New York traffic, the group didn't get home till nearly



Bob Guzy and Jody Cady at the Pez Museum



From 9-11 Memorial

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Mission Statement

The purpose of this organization will be:

- To promote better understanding between Booster Clubs and the American Hockey League Organization.
- To Compare and attempt to alleviate problems confronting each individual Booster Club.
- To act as a social organization for Booster Club members.

Submitting an Article

To submit an article to this newsletter, please email it to lighthouseman2@yahoo.com with "AAHLBC Newsletter" in the subject line.

Please note: Your club must be a member of the AAHLBC in order to submit an article to this newsletter.

Editor: Bill Walch



2017 Convention Funniest Photo Contest Winner

Congratulations to Jeanne Carras of the Albany Devils Booster Club. She submitted the winning photograph from the 2017 AAHLBC Convention in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

She has won the \$20 prize.

Booster Club Happenings

The **Bridgeport Sound Tigers Booster Club** will hold a Welcome Dinner on November 9, 2017 and an Awards Banquet on April 10, 2018..

The **Chicago Wolves Booster Club** will hold its Meet the Pack event on November 13, 2017.

The **Grand Rapids Griffins Booster Club** now has a new logo. It's pretty sharp!

The **Hershey Bears Booster Club** election results:

President: Mike Schmelz
Vice President: Paulette Kraybill
Treasurer: Harry Young
Secretary: Amy Shellehamer
Membership: Denise Shellehamer
Trustee: Linda Campbell
Past President: Tom Mara



The **Lehigh Valley Phantoms Phan Club** was involved in the Phantom Wives "Building Hope for Kids" project where 10 volunteer days were given... The LVPPC donated \$2,575 in monetary donations to the American Cancer Society, Special Olympics – Lehigh County, Peaceable Kingdom, Allentown Ecumenical Food Bank and Carrie's Essential Playground Build.

The **Manchester Monarchs Booster Club** held its annual summer event this past August.

The **Peoria Rivermen Booster Club** sadly had to cancel its Summer Picnic.

The **Rochester Americans Booster Club** will hold its Meet the Player event on November 6, 2017.



2016-2017

Calder Cup Champion Grand Rapid Griffins

(Convention...continued from page 1)



The ladies of P. T. Barnum
(and one misplaced mascot)



And the guys as well



Cotton Candy – a must at any circus !!

dinnertime, but everyone was ready to let loose. A great meal started things off, and then it was time for the outfits, and with the theme of "Greatest Convention on Earth", PT Barnum's ideas were on full display.

The party also had a great deal of meaning as a long-time attendee came to pay a visit. Butch Gesner, a long-time New Haven Nighthawks fan and booster, was paralyzed in an accident in 2005, and has had a number of recent health problems, but with the Convention close to his home, he came out to see all his old friends. The ones who were around when he was a regular got together for a great and touching photo.

Saturday morning, the raffles take hold. The clubs sell 50-50 raffles along with any



number of assorted items – beer collections, blankets, jerseys, a gift-card tree, and many others, headed by Hershey's Basket of Chocolate and a free Convention for 2018. We then had our annual meeting, where we take care of business as needed and watch a highlight reel from the prior Convention. After that, it's a free afternoon. There was a trip on the Port Jefferson Ferry, and other people went to lunch in numerous places in the area, while some just went back to their rooms for a nap before the night's festivities.

Saturday night is the "Yes, we can look good" portion of the program. Everyone puts away their jerseys, jeans and sneakers and comes dressed in their (close to) Sunday best. The program led off with dinner, followed by the annual "State of the League" address by Sean Lavoine from the league office. The Guest Speaker this year was Steve Valiquette, who tended goal for the Sound Tigers and six other AHL teams during his 14-year career.

Steve was very entertaining, and after he was done, the raffles were picked and the winners went home happy. Then it was off for one last night in the hospitality room, and one more tradition – the annual "Singing of the Anthems" at midnight.

The last tradition is the toughest – the lobby goodbyes on Sunday. For many of us, it'll be the last time we see many of our friends until the next Convention.

With the ECHL occupying some of our cities, and the schedule not allowing some of us to even play each other's teams, it makes for a tough time as we say goodbye. What we take away is the friendships built and renewed, the memories we've made together, and the knowledge that we will, Good Lord willing, see each other in 11 ¾ months at the next Convention.

I want to thank the members of the Sound Tigers Booster Club for putting on a memorable event. Their hard work paid off in a terrific week and weekend, and now you can relax for a few days before your own season starts. We have a lot to look forward to in 2018, as the Chicago Wolves Booster Club will be our hosts in the westernmost Convention ever. It promises to be a great time, and we are all looking forward to it.

Have a great season, everyone!!!



Part of Hershey's crew at the
"Bear and Grill" restaurant (seriously!)