

Kyle Alpe

American Hearing Impaired Hockey Association - Slashing the Sound Barrier

Junior Division

1,445 Words Website

497 Words Process Paper

I chose to explore AHIHA - The American Hearing Impaired Hockey Association. One of my hobbies is playing hockey. I currently play on a AA travel hockey team and it is a lot of fun. I first learned about AHIHA through my older brother. Several years ago, his team was invited to participate in a scrimmage game versus an AHIHA team of players with various hearing issues. I watched the game and was impressed by how the coaches and individuals with hearing loss modified the game of hockey. The more I watched the game, the more I realized hearing issues do not have to be a barrier to playing hockey.

I began researching AHIHA when this year's theme was first announced. I wanted to focus on a sports-related topic. Initially, I considered researching the first African American to play hockey, Willie O'Ree. However, there wasn't a lot of information about his playing career. I started thinking about famous Chicago Blackhawk players, and Stan Mikita came to mind. I remembered AHIHA and how interesting and impressive my first introduction to the organization was. AHIHA is based in the Chicago area, so it was very easy to research. I used many websites about AHIHA's origins, their approach to teaching kids, and more. I also used primary sources such as newspapers and was able to reach out personally by email to volunteers in the organization, as well as, interview the current president. Time management was an essential part of the research and web building process. I needed to complete my work a week early because my team was playing in a hockey tournament in Montreal, Quebec. This meant I needed a focused and well-developed plan.

I selected the website category because I felt I could add a lot more information about my topic versus a poster board, or paper. I wanted people to be able to experience what challenges hearing impaired hockey players face. I incorporated video clips with closed captioning into my project and included a sign language tutorial of hockey terms. I chose to work alone because my teacher would not allow us to work in groups. My project took a long time to complete because I wanted to include as much information as I could about the organization and its mission.

AHIHA is a good fit for this year's theme, Breaking Barriers. AHIHA allows hockey players to break through the hearing impaired barrier. Stan Mikita, a co-founder of AHIHA, also had to overcome obstacles like a language barrier. When he moved to America from Czechoslovakia, he could not speak much English and said he felt surrounded by people who didn't understand him. Irv Tiahnybik's son, Lex, also broke down barriers while improving his self-confidence with the help of hockey. As a result of the hard work and dedication of many AHIHA volunteers, deaf and hard of hearing hockey players have access to resources and opportunities to be part of a team and feel like they fit in.