

# Feeling the freeze

story and picture by ashley guddat

Once COVID-19 hit in March of 2020, the Glacier Ice rink on Riverside Parkway, closed. Although Grand Junction is not a center for winter sports such as hockey or figure skating, the rink closure had a significant impact on many people who enjoy a fun form of exercise, or who are invested in such winter sports.

For Jacob Carmichael, a sophomore at GJHS, the closing of the rink in Grand Junction, meant a sunset on a family tradition. Carmichael's father grew up in Canada where hockey was a major part of his life. He then transferred this love to his sons Trevor, Brayden, and eventually Jacob himself.

"[I love] just the speed of the game," said Carmichael. When the rink was shut down during COVID, however, Carmichael had a hard time finding places to get out on the ice. Carmichael has been on a team for six years, through the Glacier Ice rink. Once the rink closed, his family made the trip to Glenwood – an hour and a half drive each way – the nearest ice to Grand Junction, almost twice a week.

Walter Fox, a GJHS special education teacher, also had to commute to Glenwood Springs once the rink closed. He has been playing roller hockey and ice hockey for around 10 years and has since taken up coaching young hockey players at Glacier Ice Rink.

"I started as an assistant, then I became a head coach, and then I was actually directing the program last couple of years and it's been on a volunteer basis," said Fox.

The Glacier Ice rink has been re-opened as part of the River City Sportsplex as of October 8, 2021. Being such a new venue already part-way into the season, there are not enough 16 and 17 year-olds to form a complete hockey team this year. Carmichael, however, does not let that fact deter him from pursuing what he loves.

The River City Sportsplex offers Stick and Puck sessions which are basically free skate sessions specifically for hockey players looking to practice skills and have a little fun. Carmichael has already been to a few even though the rink

has only been open for a little over a month. "Since the rink has re-opened, we've kind of had to start over, but we have 63 kids in the youth program," said Fox. Fox attributes this growth in membership to the publicity the rink got since its reopening. Although they have grown in numbers, skills during the two-year period where they had no place to practice, and thus Fox is focusing on rebuilding the team for next year.

"I want to get a high school team together in the next couple of years, whether that's like a Grand Junction High School team or its all four high schools playing together," said Fox.

Carmichael has been making the best of the situation by practicing whenever and wherever he can until an official team can form since Carmichael plans to play hockey in college.

"My brother already plays in Vancouver, I can't let him show me up," said Charmichael.

The River City Sportsplex is in the same location as Glacier Ice rink was– 2515 Riverside Pkwy, Grand Junction, CO 81501. They are open from 9 AM to 11 PM on Tuesdays through Thursdays, from 9 AM to 8:30 PM on Mondays, and from 7:30 AM to 10:00 PM on Saturdays and Sundays. In the future, according to Fox, the rink hopes to expand its facilities to include batting cages, volleyball courts, etc, to become a true "sportsplex." As of now, they offer lessons in figure skating and hockey, as well as recreational leagues. They also host a free skate time where anyone can enjoy some time on the ice.

the years all volunteer

