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## LANCASTER SCHOOLS

# Lancaster board hears plea for forming girls ice hockey team

By Barbara O'Brien  
NEWS STAFF REPORTER

Christine Doherty, of Lancaster, has been playing ice hockey for three years, and she says she will have to quit soon, if Lancaster Central High School does not form a girls team.

"Although I have played many different sports, hockey is by far my favorite," she told School Board members Monday night. "I absolutely love it."

Christine and other girls joined their parents in appealing to the School Board to create a girls hockey team.

Parent and Buffalo Regals coach Larry Blas said efforts are under way in other districts to add girls teams in the 2009-10 school year. If all are successful, Lancaster would join Amherst, a combined Catholic school team, Clarence, Hilton, Orchard Park, Sweet Home, West Seneca and Williamsville in the Western Division of the Upstate New York Girls Varsity Ice Hockey, he said.

Last year, Williamsville Central Schools considered a preliminary budget request of \$25,000 to field a single, districtwide varsity team for the current school year. Girls from all three district high schools would have been eligible to try out. But they had no local teams to play, and administrators decided not to add the money to the budget.

Blas said he made a list of high school hockey players from Lancaster and came up with more than a dozen.

"We have 14 or 15 girls, we can make up almost the whole team right now," he said.

Christine, who is 14, said younger girls play with boys, but as they get older, most girls do not play with boys.

"Boys hockey tends to be rougher at this age, and this is where checking is introduced," she said. "Some girls get hurt by the checks."

"Up to that point, the girls have been playing with the boys without any issues," said her mother, Sharon Doherty. "They are suddenly playing with young men who are stronger and hit harder."

If a girl can't afford travel hockey, she may be forced to quit the sport because she does not want to get hurt, Christine said.

"I absolutely do not want to quit hockey," she said.

School Board President Kenneth Graber said the board would consider the request, particularly since the district has a boys hockey team, but he made no promises.

"Every new program we consider at budget time," he said. "We certainly would be quite willing to consider this."

Members of the boys team contributed money for ice time the first several years and brought some equipment with them, Superintendent Edward Myszka said.

“I’m sure you’re aware of the fiscal realities going on in this state,” Graber said. “On the other hand, I don’t think anyone here wants to deprive these young ladies of this opportunity.”

[bobrien@buffnews.com](mailto:bobrien@buffnews.com)