

Be a Billet Family & Host a Hockey Player!

Watertown, the Shamrocks are looking for local families who have a little extra room in their hearts and in their homes.

Junior hockey would not exist without the warmth and support of host families. Each season, aspiring athletes aged 16 to 20 from across the US, Canada, and Europe will become the newest residents of Watertown. They're here to chase their dreams of NCAA Division I hockey and beyond, and they need your help to make Watertown feel like home. As a host family, you provide more than just a roof over their heads. You offer a nurturing, family atmosphere that becomes their sanctuary away from the rink. Hosting a player isn't just about lodging; it's an adventure filled with excitement and fulfillment. Plus, it often blossoms into lifelong friendships between your family and the player.

A Letter From Coach Kirley

The Watertown Shamrocks are looking for good homes to house Shamrock's hockey players for the upcoming 2024-2025 season. This is a very important time in our players' lives – they are away from their friends and family (often for the first time), so their billets become their surrogate family. While the families receive some monetary compensation, the real reward is the lasting relationships that are formed. In essence, the importance of billet families to our winning program is immeasurable.

When a family volunteers to house a member of the team, they are required to provide room and board for the player. This includes providing nutritious food that is available for the player to prepare or for the billets to prepare for the player. Additionally, billets must be able to provide the player with his own room, or the availability to share with a fellow team member. Billets are expected to treat the players as “one of the family” and not just a “renter”.

The same goes for the player, who must clean up after himself and keep his room and belongings tidy. We have team guidelines and policies that the players must abide by within our organization, and we expect our billet families to uphold and enforce these team rules. All billet house rules will need to be communicated to the player when he arrives.

The unique bonds your family will form with the player(s) you house last a lifetime. It is not uncommon for players, years after their time in the league, to keep in close contact with their former billet family: keeping them informed of their collegiate, professional, and family lives.

How long is a billet family's commitment? This varies depending on the player – some are with the family during the hockey season only while others need to complete their school year.

Some families have found it easier to house two (2) players as they can travel together and are company for each other. Host families have included traditional two-parent families and “empty nesters”. All that's really needed is a willingness to help a player pursue his dream by providing a “home away from home”.

The Shamrocks are seeking local families to host our players from across the globe from late August 2024 to May 2025. Players are responsible for their own transportation and will hold down a part-time job or attend classes.

FAQ:

WHAT IS A HOST FAMILY (AKA. BILLET FAMILY)?

A billet family, along with each of its members, is as crucial to our team as the players themselves. Billet families generously provide a welcoming and secure home environment for our visiting players, ensuring they have a comfortable and nurturing place to stay during their time with us.

WHY BECOME A BILLET FAMILY?

Hosting players is more than just a responsibility; it's an adventure filled with rewards.

Families who've opened their homes to dedicated players often reminisce fondly about the experience. And for many NAHL organizations, these bonds endure long after the players have moved on to university or the pros. Hosting a player isn't just a gesture; it's an enriching journey for both your family and the hockey team. Here's why:

- Forge lasting friendships with players and their families.
- Offer a supportive environment for young players to hone their skills at the highest level.

- Embrace a fantastic social and cultural exchange.
- Help visiting players manage living expenses, enabling them to pursue their hockey dreams in our community.
- Rally behind our hockey team, contributing to their success on and off the ice.
- Play a pivotal role in ensuring a fulfilling hockey season for a young athlete.
- Provide mentorship for your own kids or bring life back to an empty nest.

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN BECOMING A BILLET FAMILY?

Our players seek a supportive hockey family and a home away from home where they can experience community life firsthand. Our hosts are enthusiastic about welcoming new faces into their homes. Having a hockey player stay with you requires time, patience, and a willingness to share. While there may be cultural and personal differences to navigate, embracing and learning from them adds to the experience of welcoming someone new into your home, often leading to lasting friendships.

WHAT MAKES A GREAT BILLET FAMILY?

We're looking for families who are caring, sensitive, and patient. Being far from home can be tough for a player, so having a host family that understands this and respects each player's uniqueness is crucial. Effective communication and mutual understanding require effort, and our hosts are ready to make that commitment.

Our hosts are genuinely interested in sharing their lifestyle in a positive and mutually fulfilling manner. We prioritize families whose motivations go beyond financial gain. Players can easily detect when hosts are solely focused on money, which detracts from the intended experience: providing a safe, secure, and welcoming environment for players to learn and thrive in.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Here are some key considerations:

- **Time Commitment:** Are you able to dedicate quality time to the player? Even confident players value meaningful interactions with their host family.
- **Acceptance of Differences:** Is everyone in your household open to welcoming someone from a different background?

- **Comfort of Children:** If you have kids, are they comfortable with adding a new member to the family dynamic?

Additional important points to note:

- **Irregular Schedule:** Junior hockey players juggle school, work, and a busy hockey schedule, including games, practices, and team activities. Host families will receive a schedule of events from the Watertown Shamrocks before the regular season begins.
- **Holiday Breaks:** Some players may opt to return home during the NAHL's Christmas break, returning before the New Year to resume play.
- **End of Season:** Many players return home once the season concludes.
- **Road Trip Logistics:** Meals and accommodations during road trips are covered by the team and/or the player.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BILLET FAMILY

Host families should be ready to offer the following to ensure the player's stay is as comfortable as possible:

- Treat players as you would want your own child treated if they were away from home.
- Clearly inform players of your expectations and house rules.
- Enforce the team rules, which will be communicated to the host families.
- Provide a room for the players to sleep, equipped with a twin bed or larger, a dresser, closet, and a desk with a chair, ideally with a television in the room.
- Provide a student desk for homework, preferably in a quiet area of the home if not in the bedroom.
- Offer family-type meals, including breakfast and supper, as well as snacks for the visiting player.
- Provide access to WiFi in the home.
- Allow use of laundry facilities and provide detergent.
- Confirm with the players their allergies, medical conditions, and special dietary needs, and support them with these requirements.
- Support the player, communicate with him, and be understanding.
- Communicate all concerns and questions regarding the player to the Host Family Coordinator.

- Make the player feel at home and part of the family.
- Provide information about your home to the Billet Coordinator (e.g., presence of pets, smokers, etc.) and necessary contact information (including work telephone numbers, cell phone numbers, and email addresses). All information must be current.

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE ATHLETE

While guests in your home, the Watertown Shamrocks fully expect each player to be well-behaved at all times. Key expectations for the players include:

- Show gratitude to the host family for opening their home.
- Provide information on allergies, medical conditions, and special dietary needs.
- Respect the host family as they would their own parents.
- Adhere to the 'house rules' as determined between the host family and the player.
- When unsure of anything, always ask!

THE BILLET COORDINATOR'S ROLE

The Billet Coordinator is the primary contact for any host family. This individual is responsible for arranging accommodation for visiting athletes with local host families and recommending families for this important role. Any questions about hosting a player or concerns about visiting athletes should be promptly forwarded to the Billet Coordinator.

BILLET FAMILY BENEFITS PROVIDED BY THE WATERTOWN SHAMROCKS

The Shamrocks appreciate the support that our Billet Families provide our players and demonstrate our appreciation in the following manner:

- All host families will have the choice to receive either option a) or b) that are valid throughout the 2024-2025 regular season, regardless of player placement (traded injured, scratched, etc.)
 - a) two season tickets with premium seating (glass or bar-rail seating)

- b) flex-pack of 60 tickets that can be used “mix-and-match” (ex: 4 tickets for one game, 6 tickets for one game, 2 tickets for one game, etc.)
- Monetary compensation of \$450 per month, paid by the players’ families.
- A wonderful experience with many great memories to those who will extend their families to include a dedicated young man while playing junior hockey.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The following information will be provided to all billet families upon selection:

- Team Contact List
- Team Code of Conduct
- Host Family Contact List
- Other pertinent information

HOW TO GET STARTED

Anyone who is interested in becoming a billet family is welcome to attend an open information session and Q&A with the Watertown Shamrocks Billet Coordinator and Head Coach that will be announced soon.

If you are interested in exploring this opportunity, please contact our Billet Coordinator, Jenni Wirkus by email at billet.mom@watertownshamrocks.com.

Visit our website at www.watertownshamrocks.com for more information about the team and league.

Ready to fill out our billet application? You can find a printable application on our website and send the completed form to Jenni Wirkus at billet.mom@watertownshamrocks.com to be reviewed. Applicants will be contacted when their form has been received and will be notified about next steps in the selection process.

The team will conduct an interview, site visit and background check on all adults living in a host family home, as directed by the NAHL.