

The Olds Grizzlys of the Alberta Junior Hockey League recently underwent an ownership change. The Friends of the Grizzlys (FOTG), a dedicated group of former players and local business owners, united eight years ago to save the franchise. Despite challenges on the ice, their primary goal was to ensure the team remained in the Town of Olds—a mission they successfully accomplished.

When the FOTG took over, the franchise was on the verge of folding or relocating and was burdened with debt. Through perseverance, including navigating the difficulties of a COVID-impacted season, they managed to eliminate the debt and provide a platform for young athletes to pursue their junior hockey dreams. Many of these players advanced to university and college hockey programs in both Canada and the United States.

The FOTG extends heartfelt gratitude to the fans, volunteers, employees, players, the Town of Olds, and the generous sponsors who played a crucial role in keeping the team in its rightful home since 1981. The economic impact of a junior hockey team on a small community like Olds is significant. With various camps, tournaments, games, and hockey schools, local businesses benefit greatly. Hotels, restaurants, and shops see an influx of visitors, making the Grizzlys an essential part of the town's economic and social fabric.

This past season, the FOTG welcomed Kevin Watson as Manager of Business Operations. Watson, who has a long-standing history with the team dating back to his days as the "radio guy" in the early 1990s, has played a key role in increasing community engagement, fostering relationships with fans, sponsors, and alumni, and raising awareness about the team.

For the Grizzlys to continue thriving in Olds, the new ownership will need sustained support through sponsorships, volunteer efforts, and enthusiastic fan attendance at games.

Once again, THANK YOU for your unwavering support over the past eight years. We wish the new ownership all the best for the future.

**GO GRIZZ GO!**

The Friends of the Grizzlys:

- Darcy Dallas
- Josh Erdman
- Blake & Russ Parker
- Art Birch
- Paul Hildebrand
- Ed Hildebrand
- Scott Leatherdale
- Gary Lebsack
- Mike Van Tetering
- Shawn Pitkanen
- Richardson Bros Construction
- Brian & Ian Perkins
- Jason Jaskela
- Mike Gayle
- Olds Minor Hockey Association
- JP Trottier
- Mike Cotrone

