



## ILLINOIS HOCKEY HALL OF FAME CLASS OF 2020

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### Joe Modrich Builder's Category

Joe is fifth of eleven children, born in a house his father built in Franklin Park when Midway was the big airport in Chicago. Then, frozen ponds were everywhere and everyone skated on flat ground skates sharpened by a shoemaker. Led by the visionary Moms in the growing town, the Park District formation in 1964 changed everything. All ice was natural for many years after and Joe had the opportunity to flood the ponds and snow-banked rinks as a Park District worker and Ice Guard all through High School.

Interest in Parks & Recreation education led to playing on the Triton College Hockey Team in 1970-72 at a time when all Junior Colleges in Northern Illinois had teams. Finishing at Southern Illinois University Joe graduated in August 1974 after a Park District internship, having the good fortune to begin his career with the Franklin Park Ice Arena that just opened in August that year. Park District and private Ice Facilities were being built seemingly everywhere, ushering in a major boom for ice hockey, figure skating, and speed skating.

From the beginning, the Franklin Park Ice Arena was a special place, renting ice commonly 24 hours per day and becoming a hub for AHAI and AHAUS events; local, statewide, national and international. Most prominent were the AHAI Illinois High School State Championships at all three levels, providing inspiration for the National High School All Star Tournaments, an annual combined effort with Johnson Sporting Goods, AHAI, AHAUS, the Park District of Franklin Park & Marriot Hotel. Those 16 team tournaments attracted numerous colleges and NHL scouts and outstanding young student athletes from as far away as Alaska, California, New York and Massachusetts. It was a week of High School Hockey like no other!

Midwest, National and International Speed Skating events showcased World and Olympic ranked speed skaters on the tightest possible FPIA track! The Arena also served many years as the Chicago Blackhawks practice facility, including many visiting NHL Teams. Ice Capades Skaters including World and Olympic British Ice Dancing Champions Jayne Torvill and Christopher Dean also practiced at the Arena. As a serious Summer Training Center for figure skaters, David Santee brought skaters for month-long training from Japan each year. The FPIA Team always focused on community first, including the Annual Special Needs event featuring Sled-hockey, Figure Skating, Speed Skating and Ice Hockey. Historically, beginner level Hockey included the family based Franklin Park Jets, Flames Hockey Club. and earlier Minor Hawks & Team Illinois organizations that restarted the Silver Stick Tournament and other National Events. Decades of summer training by Midwest Elite and Ice Company Hockey Schools developed thousands of boys and girls.

Joe also worked at the Niles and Oak Lawn Park Districts overseeing the IceLand renovations and rebranding, and the opening of the newly Constructed Oak Lawn Ice Arena before returning to Franklin Park as Director of Parks & Recreation in 2000. The last 21 years have been a whirlwind of development and progress throughout the Park District including a \$3.5 Million renovation of the Ice Arena in 2014.

Throughout this privileged work, Joe was part of amazing Park District professional teams for all of these years and had the tireless support and patience of his wife Julie and four children; Stefan, Anna. Katarina & Peter, who have all benefited immeasurably from these wonderful Park Districts and affiliated organizations.