



## NEWS RELEASE

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### *Seattle Pride Classic pres. by Symetra, now largest pride hockey event in the world*

Fourth annual tournament on June 7 through 9 will host 300 athletes, including six professional players, aims to grow ice hockey and be a model of inclusion in sport

SEATTLE | Thursday, May 30, 2024 – Now six times the size of their inaugural event in 2021, the Seattle Pride Hockey Association (SPHA) will host the *Seattle Pride Classic 2024 (SPC24)* presented by Symetra on June 7-9 at the Kraken Community Iceplex in Seattle. The 20-team hockey tournament will showcase roughly 300 LGBTQ+ and allied hockey players participating over three days. Spectators are welcome to celebrate pride and watch hockey free of charge, courtesy of WaFd Bank.

“From 2019 in the basement of a local hockey arena to now, the vision to create the most inclusive pride hockey tournament in the world is our never-ending mission,” said Joey Gale (he/him), SPHA Vice President. “Now the largest pride ice hockey event globally, we feel a deep honor and commitment to continue championing the growth of the LGBTQ+ hockey community. Making space on and off the ice, especially for trans players, has never been more important” added Gale.

SPHA’s rapid growth has accelerated thanks to support from the National Hockey League (NHL). Following a generous donation from the NHL and NHL Players Association’s Industry Growth Fund, the Seattle Pride Hockey League launched in April made up of four teams, 70 players, and nearly 80% of participants representing the LGBTQ+ community. The NHL and NHLPA are excited to support next week’s event to continue elevating diversity and inclusion in hockey.

*“Members of the LGBTQ+ community have made, and continue to make, enormous contributions to the game of hockey,” said Kim Davis, NHL Sr. Executive Vice President of Social Impact, Growth Initiatives, and Legislative Affairs. “Investing in the rapid growth of the SPHA, a space where the LGBTQ+ community can be authentic and feel welcome, is an important part of our commitment to inclusion on and off the ice, and ensuring our sport continues to thrive.”*

More than 70% of tournament participants identify as LGBTQ+. 40% of players identify as female, 15% as non-binary or trans, with the remaining 45% identifying as male. Nearly 3 in 10 players will be traveling from outside of Washington, now spanning coasts and continents (including as far away as Australia).

Back for a third year, the *Alaska Airlines: All Stars of Pride* game will start at 3:00 PM on Sunday, June 9, and is the marquee event of the tournament. Each participant in this game will be nominated by their tournament peers based on how they elevated the experience for their teammates and promoted inclusivity.

Several special guests from the hockey community will be present all weekend, including playing in the *Alaska Airlines: All Stars of Pride* game. Luke Prokop, former Seattle Thunderbirds defenseman, two-time WHL Champion, and the first openly gay player under contract with an NHL team, will join different teams on the ice throughout the weekend. Prokop will be joined by five other current and former pros, including Erin Ambrose and Élizab eth Gigu ere (current PWHL players), Jessica Platt (former woman’s Canadian professional and trans rights advocate), J.T. Brown (former NHL forward and TV analyst for the Seattle Kraken), and Andrew Ference (former NHL defenseman and 2011 Stanley Cup Champion) who now serves as the Director of Social Impact, Growth, and Fan Development for the NHL.

Everett Fitzhugh (Seattle Kraken radio broadcaster), Tom Helm (former Seattle Thunderbirds public address announcer), and Tyler Gunhus (Seattle Thunderbirds public address announcer) will be on the mic announcing the tournament’s consolation and championship games on Sunday, celebrating the teams who will hoist the championship trophies – the Empowers Cup and the Symetra Cup.

Symetra is the first founding partner of the Seattle Pride Hockey Association, returning for their fourth consecutive year championing the event. Symetra was the presenting sponsor for the first-ever *Seattle Pride Classic* in 2021.

“Symetra is thrilled to be the first founding partner of the Seattle Pride Classic and to support SPHA’s vision to host the most inclusive pride hockey tournament in the world. We’re deeply committed to inclusion, allyship and to promoting accessibility, and the explosive growth of this exciting event underscores how important it is to bring the community together. What an amazing way to celebrate the LGBTQI+ community, hockey and Pride,” said Trinity Parker, SVP, chief marketing officer.

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#### About Seattle Pride Hockey Association

The Seattle Pride Hockey Association (SPHA) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization on a mission to grow the sport of ice hockey through diversity and inclusion. SPHA welcomes players, fans, and anyone with an open mind and a love for hockey who wants to be part of it. SPHA hosts events and tournaments throughout the Greater Seattle area, and works with the National Hockey League and Seattle Kraken to ensure that hockey is for everyone. Learn more at [seattlepridehockey.org](https://seattlepridehockey.org).

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