

# Community Rallies Around 18-Year-Old Hockey Player with Lymphoma

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter  
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**EAST ALTON/WOOD RIVER** - Wyatt Owens is a fierce hockey player, but he has proven himself even tougher off the ice as he undergoes treatment for lymphoma.

The 18-year-old player for East Alton-Wood River has received a lot of support from his team, and now they are asking the community to step up and help out. [DAWG Nation Hockey Foundation](#) is sponsoring a fundraiser for Owens, and his team is cheering him on.

“Everybody’s got his back,” said James Mitchell, Owens’s coach. “We’re fighting for him. Hockey’s the best, and to see everybody come together and stuff and do this for Wyatt, it’s just been amazing.”

On Dec. 19, 2023, [teams from across the conference taped up their sticks in lime green](#) to bring awareness to lymphoma and show support for Owens at the East Alton Ice Arena. The Alton, Granite City, Bethalto and Highland hockey clubs took a break from the competition to come together and welcome Owens as he joined the teams on the ice.

According to Mitchell, this is one of the best parts of the local hockey scene. Most of the players have been playing together since they were children, and even though they can be “cutthroat” in their games, they are close friends when the buzzer sounds. It makes it all the more meaningful to see the support they’ve shown one of their own over the past few weeks.

“The hockey community itself is just amazing of what they do for one another. So it’s just awesome to see it, people reaching out and helping out families that are in need of assistance,” Mitchell said. “A lot of these kids grew up playing club hockey together. Over the years, we see a lot of the kids part ways, but they still stay in touch and keep a strong bond with one another. Hockey’s just amazing. Just one big giant family. It really is.”

This is especially clear on Owens’s team, where players have been rooting for him for years. While Owens won’t be able to complete his senior hockey season, he has many people playing for him now.

“Lot of emotions run throughout the locker room. Players look at the sport a little differently. A little bit more grateful, I would say,” Mitchell noted. “There’s actually become a little bit more of a drive for them to do it for Wyatt and not take for granted the little things in life and be more appreciative of the game and where we’re at...At the end of the day, I think Wyatt’s going to be the one that’s going to teach us what true champions are made of. He’s definitely a warrior.”

To support Wyatt Owens and his family, you can donate at [DAWGNationSTL.com /WyattOwens](https://DAWGNationSTL.com/WyattOwens) or click [here](#). Follow the [EAWR & Roxana Hockey Club Facebook page](#) for more information.