

BY: Senator GRIFFO

COMMEMORATING the 150th Anniversary of the Utica
Curling Club

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to honor those enduring organizations which faithfully devote their resources and purposeful energies to fostering opportunities and contributing to the quality of life for the residents of the communities they serve; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of the Utica Curling Club; and

WHEREAS, After a century and one-half, the Utica Curling Club has become a true institution within the Utica community; and

WHEREAS, The Mohawk Valley, with its abundance of waterpower and its strategic location in relation to transportation, was on the leading edge of industrialization; the population of the area was growing rapidly, and two out of three Uticans were born in foreign countries or were children of immigrants; and

WHEREAS, The earliest recorded curling events locally were organized by Scotch and English textile workers in Clark Mills, New York, in 1832; more than two decades later, the sport moved to lower Campbell Pond (now Twin Ponds) in New York Mills where it flourished for more than 20 years; and

WHEREAS, Benjamin Allen, who arrived from England in 1832, was an expert stonecutter and worked on the Erie Canal Expansion, the Chenango Canal and various other building projects; he was an avid curler who participated in games held on the Chenango Canal, the Globe Mill Pond in West Utica, Butterfield skating rink on Jewett Street, the Erie Canal, and sometimes on the Mohawk River flats; and

WHEREAS, Benjamin Allen purchased property which contained Ballou Creek where it emptied into the Erie Canal; by damming the shallow section of the creek near Rutger Street, he was able to form a large ice surface which could be used for both curling and ice skating; and

WHEREAS, In 1868, Benjamin Allen established the Utica Curling Club; six years later, the rink area was fenced in and a small shed with a wood-burning stove was built; that same year, the New York Mills Curling Club merged with Utica and joined the Grand National Curling Club as the Utica Curling Club; and

WHEREAS, By 1892, a large building, known as Rutger Rink, was erected and housed three sheets of curling ice under cover; refrigeration was provided by opening the large windows on three sides of the building; the Utica Curling Club used this facility until 1916; and

WHEREAS, The Utica Curling Club then bought property on Francis Street and began construction on the new Clubhouse in October of 1916; the building housed five sheets of ice and once again, refrigeration was provided through large windows in the curling shed; and

WHEREAS, Even though no curling clubs had artificial ice prior to World War I, A.S. Brinckerhoff, a member of the building committee and long-time ice chairman of the old Rutger Rink, insisted that a basement room in the new building be designed to hold equipment for future ice-making; and

WHEREAS, The Club experienced many fruitful years, and by 1923, the membership limit of 180 had been reached and a waiting list was established; and

WHEREAS, Then came two disastrous winters of thaws, uncompleted schedules, and wrecked bonspiels; consequently, an artificial ice plant was installed; as a result of old "Brink's" foresight, when the York Ice Machinery Co. made the installation in 1925, not a single change had to be made in the basement to accommodate the equipment; and

WHEREAS, During the Great Depression, avid curlers still attended the Club, and in the early 1940s, women relatives of club members received permission to use the ice, when available, for 50 cents per person, per game; and

WHEREAS, In 1948, the Utica Curling Club voted to accept the women as associate members; in 1949, the Utica Glengarries were formed, and in 1990, women became full members with voting privileges; and

WHEREAS, A major expansion was undertaken in 1958-1959, which was also the first time that all five sheets had matched stones; in 1962 a new ice base was installed, with indirect refrigeration which removed the hazard of pressurized ammonia gas inside the curling shed; and

WHEREAS, The interior was upgraded in 1975-1976, and the stones were replaced at the start of the 1985-1986 season with the new Ailsa Craig insert stones with modern plastic handles; and

WHEREAS, After a fire destroyed the building on Francis Street, a new facility with six sheets of ice was opened on Clark Mills Road in Whitestown, New York; in honor of its "resurrection from the ashes", Tom Garber designed a new Phoenix logo and pin; and

WHEREAS, Since then, the building has been modified for wheelchair curlers and others with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, The new facility has been host to numerous events such as the United States Men's and Women's Championships, the United States Club Championships, and the College National Championships; in 2011, the Club celebrated the 100th Anniversary of hosting the Mitchell Bonspiel, an international men's Grand National Curling Club contest; and

WHEREAS, Today, the Utica Curling Club is comprised of approximately 300 members, including novices, long-time curlers, juniors, college curlers, and wheelchair curlers; teenagers began curling in 1954, and Little Rockers in 1989; and

WHEREAS, College curling became a permanent addition in 2005, when Hamilton College and Colgate University formed their curling clubs and made the Utica rink their home; SUNY Polytechnic Institute joined in 2015; and

WHEREAS, Curling has undergone many changes in Utica in the last 150 years, however, the spirit of curling remains strong as the Utica Curling Club looks forward to celebrating its Sesquicentennial Anniversary; and

WHEREAS, In light of its commitment, dedication and successful efforts, it is the custom of this Legislative Body to extend its highest commendation to the Utica Curling Club of Utica, New York; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of the Utica Curling Club; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the Utica Curling Club.