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## **Albany-Tula Alliance sponsors area youth hockey team to play in Russia**

**Capital Region Sister-City Organization supports an opportunity of a lifetime for 14 local children**

April 4, 2018 - (Albany, NY) The Albany-Tula Alliance, a not-for-profit organization that promotes ties between Albany, N.Y. and Tula, Russia, is sponsoring a local team in an upcoming youth hockey tournament in Russia.

The EuroChem Cup will take place May 25-30 in Novomoskovsk, a town of 130,000 in the Tula Region. This will be the first time in the EuroChem Cup's history that a team from the United States will compete alongside youngsters from Belgium, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Lithuania, Switzerland and Russia.

The team, dubbed the Albany Capitals, has 14 players committed to the event. The youngsters, ages 10-12, come from the Capital Region and Central New York, said head coach Brad Chartrand. Chartrand is a former NHL player who spent five seasons with the Los Angeles Kings.

“This is an incredible opportunity for our kids to get out there, see the world, learn how others play hockey and potentially forge life-long friendships,” said the 43-year-old coach. “We also recognize the importance of visiting our sister city, Tula, and hope that we can have a Russian hockey team come here to the Albany area to visit New York and play hockey in the future as we build this partnership.”

This will be Chartrand's third trip to Russia: He first visited the country in 1997, while playing for the Canadian National Hockey Team. “I loved my experience in Moscow,” Chartrand said. “The people, the culture and the strong pride and history they have in hockey.”

Anton Konev, a dual Russia-U.S. citizen and a member of the Albany-Tula Alliance board who has spent months organizing the trip, added, “It's events like these that will stay in the children's minds forever. There can be no stronger initiative for building bridges between cultures than this: Bringing children from different countries together at such a formative age to do something they love—playing hockey.”



The Albany-Tula Alliance has committed \$2,000 to the project. David Smith, chairman of the ATA board of directors and founder of the Troy-based translation/localization company LinguaLinx, and Charlotte Buchanan, founder of the Alliance, added personal donations.

In Russia, the youngsters will compete in a round-robin format within their groups. Those with the best records will compete in quarterfinals, and the best players can win prizes.

Star players have attended the tournament as VIP guests. Big names at last year's competition included Pavel Bure, Alexandre Yakushev, Sergei Fedorov and Vyacheslav Fetisov. Recently, the U.S. youngsters met Alexander Ovechkin of the Washington Capitals.

EuroChem, based in Switzerland, is a mineral fertilizer producer with operations in numerous countries, including both Russia and the United States. It created the EuroChem Cup in 2013, initially for youngsters in places the company operates. EuroChem later relaxed entry rules to allow more children to play.

Founded in 1991, the Albany-Tula Alliance has fostered numerous exchanges and initiatives in business, health, science, culture, education and now sports in its nearly three decades.

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