



**Pictured: Rob Van Kommer**

As most of you know, my initial passion in becoming President of CurlManitoba began with our son, who was a young curler at the time. Curling has made an incredible difference in his life, and in his development as a young person. As he began to curl, and I became more involved in his programming, and that of his peers, I soon realized that what I wanted to do was to promote and further the grassroots level of curling at the junior level so that other young people could reap the benefits of this sport. Curlers, elite or otherwise, do not just suddenly appear at the age of 20; they are nurtured, coached, mentored and given the opportunity to play. While, some will make it to elite levels, some will not, however all will learn a work ethic, learn how to work with others, make friends for life, and develop a skill that will last for their entire lives. It was this passion; the simple opportunity to help any child learn to curl, at whatever level, that continues to drive me. Curling gave me, and eventually our son, so many wonderful opportunities, that it became my passion to make sure others knew of, and had the opportunity to access these same opportunities.

I believe that those accomplishments are built on a solid foundation of supportive programs, mentors, the board of CurlMb, and the many opportunities provided by all of the above to our young curlers. There is a saying that there are only two lasting bequests we can hope to give our children. One of these is to give them roots, the other, is to give them wings. During my tenure as president I worked, and I commit to continuing to work towards giving our youth these roots, and have proudly watched and will continue to watch as so many of our athletes, both the elite and the weekend enthusiasts take flight in their particular paths. While some of curlers will soar to the top of the world in their sport, others will soar in other areas, no less successful, perhaps not as revered, but soaring none the less.

I must admit that personally, my rural roots always have and will always continue to pull at me. And while I had the opportunity to be part of an array of amazing accomplishments by our elite curlers during my time with CurlMb, for someone who lives in rural Manitoba and is a farmer, and a curler, it should perhaps come as no surprise that what brought me the greatest pleasure during my tenure was attending those grass roots events of curling, such as curling in a nearby 'toaster' bonspiel as a participant just to support another rink/community, watching my son curl, driving my kid to hockey because my wife curled that night, encouraging our local 6-8 year olds through their bumps and bruises and up and downs in a Monday night junior sessions at our local rink here in Carberry. Curling is family, friends and community.

