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# RINKSIDER

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Sept-Oct 2009

## 2009-2010 Fall Buying Guide.....12

The RINKSIDER's comprehensive industry directory lists every vendor you will ever need or want to help make your skating center run smoothly and profit nicely. Be sure to tell our advertisers you found them in The RINKSIDER!

## 'Upload' your pro-shop.....8

Retail stores with Internet sites is no new trend. It is a proven way to sell to today's internet-savvy generation and to promote your "brick-and-mortar" store. In this issue, two rink operators share their thoughts behind selling on the internet.

## Expand with day camps.....9

A new and innovative New Jersey company meshes daycare, camps and an FEC with results that have exceeded the owner's expectations.



In this photo from the soon-to-be-released Drew Barrymore (above second from right) film *Whip It*, the Hurl Scouts, led by Bliss Cavendar (played by Ellen Page) get ready to enter the rink floor for a regional championship bout against arch rivals, the Holy Rollers, led by Iron Maven (played by Juliette Lewis). All roller skates used for the film - and very nicely presented in the lineup, here - were provided by Riedell Skate Co. (Photo Credit: Darren Michaels)

## Hollywood laces up its skates and gets ready to Whip It

By Suzy Weinland

Operators, get ready to roll! The much-anticipated roller derby film *Whip It* will officially release in theaters nationwide on October 9.

*Whip It*, a movie based on the book *Derby Girls*, by screenwriter and Los Angeles Derby

Doll skater Shauna Cross, was handpicked by actress and director Drew Barrymore, and filmed over a year ago in a warehouse in Detroit, Mich.

While Twentieth Century Fox is still very tight-lipped about the upcoming film, and does not yet have much publicity information, The RINKSIDER was able to obtain the insider's

scoop from Riedell Skate Company's Scott Riegelman and Ron Griffin, and Jackie Daniels, cast member Detroit derby team member, and Riedell prototype tester.

Riedell supplied all the skates for all participants in the movie as well as props, such as

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Dianna Carlin (a.k.a. Lola Staar), owner and operator of Dreamland Roller Rink on Coney Island's boardwalk in N.Y., offers custom airbrushed designs to her patrons. Skaters currently can bring in their own skates and pay for the designs, but she's working to begin selling skates from her rink with exclusive Lola Staar designs like this one. (Photo Credit: Norman Blake)

## Ye ol' pro-shop: New twists on an old idea

By Jim Morris

While roller rinks all over the country continue to look for new ways to generate revenue during difficult times, some have taken a second look at the products they already sell - roller skates - and discovered some new ways to generate sales.

### Sell skates and service, too

Over the years, Linda Pena has seen plenty of discount store roller skates come into her rinks. So every chance she gets, she tries to explain the difference between skates bought at a discount store vs. skates purchased at one of her two Skaters Choice shops in Tampa, Fla.

"I let them know that nothing that comes in

a box is ready to skate in," Pena said, "including the skates they buy here. We adjust everything



we sell before people try to skate in them."

Since her shops are located in two USA rinks in Tampa, USA and USA Skateplex, she does most of her business with people who come into the rinks.

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**Roundup** (cont'd from page 1)

Pena and her staff go to great lengths to point out all aspects of skates they sell to make sure the skate is a good fit for the skater who buys it.

"We are the largest full-service roller skating shop in the Tampa Bay area," she explained, "so one of the things we have to sell is our customer service. It's important to let people know we will back everything we sell."

Trust and value are important to Pena since she and her husband and their children run the rinks, making them the fourth generation involved in the roller skating industry.

Pena said her staff will try to service discount store skates, for a charge. But most of the time those skates are throw-aways. If they break, fixing them could cost more than the skate is worth. If you buy the skate at her shop, Pena will fix it free (except for parts).

She said she promotes the skate shop mostly with handouts, announcements and posters at the rinks to make sure every person who comes into the rink is made well aware that skates are for sale there. For the shop's Thanksgiving and Christmas sales she also advertises in a small area newspaper.

Year 'round Pena offers a free skating pass for every \$50 that is spent in the store and a "First time Free" pass to the beginner skate class. "This adds value to the package and also brings them back into your skating facility," said Pena.

Having an item in the window that catches the customer's eye, as well as being a conversation starter, "is a great way to get the customer that might not have been ready to come in and buy a pair of skates to still come into your store," shared Pena. "We have a couple of pairs of high top skates from the '50s as well as a new pair of Powerslide racing inlines with the huge 110mm wheels visible from our window so we attract comments from young and old alike."

Once they come into her store, Pena and her staff get the chance to educate them on the new technology and what they should be looking for in a pair of skates. "Educating your staff is crucial," she explained. "You need to have employees that know and love skating and working for you, and not just someone that can ring up a sale. In this economy, the customer needs to understand why, for an adult, they need to pay more than \$40 for a pair of skates to enjoy their skating experience."

Pena is also the coach of the Tampa Bay Derby Darlin's flat track roller derby team. All of the participants buy their skates and other equipment from Pena. She also sells hockey skates and other styles.

"It's important to have diversity in your product line," she said. "So if someone is involved in hockey, figures, roller derby, roller jam or is just in it for the exercise, they know where to come to buy quality skates that won't let them down."

When her shop sells a pair of skates to a person who wants to skate outside for exercise, she gives them free bearings when they buy a set of outdoor wheels.

"People have gone back to the traditional skates (quads) for outdoor skating," She pointed out. "It gives them stability over the inlines."

Pena also has an online Skaters Choice

shop, but says most of the skates she sells are in person in the two rinks.

**Decorated skates fit rink's concept**

Dianna Carlin has, for the past 15 years, worked at building her businesses around an image of modern fashion and design. And now perhaps more people around Brooklyn, N.Y.'s famous Coney Island know her as Lola Staar.

In fact, the roller skating rink she opened a little more than a year ago on Coney Island's legendary boardwalk is known as Lola Staar's Dreamland Roller Rink. She

also brought in some of New York's top DJs, including the very popular DJ Julio Estian.

Although she had to close her clothing design/souvenir shop at Coney last year – due mostly to local politics and changing land use, she moved it into the rink and hopes to relocate it again soon.

Having all the design elements handy, however, fits right in to the party concept in the rink. And although the rink is just now developing its pro shop, she has come up with a revenue-producing plan that isn't selling skates – it's decorating them.

Customers can bring their skates to her rink on Saturdays and for a few hours she has a person air brushing designs on the boots.



**The One-day Skate Sale at Darrin Veder's Wisconsin rink is in its third year, and selling beyond all expectations.**

won a contest sponsored by Glamour Magazine and designer Tommy Hilfiger that helped her get started.

"We are not like most other roller rinks," Carlin said. "We are located right on the boardwalk next to the beach. We're in a neat historic building – the former Childs Restaurant – and our skating floor is only 40 by 80."

The operation is not exactly typical, either.

"We do parties ... a lot of themed parties," she explained. "The skating is more dance skating. We use a lot of costumes and dress-up."

Since opening in 2008, Dreamland has filled a void left by the closing of two established indoor New York City skating rinks in 2007. Word has gotten around to the regulars at the former rinks who have now become regulars at Dreamland. Carlin has

The cost starts around \$20 and can go up to as much as \$200 depending on how intricate the design is.

These designs have become popular with her regular skaters. On any given night you will see skaters in the rink rolling around with stars, flames, flowers or wings on their skates.

"It's become just as popular with the guys as it is with the girls," Carlin said. "Of course with (the guys) lightning bolts and flames are big."

She said her artist uses a "high quality paint that sticks to leather and won't rub off. In most cases, the design lasts as long as the skates.

Carlin said the rink is getting geared up to sell skates with the Lola Staar design on them. Eventually she plans to sell skates and have customers choose their own designs. Right now they can just choose the designs

for skates they already own and bring in to the artist.

**One-day Sale boosts interest**

Skatetown in Racine, Wisc., has put together some new ideas on one of the oldest revenue producers known to man – a sale.

For two years, the rink has had a One-day Skate Sale. It has been successful beyond the owner's greatest expectations.

"When we started this two years ago, we figured a one-day sale might enable us to sell 30 pairs of skates. It turned out we sold 80. And then we sold about the same number last year," said Darrin Veder, owner of Skatetown since 2000.

He said the first year of the sale they sold only skates they had in stock. They put sale prices on all merchandise that retails for more than \$100. The second year, they allowed people to order skates and they also got the sale price as long as they paid for the skates that day.

"You can't stock every model of skates in all sizes, so we decided to let people order this year. That worked out very well," he explained.

He said anyone who decides to do the one-day sale should have it on a Saturday when the rink is at its busiest.

"If you have a clean, exciting rink with all sorts of things going on, what better way to advertise skating and bring people back to your rink?" he pointed out.

"If people come into an empty rink for the first time to look at your skates, they aren't going to be as enthused as they would when there are people there skating and having a good time. They might think, 'Hey, that looks like fun. I think I will get some skates.'"

So he has the sale on a Saturday during the regular hours of 10 a.m.-11 p.m. He has it in late February when people are receiving tax refunds. Any thought that people would already have skates they received at Christmas wasn't necessarily true.

"Last year we had a strong Christmas sales season and then we did well on our One-Day Sale in February," he said.

To advertise the sale, he said they started about two weeks ahead with in-house signs and promotions. They traded information with other local retailers, who displayed his signs, and then he promoted their stories in his rink later in the year. On the day of the sale, he placed real estate-like signs at all the nearby intersections, saying "Skate Sale Today."

"We had people walk in who saw those signs, but hadn't seen any of our other advertising. They wanted to see what it was all about and when they saw all the people here having a good time, it helped sell some skates."

Veder said the same format should work in any size rink. He has a 20,000-square foot building, but said a nearby rink in a smaller town with less space recently tried the same concept and it, too, was successful.

"Just because you have a small business doesn't mean you have to think small," he said. "If you have an idea and work at it, chances are it will be a success."

"A sale like this is good for roller skating," he added. "To me, it's as much about that as it is about selling skates."