

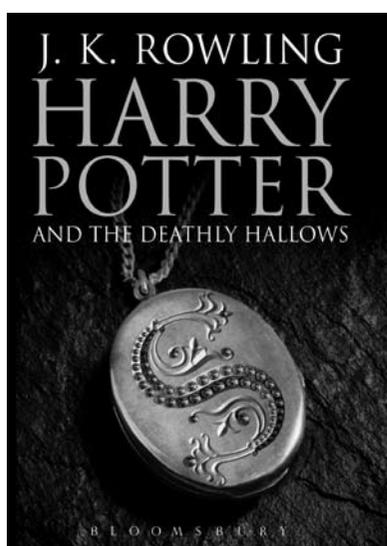
HOT SPOT

By Art Snyder

The start of the school year looks busier and better than ever. That's what is in store for your rink, your cash registers and your bottom line as you look at recent news and developments concerning **Harry Potter**, the **Ghostbusters** franchise, the muscle-flexing **energy shots** beverage category, and one of **Dr. Seuss's** feline creations. All the details are for you to enjoy, below.

Harry Potter

Few doubted the wild success of the sixth and most recent **Harry Potter** film, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, and this phenomenon is almost guaranteed to continue for years to come. The final two installments in the series of **Potter** films will be based on the last novel, *Harry Potter and*



the Deathly Hallows. They are slated to be released in 2010 and 2011, to conclude the program of crafting film versions of the books that have reigned in popularity since the debut of the first novel, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, in 1997. Licensed candy, snacks, school supplies, DVDs and a host of other **Potter** fare should figure in profit centers throughout your rink, from prize drawings and redemption goodies to themed school-age sessions. Remember, too,

that each year will see a new wave of students discovering and enjoying **Harry Potter** books and films. Be sure to consult with your staff to cover all the **Potter** tie-ins and angles that'll prove successful with your customers.

CokeSolutions.com

It's great when you get free help, especially from a renowned entity. That's the lesson from a new Internet site from **Coca-Cola**, called **CokeSolutions.com**. The site is dedicated to marketing ideas, promotions, business solutions and other insights that are tailored to the needs of small business. That thinking fits rinks to the proverbial "T." The

thrust with **CokeSolutions.com**, of course, is with that company's wealth of beverages and how to maximize your profits every day as you offer carbonated **Coca-Cola** varieties, teas, waters, energy drinks, sports drinks and new beverages, like **Coke's** fruit-based **Fuze** line. The advice on market trends and promotions is especially helpful, and the information truly is free. Much of it, too, can apply to similar beverages from **Pepsi-Cola**, for example, if you're not a "Coke rink." Whatever your beverage offerings, spend time at **CokeSolutions.com** and gain that competitive edge. That'll make customers happy and profits soar.

Cheese Jerky

Beef jerky and related dried-meat varieties — **Slim Jim** is a favorite — are a handy, tasty snack, perfect for active rink consumers. Now, added fun, taste and profit-making opportunity are here:

"Snack Patrol, LLC, has developed a new snack called **Cheese Jerky®** that combines shredded beef jerky with string cheese. This new product, which is already available in stores across the United States, offers a previously impossible variation of string cheese," according to Snack Patrol's



"Chief Snack Technician" (and founder and CEO), Ross Segel. "This product is unique, in that it's not just a new product, it's a new category."

Cheese Jerky® is available in two flavors: **Original Cheese Jerky®** and **Peppered Cheese Jerky®**, with more to come, such as **Pepperoni**, **Habanera**, **Jamaican** and **Chipotle**. The snack is sold in 1.5-ounce sticks, and it needs refrigeration.

Your rink customers are on the lookout for new taste sensations, and your bottom line is ready for a lift, thanks to the rink-friendly

Harry Potter, Ghostbusters, energy shots and more

prospects of **Cheese Jerky®**, so contact your suppliers today to see how **Cheese Jerky®** can join your foodservice team. For more, visit cheesejerky.com.

Ghostbusters forever

You first saw **Ghostbusters** fever at your rink back in 1984, when the original version of that now-cult film came to life in theaters. A sci-fi comedy hit with young and old alike, **Ghostbusters** strengthened its grip on the public imagination with an irresistible soundtrack and its singalong lyrics, written and performed by Ray Parker, Jr. Adding to the quarter-century legend was a 1989 film sequel, some video and computer games (among other licensed fare), and two animated TV versions, for the pleasure of the younger set, and now yet another big-screen installment of the franchise — **Ghostbusters 3** — is in development for release in 2010. On the heels of all this **Ghostbusters** activ-

ity is the huge hit **Ghostbusters: The Video Game**. It's available in all major video formats (Nintendo DS, Nintendo Wii, PlayStation 3, PlayStation 2, and Xbox 360), and a PC version for Windows is next. Throughout your rink, the siren call of **Ghostbusters** can pump your profit levels to new heights, especially with the start of a new school year. Let's hear it for **Ghostbusters** drawings, contests and redemption items, as well as themed **Ghostbusters** sessions for several age groups. Have your staff in appropriate **Ghostbusters** costumes, as well, and consider prizes for **Ghostbusters** lookalike contests during such sessions. And peering months ahead, the Halloween 2010 weekend looks like a superb fit for a themed **Ghostbusters** session. Mark your calendar. Fun is in the air!

McDonald's, BP ampm

When competition for the leisure dollar intensifies, even the biggest companies realize that it's time to ramp up and deal those incentives and freebies. **McDonald's**, for example, has advertised its "Free Mocha Mondays," and has all of its thousands of participating units giving customers a free iced or hot mocha (from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.). The result? More customer traffic and greater profits. You can be sure that to meet their goals, **McDonald's** has asked for and gotten some volume and pricing discounts from their suppliers. Similarly, **BP's ampm** con-



venience marts have developed a "Twofer on Tea" ready-to-drink tea promotion (it ran earlier this year in the West, and it's launching now in the East). Sales of ready-to-drink tea have been outstanding and a very fast-growing beverage category, so **BP's ampm** units have been able to lure customers with an irresistible money-saver, and turbocharge tea sales overall. The lessons for rink operators are clear: 1.) Beat your competition with dollar-stretching offers for the public, 2.) boost weekly customer counts, 3.) add some zip to your beverage lineup, and 4.) ask your suppliers for assistance with marketing, advertising and volume pricing.

Energy shots

Energy shots have developed into a tremendous growth area for the beverage industry, so it's time to add one or two energy shot brands to your snack and vending areas and promote like crazy. (*Crazy* is an apt word here, since an energy shot typically has only 2 ounces of the drink, yet it's priced at a high premium, generally from \$1.79 to \$2.79 per 2-ounce serving.) The appeal of energy shots

lies in their concentrated, presumed near-magical ingredients, often with loads of caffeine and a dollop of vitamins, herbs, amino acids and other such assets. Among the top energy shot brands (in various flavors) are **Coke's Full Throttle Quick Shot**, **Pepsi's AMP Energy Shot**, **Red Bull Energy Shot**, **iSatori's Hardcore Energize Bullet** and **5-Hour Energy**. **Coke** also is marketing its newer **NOS Power Shot**, and that alone should make it into the Top 10 energy shot brands. No one knows how long the energy shot train will roll, so get on board and see for yourself what kind of profitable future the category has for your rink.

Dr. Seuss's Cat in the Hat

For the young at heart and the forever young, consider **Dr. Seuss** and his sprightly feline with the perfect noggin-topper, **Dr. Seuss's Cat in the Hat**. Yes, the beloved **Cat in the Hat** is back, or will be, thanks to the broadcast TV network PBS Kids. They'll bring **Dr. Seuss's Cat in the Hat** back to animation life next year, when the new series **The Cat in the Hat Knows a lot About That!** makes its debut. In addition to the 40 programs already in production, **Seuss** will be available by way of a new series of books, too, and companion **Seuss** offerings will be online and interactive. Other marketing and licensing should ensure full exposure of **Dr. Seuss's Cat in the Hat** with the target group of children. For you, borrow the **Cat's** thinkin' hat and see what you can parlay at your rink, especially with new themed birthday parties and daycare sessions. Remember **Seuss**-licensed items for your redemption and vending areas, as well.

Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen

The **Transformers** Hollywood franchise has enjoyed record-setting theater ticket sales with this year's **Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen**, and that bodes well for rinks in the year ahead, and beyond, especially with your school-age customers. The film's popularity has benefited sales of specially licensed themed **M&M's** and **Snickers Nougabot** candies, and that should play into stronger sales of those candies at your rink throughout the months ahead. Your supplier should have appropriate **Transformers**-themed advertising materials and signage, and even if you missed heavy **Transformers** promotions in recent months, get on the bandwagon this fall, especially during school and other youth sessions. Also, **7-Eleven** has created a major, national **Transformers** marketing campaign and introduced a new **BUMBLEBEE Blast** Slurpee drink that keys on a **Transformers** robot character, to help ensure demand for similarly licensed tie-ins. Again, **Transformers** demand grows daily, so look for redemption items and giveaway and prize materials in the **Transformers** vein. Note that an Xbox 360 **Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen** video game is in the works, and that may be a winner for you, as well.

Art Snyder is a regular RINKSIDER contributor who specializes in marketing and technology. He lives in Centerville, Ohio.

Special Olympics focus on fun, honor Ohio coach

By Melanie Oyster

A group of very special roller skaters gathered in Columbus, Ohio, the last weekend of June. They arrived ready for fun, competition and camaraderie, and also for the unique opportunity to honor a coach for his outstanding dedication to the



Unified Pairs competitor Anthony DeVallie helps partner/coach Amber Shultz, from the skating floor. Both hail from Cuyahoga County's Brookpark Skateland, owned by Tent Badnan and Neil and Thelma Bradnan.

group and to roller skating.

The skaters, part of Special Olympics Ohio, competed with each other and cheered each other on in the 2009 State Summer Games roller skating events, held at USA Skate in Columbus. Special Olympics Ohio is part of the international Special Olympics organization, which serves nearly 200 million people around the world who have intellectual disabilities.

Jack Muransky, manager of the former Youngstown Skate for 30 years, was honored by Special Olympics Ohio as "2009 State Summer Games Honorary Coach." Muransky's work with roller skating and Special Olympics began before roller skating was an official sport with Special Olympics. Muransky brought a roller skating team to the summer games 22 years ago, to see how the sport would fit with Special Olympics.

Apparently, roller skating made a good fit as a Special Olympics sport. Muransky said he has been involved with roller skating and Special Olympics ever since.

Starting out as a coach for athletes in the Youngstown area, Muransky branched out to recruit rink owners and operators to provide sessions for Special Olympics athletes, to train coaches around the state, and to involve more athletes in roller skating for Special Olympics. In 1995, the first group of U.S. skaters participated in the World Games — with Muransky as Team USA skating coach. Since those games in Connecticut, Muransky has taken Team USA skaters to World Games as far away as Ireland and

China, and in addition, he currently serves as a state area director.

Special Olympics "best experience"

Muransky, who has taught competitive skating and had national champions, said his work with Special Olympics has been "probably the best experience I've ever had." In contrast to the pressure and emphasis on winning and losing usually associated with competitive skating, Muransky said athletes at Special Olympics games are focused on something else.

"Here they have fun," Muransky said.

"It's a great experience to come and see these kids skate and get awards. They are so happy." All Special Olympics participants receive first, second, or third place medals, or ribbons for fourth place or

for me to get a medal myself." Ball pointed out a contestant who had never skated before



Jack Muransky (right), manager of Youngstown Skate but known throughout Ohio and the nation for his involvement in Special Olympics, looks over a first-place medal with two competitors from Brunswick Skate Station in Medina County, Billy Mitchell and Heather Colbow. For his long-time dedication to Special Olympics, Jack was honored as the 2009 State Summer Games Honorary Coach.

attending her rink's Special Olympics sessions. Now the young woman is getting a medal, Ball said.

Brunswick Skate Station sponsors an Artistic Club with 29 members, including 10 Special Olympics athletes who made the trip to Columbus for the State Summer Games, Ball said.

Roller skating events at the 2009 State Summer Games included free-style, solo, pairs, and team dance; slalom; school figures; 30- to 1000-meter races; and 200-meter relays. Several events with "unified" designations paired Special Olympics athletes and coaches. Nearly 3000 Ohio athletes ages 8 to 70 years old and their coaches trained for the games.



Missy Ferguson (center), from Brookpark Skateland in Cuyahoga County, receives congratulations and support from new friend Manpriet Thomas (left) and Ginny Cassano, a skating coach. Missy finished the 500-meter race despite a spill and skinned knee. The rink is owned by Tent Badnan and Neil and Thelma Bradnan.

participation, Muransky explained.

Another roller skating coach at Special Olympics Ohio who talked about her experience with Special Olympics was Janet Ball. Ball and rink partner Bruce Lane own Brunswick Skate Station, southwest of Cleveland. This is Ball's fifth year as an owner and fourth year at the Ohio Summer Games. She said that when she, as the rink's new owner, was first invited to attend the Special Olympics session at her rink, her response was cool.

"I'll come this Sunday — but I don't know if I'll be able to come every Sunday," she said she told the group. Ball has been to every session since.

Owner proud of athletes

Ball and Lane recently returned from regional competition where they placed third, but she said "it's more fun to watch them (the Special Olympics athletes) get a medal than



Sarah Kiziah, who won a first place medal in the 100-meter race, stands in front of a display at USA Skate in Columbus, Ohio. USA Skate hosted skating events for the Ohio Special Olympics competition on June 27. Sarah's home rink is Brunswick Skate Station in Medina County, owned by Janet Ball and Bruce Lane.