

# HOT SPOT

By Art Snyder

As with other profit centers, your snack, foodservice and related vending areas are as good as you make them. Thankfully, food and beverage manufacturers understand this, and that means better profits for you — even in this most challenging time for the economy. Since rinks traditionally have stood for fun and good value, give thanks for a wealth of items that are perfect for rink use: Go Fast Energy Drink, Honest Kids beverages, Cheez-Its and *Ghostbusters*, a film franchise and cultural phenomenon that's beginning a year-long celebration. Details are below.

## Go Fast Energy Drink

Go Fast Energy Drink promotes itself with a tag line that makes it a natural fit with today's rink customer:



*The Athlete's Energy Drink™.* That sentiment holds for a range of after-school, private, evening, weekend and other sessions that pull customers into your rink — Monday through Sunday. And let's include members of your roller hockey teams, of course. Go Fast might be the ideal beverage to feature during those action-packed hockey times, as it's loaded with vitamins, ginseng and other beneficial ingredients. Go Fast marketing has highlighted skydiving, snowboarding, jet events and cycling activities, for example, on television and Internet sites like YouTube and Go Fast's own site. The company sponsors

## Spotlight on Go Fast Energy Drink, Cheez-Its, Ghostbusters

specific, well-promoted athletic events, too — it was founded in 1996 by world-class skydiver Troy Widgery — so if you have a roller exhibition, competition or similar rink idea to run by them, visit their Web site at [gofastsports.com](http://gofastsports.com) and check out the process. The preservative-free beverage has the support of parents and foodservice officials alike, and a company spokesman said, "Both Go Fast Original and Go Fast Light have a great taste without a medicinal flavor or aftertaste. They are lightly carbonated ... and formulated with honey, instead of high-fructose corn syrup."

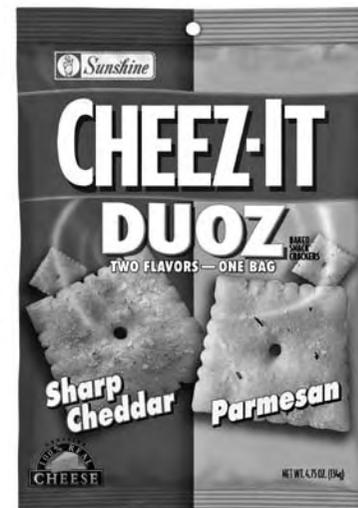
### Honest Kids, Honest Ades

Honest Tea is making a huge name for itself as a favorite of President Barack Obama, and this "glow" is following the company's Honest Kids and Honest Ades lines that are receiving

great press. The company enhanced its stature with young people by unveiling a new lineup of Honest Kids low-sugar, organic beverages in handy plastic bottles and pouches with a fresh redesign. Among the Honest Kids flavors are berry lemonade, grape and tropical varieties. Honest Ade thirst-quenchers in plastic bottles offer lime, orange-mango, cranberry-lemon and others. Also, Honest Tea has tweaked the formulas of their several ready-to-drink teas, to strengthen their appeal with consumers of nearly all ages. (See the January/February issue of *The RINKSIDER* for more on *Honest Tea*.)

### Volt

Volt states their case, and skater appeal, with the tag "High-Perfor-



all who eat snacks, and the parent company has enhanced the brand with its "double-flavored" Cheez-It DuoZ. These variations on the original snack cracker offer two tastes in each box of crackers, with equal numbers of flavorful cheese crackers. Sharp Cheddar and Parmesan Cheez-It DuoZ is one variety, and Zesty Queso and Cheddar Blanco DuoZ is another.

While Cheez-It DuoZ joins the Cheez-It family that has dozens of varieties, the Cheez-It cracker innovators see new taste-temptations on the horizon: Going into national distribution this spring are Cheez-It Pepper Jack, with lip-smacking pepper-jack cheese, and Cheez-It Scrabble Junior™ crackers. Yes, these Scrabble Junior™ crackers enjoy the original cracker's cheddar flavor, but with actual alphabet letters on the crackers. Play the game and eat it, too! Look for several variations on the Cheez-It brand to spice up your foodservice options as the school year winds down.

### Snapple, Venom Energy news

The Dr Pepper Snapple Group of beverages continues to show strength, and that can boost fountain and vending sales at your rink. First, a listing of company drink families: Dr Pepper, 7up, Sunkist and Canada Dry are the flagship brands, while Motts is the juice brand and Venom Energy is the representative in the newest category, energy.

Snapple Premium and Sunkist families have new packaging designs for 2009, in a bid to revitalize the brands. Canada Dry has sales up almost 10 percent with its latest variant, Green Tea Ginger Ale, and a diet version of that line is in the works. Additional brand extensions this spring for the youth-oriented Venom Energy group include Mango and Fruit Punch, and these fruit-flavored variants are seen as a bid to meet the taste preferences of Hispanic consumers, among others. Keep that in mind if your rink has a sizable Hispanic demographic or if you'd like to reach out to these consumers if they are underserved in your area. Other brand introductions for this year

mance Sports Drinks," and a direct call to consumers who live by Mountain Dew. Some Volt outreach has been via Facebook, Guitar Hero, MySpace.com, MTV and several other brands and locales that are favorites with your school-age crowds. It's time to pump up the push for Volt at your rink during youth sessions, so ask your supplier for signage and other marketing materials, as well as discounts that'll allow you to announce energized 2-for-1 Volt offers. Their flavors include Volt Citrus Shock (an energy drink), lemon-lime, raspberry, orange and tropical punch.

### Cheez-It DuoZ

From Sunshine, Cheez-It DuoZ are almost guaranteed high demand by the under-21 set (and older skaters, too, for that matter). The original Cheez-It brand has become iconic with nearly

will have Cherry Dr Pepper (Dr Pepper already has a cherry flavor, but the new

variety will have cherry more dominant) and Cherry 7Up with antioxidant qualities. Finally, Motts looks to capitalize on rising consumer demand for healthier juice beverages by adding vitamin C.

**Ghostbusters rules**

You can celebrate your rink's 25 years of *Ghostbusters* tradition — money-making mania, perhaps — with a new, contemporary approach: a video game console. As the original Sony Pictures' *Ghostbusters* and the follow-up *Ghostbusters II* have made their mark, Atari has designed *Ghostbusters* as an interactive game, and officials say the game will be manufactured to the formats of the top five game systems. These count Xbox 360, Nintendo DS, Nintendo Wii, PlayStation 3 and PlayStation 2, with a Windows variant after that. All will be ready for retail this year. To honor the *Ghostbusters* story's legendary appeal, Sony has a first-rate marketing plan to get the word out about the film's anniversary. This marketing will feature licensed comic books, toys and T-shirts, among other items youngsters enjoy. Some items might be ideal for your redemption area, as well as for drawings and other giveaways during school sessions. Prop replicas from the *Ghostbusters* world are especially popular, and they'll be available at retail, too.

These look as if they have rink potential at any number of your profit centers. Additional good news to help sales and other rink promotions: A *Ghostbusters* theme park will open, sure to keep the franchise on the pre-teen and teen radar, and to cement outreach, Sony will make *Ghostbusters* videos available on Blu-ray in the months ahead. That should work for year-end rink promotions and redemption use for the autumn and Christmas holidays.

**Short takes**

•Coke Zero is showing very strong sales, despite overall softening demand for traditional carbonated beverages. Advertising gets a boost, so add Coke Zero to your snack bar and vending areas.

•Vitaminwater is playing on its sports strength as an enhanced-water beverage, and hockey appears to be its sport of choice. (The Syracuse Crunch American Hockey League team, for example, had a giveaway for its fans, in partnership with Vitaminwater.) A subsidiary of Coca-Cola, Vitaminwater has posted great sales, so consider the brand, especially if you conduct hockey sessions.

•Red Bull gets bigger, with the debut of a larger-sized beverage container of the leading energy drink. Red Bull is right for many rinks, especially those with a large, active

number of customers in their teens.

•The energy drink Cocaine has a lot of negatives with its name, as reported here in the past, and the state of Texas recently banned it. Your rink deserves better than any such controversy, so be advised.

•Full Throttle Fury Energy Drink has opted for celebrity marketing with Big Boi, the leader of the pacesetter rap group Outkast. A Full Throttle Session might be a good idea if your customer base counts a sizable number of rap fans. Full Throttle is a brand in the Coca-Cola family, so talk to them about sponsorship, discounts and marketing signs and related materials.

•Subway looks to get its fresh-food menu noticed with advertising that keys on sports celebrities. Michael Strahan, Reggie Bush, Ryan Howard, Tony Parker, Laila Ali, Michael Phelps and Kimmie Meissner are among them. Talk to your nearby Subway eatery for some rink cross-coupons, and see if you can set up a Subway-sponsored session, giveaway, redemption coupons or other marketing at your rink, especially during school and hockey sessions. Subway might be perfect as your hockey underwriter.

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