

# Here comes EPIC Rollertainment: ‘Embracing the weird’ in Southern California

By *Connie Evener*

Shawna Grammatico has been “wishing on a star” for the last ten years, and it looks like her dream, a roller rink for Murietta, Calif., is finally coming true. When Grammatico spoke with *The Rinksider*, she was up to her ears with construction and all the squeaky wheels demanding grease that a soon-to-happen grand opening generates.

Grammatico is, per the beach/surfer lingo of her Southern California home, “amped.” And so is the entire community, where people shout to her on the street – even when she’s idling at a red light – about how thrilled they are to have a roller rink on the way. “Coincidentally, Murietta and (neighboring) Temecula now have their very first roller derby team, the Wine Town Rollers, and they have been extremely instrumental in word-of-mouth advertising,” said Grammatico.

Murietta grew a whopping 233.7 percent between the 2000 and 2010 censuses, and the city’s churches, schools and businesses have been struggling to keep up. Adult entertainment, including wineries and Indian casinos, is available nearby, but entertainment for kids hasn’t kept up with demand.

Three years ago Grammatico and her husband, Joe, began working with the

man she calls her “rock,” Bill Carlson of U-Profit. When Carlson did an assessment of the area, he advised the Grammaticos that 50 percent of the area’s population is under the age of 18. Grammatico, who has two sons, relates to parents seeking healthy activities for their kids. “I was born and raised in Omaha, Nebraska, and I had every birthday party until I was 12 at Skateland,” said Grammatico. “Amazing as technology is – X-Box, texting, Facebook – I’m afraid kids nowadays are losing that face-to-face connection, the exercise and social aspects of roller skating.”

When the Grammaticos attended the 2012 RSA-ILTA Convention in Las Vegas, they were rolling right along. Then one of the presenters brought them up short. Grammatico doesn’t remember his name, but his message altered their plans dramatically:

“He was asking, ‘What’s your theme? What’s your brand? Because otherwise, you have no identity and you’re just like everybody else,’” recalled Grammatico. Until then they’d planned to call the rink Rockin’ Rollin’ and “I had the L’s as little skates and the O’s were records,” she said.

But that branding question was an “Aha!” moment. Later, at Caesar’s Palace, they had a brainstorming session. What would be a uniquely Southern California theme that all those under-eighteen-year-olds would identify with? The answer had



*The entrance to Epic Rollertainment, Murietta, Calif.*

been staring them in the face all along: the beach, of course! They pulled out their iPhones and began Googling beach terms. When the right word came up, they knew it. It’s a term that crops up almost as often as “awesome” on Venice Beach, where beach skating was practically invented. A surfer site called Kranky Kids provides a “gnarly” definition for “epic,” the word that will define their brand: “the best, near-perfect, not ordinary at all, as in best ride ever. It was epic, dude.”

But how do you pull “epic” together with skating and entertainment? At first, they were thinking along the lines of “Epic Roller Rink Fun Zone.” But it just didn’t deliver the kick they were looking for. “I was thinking, okay, what says roller skating and entertainment,” said Grammatico. “So we put the two words together and came up with ‘rollertainment.’”

The beach theme turned out to be an even better choice when it came time to transform a 28,000-square-foot former furniture store into EPIC Rollertainment. “We don’t have any investors,” explained Grammatico, “so we had to do this as reasonably as possible. We had to have a concept and a theme and a brand that we could afford to do ourselves. A beach is very casual. You don’t need granite in the bathrooms or fancy/schmancy things.”

When customers arrive for the grand opening, planned for early November, they’ll walk into a facility with the beach/skating floor on the right, and the boardwalk with its café (“an actual indoor food truck”) party rooms, retail store and skate counter on the left. “The concept behind the rink is that it’s the ocean, with the sandy beach around it,” explained Grammatico. And, she said, there will be an island right in the middle of the ocean. “That’s where our deejay will be.”

“Seeing this ‘monstrosity’ that I’ve dreamt of forever actually come to life is so surreal – and so rewarding,” said Grammatico. But it’s not all sunshine and perfect waves. Unforeseen problems and details can sometimes be overwhelming. “Yesterday we had a situation where we were knocking a wall down and the sprinklers went off. You just have to roll with those little moments,” she said, noting that it helps to repeat the mantra provided by their designer, Doug Wilkerson, of Dynamic Designs/Studio 41-B: “Embrace the weird!”

For updates on new developments and to get a sense of how Grammatico is keeping local interest at fever pitch, check out EPIC Rollertainment’s Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/epicks8](http://www.facebook.com/epicks8).



*Graphic renderings show how the walls and facilities will be painted in the redemption, snack bar and pro shop areas at Epic Rollertainment, Murietta, Calif.*