

Orlando rink's 30 years in theme parks help create Disney-styled experience

By Jan Mowle

In the mecca of theme-park heaven, outside of Orlando, Let's Skate Orlando in Winter Garden, Fla., has the added benefit of having been designed by a family who has worked in the theme-park industry for more than 30 years. Phyllis Ray, her husband and three daughters have taken their expertise from working with Disney and Universal studios and opened a 25,000 square-foot "recreation attraction."

Phyllis and family have been in the business of designing, installing and fabricating large figurines and sets for the theme-park industry and have also worked on productions for companies such as Frito-Lay, Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Taco Bell and KFC. Ray Productions designed the Jedi stage at Hollywood Studios for the 30th anniversary of Star Wars and worked on Mickey's Not So Scary Halloween Gallery for years.

"We take ideas from concept to completion," she said. The company has won many national and international awards and is one of the few companies outside of Disney licensed to build its iconic characters.

Phyllis and her daughters – ages 48, 45 and 42 – knew they would have a blast translating this knowledge into the

fun-center arena, so they put in plenty of hours, researched the roller skating industry and learned a lot.

"We have loved every minute of it," she said. "It's something fun we can do within 15 miles of all of our houses."

With a 12,000-square-foot skate floor, their own Facebook page and a variety of food, drinks and games, Let's Skate Orlando highlights what they do best – themed parties. In a high-tech atmosphere with blasts of color and music to fit the tempo, an energizing mood helps the fun times roll and makes skating to the beat a blast, Ray said.

In addition, popping light effects, black lights and a neon rink make Let's Skate Orlando "unlike any other rink in the area," Ray added. Let's Skate Orlando also speeds forward with free Wi-Fi, making the entertainment center a place for all ages.

The recreation center has five major themed party rooms. The "Perfect Party for a Princess" room is all pink and contains turrets that make it appear castle-like.

"All girly-girls love this party," Ray said, "and it can easily be designed for a fancy tea party or for a sparkling party to help make a girl's dream come true. It's for princesses of all ages. We once had a

party for a 30-year-old birthday princess.

"One young girl said of the princess room, 'This is just so much more adult,'" Ray chuckled.

The "Forbidden Pirate's Adventure" room allows party-goers to creep into the forbidden Blackburn's Cave and go

The "It's Time to Celebrate!" room has been themed with décor to create excitement and fun with confetti, streamers and bright, shining colors to make it gender and age-appropriate for everyone, Ray said. "The celebrations are really adaptable to any theme in this room," she added.

The "Let's Skate!" room has a fun, party theme for everyone who loves skating.

Let's Skate Orlando holds on average about 25 parties a weekend. "We take care of it all," Ray said. "We provide the pizza, drinks, plastic ware and more. We even cut the cake and put it on plates, so the parents really don't have to do anything."

Birthday parties run \$250 for 11 kids, including the birthday boy or girl, for one hour. Each party has its own party attendant. The female party attendants wear shirts that say "party girl," while the male party attendants wear shirts that say, "This is how we roll."

The rooms aren't just for birthdays, Ray added. The rink had a class reunion that has come back twice now and even hosted a divorce party. They also host school-spirit parties and give 20 percent of the proceeds back to the schools. Universal Studios has also rented the rink for a team-building event.



Let's Skate Orlando's princess-themed party room is geared toward princesses of all ages.

aboard a 17th-century galleon.

"It's just right," Ray said, "for the captain and his or her mates to celebrate and walk the plank."

The VIP Rock Star Bash takes revelers behind the velvet rope, where they can party backstage.

"It allows the attendees to celebrate and to party like a rock star," Ray said. "The room is designed to appeal to all ages."



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