

Rink ministry is home to roller skaters

By Roberta E. Molaro

How does a pastor bring his ministry to today's young people when statistics show that modern teens aren't filling the pews to any great degree? Pastor Tony Nolan's solution five years ago was to bring his family's ministry to the kids by opening a roller rink. He stumbled on the idea after regularly passing a building that had been empty for years. "Someday," he told his son, "I'm going to bring my ministry to that place." Finally, he approached the owner and struck a bargain.

Being totally unfamiliar with the roller rink business didn't prove to be the major handicap it could have been. Unhindered by pre-conceived, conventional concepts, the Nolan family got support, advice and backing from relatives, friends and acquaintances. Together, they were able to raise enough funds to add color and improvements to the formerly drab interior and make it an inviting home for roller skaters.

The name of the rink, "HOME," evolved because they knew many children's family lives were chaotic, with some more hostile than hospitable. The goal was not to cram religion down their throats, but to provide a refuge, in a place with a welcoming name that offered comfort. Pastor Tony shared, "HOME is an acronym for Healing Outreach Ministries

for Everyone."

One of the things that makes the rink stand out is the background music played during sessions and parties, such as Christian and cleaned-up secular tunes. A bold decision, perhaps, but accepted by their predominantly 8 to 16-year-old patrons. "They mostly come to hang out with friends," said Pastor Tony, "so the music is secondary."

Asked how he handles requests for less-than-acceptable tunes, he replied, "We simply say, 'we don't have it' --or-- 'we tell them we don't have it.'"

An approval rating of mostly five stars on Facebook, along with no negative comments, affirms the Nolans and staff are meeting guest needs and making a positive impact in their community.

Pastors Tony and his wife of 34 years, Crystal, spearhead the venture, assisted by daughter Stacia and son-in-law Omar Muhammad. Stacia is the party coordinator and kitchen manager. Son Jay Nolan and his wife are also an important part of the team, as well as grandsons Donnic, Adrian, Aiden, Devon, and Elijah who pitch in to help where needed.

When they're not holding public sessions, private parties help fill up the schedule and pay the bills. The music selection doesn't seem to make a difference to skaters from the local schools, scouts and churches who patronize HOME.

The ready-to-play music is pur-



The redemption counter at Home Roller Rink is a popular place.

chased from various sources with thousands of "G-rated" tunes on their music computer using a Virtual DJ program. One of Nolan's adult sons oversees the music programming.

Pastor Tony admits, "In the beginning we had to deal with a gang problem." In order to assure a safe haven for his young patrons, he told each gang member that if they didn't want to follow the rules, they were not welcome. How did that go over? "They're still coming," he stated.

There is a lot of competition for family activities during the summer months, nearby beaches, beautiful weather and wide open spaces that brings people outdoors, instead of the rink. After riding out

the recent slim summer Pastor Tony and his crew are hoping for a good 2014-15 season.

HOME Roller Rink's mission is "Caring, connecting, creating paths to Christ." The foremost goal of Pastor Tony, his family and staff, without being preachy, is to live and demonstrate their message daily.

Their Vision: To offer a family-friendly facility where all can come HOME and enjoy themselves! "We also desire to reach and connect with the youth of this community and provide them with positive role models and a direct path to Christ by showing them they are important and we care for them!"

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