

# Hollister, Calif., Junior Derby Girls give back to the community that helps them fund their team

By Kathy Bergstrom

The girls that participate in the Hollister Junior Derby Girls program in Hollister, Calif., have to brush up on their sales skills while they're working on their derby moves.

The girls already pay \$50 a month to skate and practice at the Hollister Derby Girls Warehouse, but they need to raise an additional \$300 annually to cover the costs of uniforms, coaching, travel to competitions and other expenses.

Ashley Schwartz, also known by her derby name, Ruby Slip-Her, started the Hollister Derby Girls about two and a half years ago. The program formerly included an adult team but now focuses mostly on the junior derby league team.

Schwartz operates the Hollister Derby Girls skating facility, which is a former warehouse and a skate shop there called Ruby Red Skates. The program is challenging to maintain financially, but Schwartz believes in the value of the program.

Junior derby participants range in age from 4 to 18 and include a steady base of about 30 girls, Schwartz said. "They can come here and feel strong, and it's about wearing our personality on the outside and being confident enough to do that," she said of the derby program. "It's telling the girls

that they have the power to go out there and be feminine and as tough as anybody else."

Derby team members do fund raisers every month. They have included bake sales, car washes, chocolate bar sales, raffles and the sale of meals provided by the caterer parent of one of the team members.

In addition to paying for their own expenses, the fund raisers also help cover the expenses for those girls who can't afford to pay the regular skating fees on their own, Schwartz said. "We don't turn anybody away," she said.

Fund raising also teaches the girls about the value of hard work, Schwartz said. "They're learning that to do something, it costs money, and they have goals to reach," she said. "There is that element of responsibility and stepping up and being a part of it."

There's also an element of fun, she said.

Efforts can be as simple as bake sales set up in the parking lot of a local supermarket. They are often very effective, because sometimes people will give a large donation and only take a small item, Schwartz said.

Chocolate bar sales, however, are also successful because they are regular and can be held year round, she noted.

Schwartz also leases out the Hollister Derby Girls Warehouse for birthday parties, and one or two derby girls will help provide entertainment, which also can count toward



Hollister, Calif., Junior Derby girls at their 2011 toy drive.

their fund-raising total.

Only the girls who participate in the fund raisers benefit from the money raised during that event, so they see the benefit of their work. Schwartz estimated the girls might spend about two days of each month at a fund-raising event.

The derby girls also take time to give back to the community that supports them, Schwartz said. In November and December,

the girls collected items for a toy drive sponsored by a local television station.

"The kids want to give back to the community. There are a lot of different things that we can get involved in, especially around the holidays. They always choose the kids," she said.

In 2011, the derby girls collected two Volkswagen vans full of items for the toy drive, Schwartz said.

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