

# American Skating Association offers education programs, marketing benefits

By Suzy Weinland

About four years ago, Sandra Levin and her husband Daniel, who own Orbit Skate Center in Palatine, Ill., had a big idea. What if they could educate people nationwide on the health benefits of roller skating while offering a “buy-in” to a benefits and discounts package that would actually help Americans achieve and maintain good health?

With a background in the insurance biz for Sandra and in the medical field for Daniel, this was a natural progression for the couple. There were long discussions with key people in the roller skating and insurance industries, lots of research, and after three plus years – in September 2009 – the American Skating Association (ASA) was born. The three ASA directors include Sandra Levin, Daniel Levin and Roger Wampach, a well-known skating teacher, award-winning skater and former physics teacher.

The ASA is a non-profit association, currently working toward 501(c)(3) status, said Sandra Levin. “Our purpose is to improve the health and well-being of Americans through skating activities,” she explained, emphasizing that they are in no way trying to compete with other roller skating organizations, such as the RSA.

## Membership levels

There are three levels of ASA membership: skaters and families, rink owners/operators and staff, and merchants.

“Every area of skating is eligible for ASA membership, from roller to derby and hockey, and even ice-skaters,” said Levin. “Retired skaters, anyone who even likes watching skating, can join. You can join as an individual or as a family.”

A rink owner who is an ASA member can sign up their employees – as Levin did – for \$35 per individual and \$50 per family. “They all have their own card with the (ASA) logo on it, and they get all these benefits. So it makes me look like the good guy.” In fact, any rink who joins the ASA – at \$250 a year – will get two free benefit packages worth \$50 each, which they can give to key employees and their families.

For merchants who join, “the benefit is in gaining new customers and being a sponsor in spreading the word about skating and healthy living,” explained Levin. “Merchants that have compatible companies – skate manufacturers, business consultants, artists, website writers – anyone that can offer our member skaters good things, and they have to give them deals, can join. SP Teri boot company and Savage Pro Audio just came on board.”

Excel Skating Rink Consultants is a merchant-level member, and when a rink joins they receive a free marketing publication put out by Excel called Skating through the Generations. “It’s a 35-page PDF file that

explains every single age group, the years they were born, what they’re looking for, what advertising appeals to them...even down to what color (a specific) age group likes the best,” said Levin.



## Benefits with membership

Included with all levels of ASA membership are such benefits as legal aid at a flat, capped rate, travel club and rental car discounts, grocery coupons, up to 84-percent savings at Office Depot, 20-percent savings at such retail outlets at Popcorn Factory and 1-800-Flowers, plus other perks.

Additional available benefits include a short-term health insurance plan that covers catastrophic incidents as well as certain preventative care, which is renewable every 12 months. By adding a dental and/or vision option, members get a large discount off retail prices of office visits, procedures and products, such as frames and lenses. Plus there’s no annual limit.

There is even a ‘child only’ component that is part of the short-term health insurance option. Levin explained that this is very helpful to parents who are under court orders to insure their children.

As an example of vision savings, Levin shared, “Lenses for my glasses normally cost \$368. I got a 60-percent discount on them.” She also was able to save \$250 a month on dental premiums by switching to the ASA’s dental option for \$6 a month, which still covers the same number of family members.

“We work with an administration company called Select Benefits who has done this for 20 years. Usually, these types of benefits are only available to large companies such as Coca-Cola, Ralston-Purina, etc. This can help a lot of people,” said Levin.

“When we reach 5,000 members, we can start offering regular health insurance,” she added. “We’ve got big companies looking at this and waiting to see if this works. We need to get the rinks behind it. They have to promote their community and get their employees and their families signed up because this helps everybody.”

## ASA as a rink marketing tool

As rink owners join the ASA, they can then turn around and use it as a marketing tool by offering membership to skaters and their families, explained Levin. An owner can build a loyal following of ASA members within their community by offering discounts on admission, snack bar or even pro-shop purchases to those who show their ASA

membership card at the rink. In return, rink owners benefit by “having people skate more often because it’s more affordable with their skaters in the ASA,” Levin suggested.

“At Orbit, my skaters show their card at the window and we take \$1 off their admis-

membership provides or leads to marketing to and educating the public about the benefits of roller skating.

The ASA’s Articles of Purpose state that the association is there to: “sponsor seminars to its members on health related and skating topics; to provide instruction to skating rinks and individuals on skating techniques; to educate its members on the benefits of skating as related to health and well-being; to offer schools and educators across the United States assistance with physical education programming and learning through skating; to offer health and well-being related benefits to its members and to engage in other activities related to educating the public and members about skating, health, well-being and other related concerns.”

To that end, Levin and her team are currently working on roller skating lesson plans and how-to videos to send to ASA member rinks in the near future. Daniel Levin is lining up monthly member newsletters with articles pertaining to health education such as exercise and diabetes, obesity, congestive heart failure, cardiac issues, and how to best deal with these types of things – hopefully by using skating as a safe form of exercise.

For more information, go online to: [www.americanskatingassociation.com](http://www.americanskatingassociation.com) or call Sandra Levin at 309-822-0545.

sion. They save 10 percent on parties and 10 percent on pro-shop purchases. I also do specials, like, any ASA member can skate free this Sunday.” Levin also has a complete in-rink promotional packet for rinks that join that includes a banner and a full-color brochure with a place for the member rink to put their logo.

## Educating the public

While member benefits and marketing tools form the solid shell of ASA membership, the group’s primary goal is education – educating schools, educating media outlets, raising the awareness of skating as a healthy lifestyle. One way or another, each level of

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