

Diligence, organization and some creativity keep two Delaware rinks sparkling clean

By Susan Geary

Keeping a rink clean is no doubt one of the bigger challenges facing any rink manager, especially when buildings begin to show their age. Two rink operators in Central Delaware have perfected the art of a tidy rink.

Carmen Kemper, owner of the Milford Skating Center which is located in the town's historic downtown district, says her building dates back several decades. Before it became a skating center, it was a WT Grant's Department Store and then an automotive showroom. In 1982 it was converted to a roller rink, with a maximum capacity of 299 for a town with only 9600 residents.

"We have lots of checklists," said Kemper. "We do a thorough cleaning between each session and then once a month we do a major cleaning." That involves shampooing, vacuuming, dusting, rearranging, pulling things out and dusting behind them.

"And because the carpet is constantly rolled on, the dust and particles from the floor wreck the carpet," Kemper added.

The Dover Skating Center is situated about 30 miles north of Milford, and was originally built in the 1960s as a cattle auction house but was repurposed as a skating facility about a year later. Manager Sue

Dooley has been keeping the carpeting in her rink maintained for the past 11 years.

The rink enforces a strict "no gum" policy; however, Dooley laments, "The sour gooey candies act like gum, too." The Dover Skating Center's floor guards dust the floor before and after each session, scrape off any adhesions like the chewy candy from the skating surface, and freeze off gum and candy from the carpeting with Krud Kutter.

Employees are also tasked with cleaning up throughout each session; picking up stray wrappers from the floors, checking the restrooms, and emptying overflowing trash bins. The carpets are super vacuumed three times a week, and the snack bar gets a thorough cleaning at the end of each session.

One issue that resonates with many rink operators is keeping drinks off the wall that surrounds the rink. When Dooley was looking for a way to create space between her snack bar tables and add more storage space for customer's personal items such as jackets and shoes (her rink doesn't exchange shoes for the quad skates) she asked an employee to come up with a solution.

"I told him I didn't want the [snack bar] tables against the [rink] wall because then people are setting their drinks up on the wall, so I need a spacer." Her employee



A Dover Skating Center employee crafted PVC frames to hold laundry baskets in which guests can put their personal items while at the snack area or during a party.

came up with the basket holders by fabricating a PVC frame that supports a standard rectangular laundry basket in which guests can keep their personal items.

Not only do the basket holders provide the spacer Dooley was looking for, but they have also deterred patrons from placing skates and shoes on the snack bar table tops. Plus it cuts down on the number of skates and shoes that clutter up the aisles during busy sessions.

In party areas, the PVC frame was designed "double-decker" style for the laundry baskets to hold wrapped gifts, optimize space, and give party guests more elbow room. Currently, Dooley only uti-

lizes the basket holders in reserved areas near the snack bar for people waiting for their birthday parties to begin.

Vacuuming is key for any rink, and so is dusting and mopping the skating floor. Dooley said, "What we normally do is make sure the filters are changed, and we vacuum the speakers, but it's a constant thing - you're always cleaning the floor."

Both Delaware rinks have sinks and soap dispensers outside their bathroom areas as well as hand dryers that eliminate paper waste and keep down costs. At the Milford Skating Center, Kemper also keeps out a giant container of hand sanitizer.

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