

# Vendors form new Roller Skating Marketing Council

By Suzy Weinland

Who doesn't like to get in on the ground floor of something new and exciting – especially when it has the potential to increase their business dramatically? Well, listen up rink owners and operators, as well as manufacturers and distributors, because here's your chance.

A small group of manufacturers, distributors and rink operators have formed a new marketing entity called the Roller Skating Marketing Council. Their objective is to combine forces from a cross section of the roller skating industry to

marketing firm to help us use this money effectively."

According to Creten, the board is currently soliciting members from the manufacturing, distribution and vendor side to contribute funds to get the ball rolling. Those who commit by January, 2010 will be considered a founding member. The next step would be to designate varying levels of membership and get rinks involved.

As of press time, the group had firm commitments from the following manufacturers and distributors: RC Sports, Southeastern Skate Supply in Mableton, Ga., Southeastern Skate Supply in Roanoke, Va., Midwest Skate, Sure-Grip and Roller Derby.

The companies mentioned will start donating money to the Roller Skating Marketing Council fund in the fourth quarter of 2009. "We have to start someplace. (The industry) has been working on this (idea) since the late '70s," shared Creten. "Finally, a group of manufacturers and distributors said, 'we've got to just start it.'"

"It's going to take a good year of seed money just to get started. We probably won't see any effect in the way of any significant programming until the Winter of 2011. And that depends on how many people we can get on board."

The group plans to create a slogan that conveys the message: "roller skating is a fun thing to do," said Creten. "My goal for five years down the road is to have roller skating be top of mind; something fun and cool to do."

The slogan would become part of a logo that would go on members' letterhead and other promotional materials. The board's hope is also to bring in national partners.

Creten owned a professional indoor soccer team for 17 years, and worked with companies that handled partnership relations. They were able to get companies to sponsor and include the soccer team in their own company advertising, resulting in \$15 million worth of exposure for \$750,000.

Ramsey commented that like almost any marketing expense, the contributions to this marketing fund will eventually pass on to the consumer. "We'll accomplish this by raising prices 2% to compensate for the contributions. The 2% will be passed on to the consumer through higher retail prices," he explained. "We chose 2% because that is small enough that the consumers won't notice the increase, but large enough that we should be able to accumulate enough money to get the program started."

"The key element that rink operators and others involved will need to

understand is patience," urged Creten. "This isn't a silver bullet where tomorrow roller skating is going to be all over the media. First, we need to raise some funds, and then get everyone in roller skating to contribute in some way to their rink, corporation or product." He added that contributions will return tenfold once roller skating becomes top of mind and people start spending more in rinks.

"This is a good thing and something that needs to be done," said Creten. "Everyone needs to get behind it and get behind the vendors who are trying to do this. Let them know you support them and recognize they are doing something good for our industry."

For more information, contact Ron Creten at 414-559-1121 or ron@rcsports.com.

## Ways to get involved

To truly maximize the effect of this marketing campaign, Glenn Ramsey of Southeastern Skate Supply said the board needs to get as many companies as possible to participate. He suggested several ways vendors can do this:

- 1) "If your products are sold through skate distributors, consider adjusting the suggested dealer cost to accommodate the 2% contribution. This will allow distributors to sell your products at the recommended price instead of at a higher price point. Distributors are going "out on a limb" and we would like to make sure that they're not hurt by committing to the program."
- 2) "If you sell products direct to rinks or skaters, become a member and start contributing 2% of those sales towards our fund. The 2% could be passed on to the consumers through small price increases without hurting your bottom line. For this program to be a huge success, we need huge participation."
- 3) "Think about how other companies could be encouraged to participate in the program and reach out to them. We're going to be asking as many companies as possible, but you may have a closer relationship with some and have more success."
- 4) "Support the companies that are participating as much as possible. This is a big commitment, and we want the firms that participate to benefit from their efforts."
- 5) "We are open to any suggestions or new ideas and welcome your input."



Ron Creten, RC Sports, Lexana, Kan.

procure a national marketing campaign for roller skating centers, industry companies and products.

The board consists of: Ron Creten (RC Sports), Glenn Ramsey, Jr. (Southeastern Skate Supply, Roanoke, Va.), Walter Frazier (Roller Derby), David Fleming (Northridge Skateland, Calif.), and Dan Brown (Rollhaven Skating Centers, Michigan and USAC board member).

Glenn Ramsey explained in a mass e-mail in September, 2009:

"For many years the roller skating industry has needed a national marketing campaign. Almost all other industries have something like this. Most rink owners agree that this is something we could all benefit from. But whenever the topic comes up the obvious question becomes 'how do we pay for this?'"

"Last year the RSA hosted a brainstorming session and this was one of the goals that came out of that meeting. Several of us decided that we needed to band together to try to make something happen. We've created a plan to get skate distributors, and hopefully others, to contribute 2% of their sales towards a fund. Once we know how many other companies will join us and we have a good idea of how much money we can raise, we will start the process of hiring a

**National Roller Skating Month  
has some new faces**

October is National Roller Skating Month and in addition to Pepsi's 'You Could Win in a Flash with Slip 'n Skate, there will be a few new faces lacing up their skates this fall. Stay tuned for more information!

Check them out this October.