

Maximize summer profits with daycare and special promotions

By Pamela Kleibrink Thompson

As Alice Cooper sings, “School’s out for Summer!” And summer time for many kids means heading off to daycares and summer camps. Tried and true alternates use by rinks around the country, summer programs can boost profits during the summer, and savvy rink operators know they can build their year-round business by offering them.

The Starlite Skating Center in Sharpsburg, Ga., runs a summer camp for ages 5-12 five days a week from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Besides skating, activities include laser tag, playground, arcade, group games, crafts, and theme days such as pajama party day and a super hero day. On theme days, the kids can come in costume and Starlite will have different activities geared towards the theme.

Tara Henry, sales/marketing manager for Starlite Skating Center, offers advice for rink owners and operators who want to run a summer camp. “Promote your best, most fun, most outgoing teen employees to be your counselors. The counselors will make or break your camp. And put an organized adult in charge.”

Before starting a summer camp consider: Will it affect your daycare/daycamp business? Is the revenue gained worth the risk?

Starlite is offering a summer camp this year for the first time, but Henry brings her experience from United Skates of America where she started and ran a super successful summer camp for five years. That successful camp is still running.

Offering a summer camp enables the Starlite Skating Center to bring in additional revenue by starting a new program at a time when they are not normally busy with walk-in customers. “My goal has always been to start a camp ONLY for those weeks that are the slowest in terms of daycare/camp field trips. Ultimately my goal is to be closed to the public for those weeks once I can get my enrollment to the level that I need.”

Starlite Skating Center will offer kid friendly food such as pizza, hot dogs, burgers, chicken or peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Fun snacks will include a daily “make your own” type of snack (trail mix, yogurt parfait, etc.). Starlite will provide unlimited drinks for the kids all day.

One easy way to help promote your rink’s summer camp is to approach local elementary school and middle school principals with an inexpensive party idea—an end of the school year party in May or June. Provide handouts for all students promoting the skating party and include information about your summer camp on the flyer. Offering free admission or a huge discount to this party could introduce your rink to



August Henning helps Kearney Thompson select skates at the Rollerdrome Skating Rink in Nampa, Idaho. (Photo by Pamela Kleibrink Thompson.)

many new customers. When skaters come to celebrate the end of school at your rink, send them home with another flyer about your summer programs.

Starlite promotes their summer camp to the community through rink signs, email blasts, goodie bag inserts and social media such as Facebook. Henry finds that Facebook and email blasts are most effective, but they also use Constant Contact and have a website. Starlite sends out electronic notices once a week, and also uses voicemail and in-rink announcements to promote their new summer camp.

To reach current/returning customers Starlite uses direct email. Every time someone signs onto their wifi, the rink collects the email address and uploads it to a database.

Henry notes the challenges in running a summer camp include, “Keeping it fresh and exciting year after year. In my experience you tend to get the same children

returning every year (or you will, if you are running the best camp around).” The interaction with the camp counselors is what makes it so much fun,” said Henry.

The Rollerdrome Skating Center in Nampa, Idaho, entices customers all summer long with special promotions on different days of the week. On Sundays, parents skate free. Free skate rentals are offered on Mondays throughout the summer from June 1 through August 27.

Visitors to Rollerdrome’s website discover incentives like a free snackbar treat on Tuesdays, half-price admission on Wednesdays, and two admitted for the price of one on Thursdays. Four different sessions are offered on Fridays, when the Rollerdrome stays open until midnight. Prizes are given on Saturday at the center. Rollerdrome also posts special events on their Facebook page and offers a discount for those who like them on Facebook.



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