

# New Jersey's Camp Iliff diversifies revenue stream with daycare, camp and roller skating

By Dionne Obeso

With the economy in a tight place and wallets shutting even tighter, the limited hours of a roller skating rink can be a problem. According to Bill Carlson, owner of Profit Mentors, a roller skating rink profit consultancy, rinks can be open as few as 30 hours a week, and, as he pointed out "what kind of business can survive on hours like that?"

Skating tends to be an evening activity during the week. The solution

center within her FEC, and she hasn't looked back. This is the kind of thinking that Carlson encourages in his clients.

It is deeply engrained in the minds of many roller skating rink operators that the skate floor is only for roller skating, but it can be so much more. The skate floor at Camp Iliff hosts a regular Karate class, dance classes and teen dances, wrestling and more. "The more you can use the building, the more you will be able to profit from it," Carlson said, which is why he fully endorses the idea of adding child care to any skating rink.

"Having a daycare in the rink creates an opportunity for a new, loyal customer at a very young age, because daycare kids may come back for birthday parties, skating events, and later, regular skate," said Carlson. Even better, their parents will know that your rink is the place to drop their kids off for a safe, good time.

For after school care, tutoring programs are a wonderful perk. Make sure

that there are games planned, arts and crafts available, and plenty of physical activities, from skating lessons to no-shoes dodge ball on the skate floor. A skate center often sits empty and forlorn during the day, but it doesn't have to. "A skating rink can easily offer everything that a rec center does, and even some things, like skating lessons, that no rec center can match," Carlson said.

## Help getting started

Having trouble with the idea of where to get started to turn your rink into a child care center? Theresa Iliff runs a consulting company in addition to her FEC, which she uses to help rink and other entertainment center owners all over the country convert their business into one that focuses on multiple revenue streams, especially day and after school care.

Iliff or one of her employees are called to visit rinks all over the country, where they use a hands-on consulting method to take the reins on installing a "Camp Iliff Daycare Center." They hire a director, oversee the hiring of teachers, take care of any necessary paperwork, ensure that federal, state, and local legal requirements are fulfilled. They also provide lesson plans, information on floor plan lay-outs, and how-to manuals.

The program is designed to be a sort of turn-key, franchise-like opportunity for rink and FEC owners to transform their single revenue businesses. For more information or a consultation for your rink, visit the Camp Iliff Business web site at [opportunity.campiliff.com](http://opportunity.campiliff.com) or call (973) 383-7231.



Three of Camp Iliff's after-school campers pause for a photo before hitting the facility's rink.

is to make your rink profitable during the day, as well, but you can't just throw open your doors and pray

Theresa Iliff of Camp Iliff in Newton, N.J., is one of the go-to people to talk to if you are looking for help generating daytime revenue. "About ten years ago I did a short summer program, and I listened to the parents when they came to pick their kids up. They were all saying how they wished we did aftercare for school days," Iliff said. She created a program for them, and started the school year with 17 children enrolled in after-school care. By December, there were about 80 kids.

Iliff was not done listening. When parents picked their kids up in the evening, there was the rush of changing clothes for the little league game, running for food, and a chorus of "hurry up, we have to pick up your sister at daycare!" That was how she devised the idea to run a fully functional daycare

center. Unless you are a licensed childcare director, the running of the daycare portion of the rink should be handled by someone who is. This person can work closely with you as rink owner to protect the skate floor, set up acceptable activities, and fulfill licensing requirements and deal with paperwork. They will also be able to hire a licensed teaching staff for the daycare. Carlson suggested hiring a director on salary and then offering them a share of the profits from the daycare to ensure that they are fully inspired to do the best possible job.

People have become so busy that the more you can do for them, the more likely they will be to pay for your services. Camp Iliff has a pizza franchise within their facility, so parents can pay for dinner ahead of time and pick up their children fed, rested, and wearing the appropriate uniform if necessary. It is the perfect way to encourage loyal customers.

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