

# South Carolina rink celebrates 65 years, offers above and beyond pro shop service

By *Connie Evener*

Since Thanksgiving Day in 1948, the skating rink in Orangeburg, S.C., has gone through a change in identity, from Lakeview Skating Rink to Jammer's Skate & Fun Center. Kevin (RJ) Beebe, who bought the facility in 1999, had spent a lot of time in skating rinks throughout the area. "I didn't buy the business to make money," said Beebe. "I actually bought the business to run a rink the way, in my eyes, it should be run." So Beebe is proud of Jammer's reputation for cleanliness, for the service available in its pro shop, and for its glory days as a hub for jam skaters.

When Beebe took over, Lakeview Skating Rink had two features that would become near and dear to his heart: a separate practice skate floor, perfect for training up-and-coming jam skaters, and a sizeable shop area, stocked to the hilt by the previous owners.

When word got out, Jammer's pro-shop customers traveled from all over the Eastern U. S. to buy vintage skate parts. "There were wheels going back 20 and 30 years," said Beebe. "We had the original Fomacs and American Dream Wheels." These days most of the "antique" stock is gone, but Beebe is still bullish on stocking the everyday parts skaters need.

"We have enough spare parts back there to cover about 95 percent of the plates on the market," he said, noting

that he's been in rinks that have to order even the most commonly used axles and wheels. Many don't even have tools to make adjustments. But at Jammer's, they do it all, including mounting skates and putting together custom packages. Beebe



*This photo shows Jammer's Skate & Fun Center as it was in 1949, when it was called Lakeview Skating Rink.*

even occasionally adjusts plates for customers who are pigeon-toed or duck-footed. With the proper adjustments, he noted, skating can actually help correct those problems on and off the skate floor.

Jammer's even has a wheel shaver that removes the crystalline layer that forms after years of heavy use. An hour or so on the shaver and old wheels look like new and recover their grippiness. His maintenance and repair services don't bring in a lot of revenue, admits Beebe, but that's not the point. The point is to

provide the services that'll keep his skaters skating.

And when it comes to buying new skates – speed, high tops, and especially the low tops used by jam skaters – Beebe can tell his customers what they're made

of, the type of stitching, the composition of the wheels, and how to take care of them.

In 2007, Beebe remodeled, adding an arcade, a Play Smart playground and laser tag. Laser tag didn't pan out. What did pan out was the playground, which includes a slide, bounce room, swing with contoured floor and a maze. It brings in more birthday parties and sells out every summer day care session Beebe puts on the schedule.

Beebe's introduction to roller skating came relatively late. It was the summer he graduated from high school (Class of '82) when a rink opened up in his home town, Franklin, N.C. "I've been a true rock and roll jam skater since the day I put on my first pair of skates," said Beebe. In 2001, he met the members of the newly-formed Breaks8 (the Kokomo, Indiana, team that went on to "America's Best Dance Crew" fame) and invited them to perform and teach at Jammer's.

Beebe started a team in Orangeburg, and eventually ended up working with more than 500 skaters in 16 teams across 13 states. He went on to serve as president and tournament director of United Jam Skating Teams of America (UJSTA) and continued his involvement as a coach (also working with the casting crew of "Roll Bounce," referring skater stunt-doubles) until two years ago. It was finally time to scale back on what had become a killer of a schedule. Nearing his half century birthday, Beebe's body was beginning to complain, too.

These days, Beebe has a new sideline, custom designing light and sound systems for other rinks. He enjoys the challenge of creating a unique system that optimizes light and sound by working with, rather than around or against, factors like floor size, ceiling height, construction materials or unusual configurations.

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