

Pennsylvania rink owner knows how to make summer great

By Dionne Obeso

With summer in full swing, most parents are looking for day camps, summer activities and fun programs for their kids. So what makes a fantastic summer program? It has to be something that both parents and kids can agree on - something that doesn't cost an arm and a leg, but one that kids will love. Something like roller skating!

For a fantastic summer program, Linda Miner of Valley Skating Center in Donora, Penn., is the woman to talk to. Her family-run program keeps bodies in the rink - which totals about 30,000 sq. ft. - all summer long. When flagging summer numbers hit her rink a couple of years ago, Miner took action.

"By nature, I do not usually have a great summer, but the last two summers have been the best two I have ever had. I credit this to my 'family special', which we run in the summer. I needed to keep money flowing in the summer, so I charged \$50 per month for unlimited skating for up to a family of four, plus skate rental. If they pay \$150 up front in May, they then get May, June, July and I give them August for free. What a bargain, and they love it. This is our second season for this program and we have had lots of feedback," Miner said.

Many families who cannot afford the full \$150 at the beginning of the summer still pay the monthly fee, attracting an extra \$50 per family for the rink. Better still, bodies attract bodies as Miner has discovered, and the rink fills up with more singles during the summer because skating has become a social activity, and kids with a family pass will invite their friends to join them at the rink.

To mix things up, Miner also keeps the kids interested with special themes. "We run special skates each Friday during June, July and August (ice cream night, pizza night, hot dog night, and theme nights). This is mainly for elementary/middle school ages. The older kids, from 12-16, like us doing special items in the snack bar and special pricing. One night they do enjoy is Beach Party Night or a Luau. We mix up Mt Dew and Blue Rasp Icee to make Bahama Mamas. This year we are doing Christmas in July and Harry Potter Night (the week the movie comes out).

"We try to hand out our full summer schedule before school is out, usually starting in early May. After school is out in early June, you have lost that line of communication."

Miner also has direct advice for rink owners setting up themed programs: "Every year we try to change up each theme slightly with some new games and skates. There are games that are old favorites and they love

them, but we do try to keep things fresh. Just keep plugging away. Skating is on an uphill drive, so don't be left behind!"

Trying to fill in this summer a little more? It is never too late to contact other summer programs or camps, especially outdoor ones, and offer your rink at a set price for rainy day skates or as a filler activity for their program. It's a great way to supplement income from your own program, and may just bring in a new crop of regulars.

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By **GEORGE PICKARD**

Author/Compiler

Former Executive Officer of RSRDA, USARS, National Museum of Roller Skating, US Foundation of Amateur Roller Skating



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An organization can only be as good as its leaders. In a recreational business environment, populated by entrepreneurial types, rink owners frequently prefer marching to their own drum beat. Starting during the adverse conditions of 1937, in the throes of the Great Depression, the organizers of the RSRDA found common cause.

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