

# HOT SPOT

By Art Snyder

The months ahead show lots of promise, according to pop-culture experts, demographers and mass-marketers. Among the celebrities, movies, cultural icons, snacks and beverages, and other items that can be put to great use at your rink — to help your own market outreach, public and private sessions, and numerous profit centers stay fresh — be sure to take advantage of all the hoopla this year that'll be in full swing for these: Monsters, Inc., characters and the upcoming Monsters University animated film; entertainer Beyoncé; Star Trek Into Darkness and any licensed Star Trek products and snacks; Despicable Me 2, in July; Thomas the Tank items; films and licensed fare based on Batman, Incredible Hulk and other superheroes that you deem suitable for your school-age crowd; Hasbro's Transformers; Harry Potter (yes, still hot); The Simpsons; Curious George and pals; Dr. Seuss characters; Smurfs; 3-D movies in general; Avatar and its three upcoming sequels; The Hobbit; Chex Mix varieties, as with Snickerdoodles; health-centered snacks and beverages; and targeted marketing to Asian and Hispanic groups. (See below for more details on some of these items.)

## Xenergy news

Three new extensions have been announced for the Xenergy line of energy drinks: Xenergy + True Hydration, Xenergy + Tea, and Xenergy + Lemonade. These varieties are packaged in Xenergy's signature silver 16-oz. can that can be stocked in snack and vending areas alike. Xenergy is a sugar- and calorie-free beverage that is made with natural flavors and colors, with added vitamins, for its more than a dozen varieties. Xenergy is the official energy drink of the UFC (Ultimate Fighting Championship) organization and takes pride in its contemporary sports alliance. The newest Xenergy formulations will launch in the Mid-

west by April, with other regions to follow. Visit [Xyience.com](http://Xyience.com).

## McDonald's looks for help

In a slowly recovering economy, McDonald's has struggled to main-

tain its edge and its No. 1 fast-food sales position, so the company has announced plans to stress value pricing and more-bang-for-the-buck promotions with its menu and multi-platform marketing efforts. This suggests that your local McDonald's might welcome your rink partnership in the months ahead. Talk with your staff to develop cross-couponsing strategies that'll help both your rink and McDonald's, which is bringing back its Dollar Menu to turn profits around. Remember to stress your long experience with frugal customers, as your experience, goodwill and success with this demographic will

look hugely attractive to McDonald's. Everyone wins when you help each other generate customer traffic.

## Coca-Cola 'goes dairy'

Coca-Cola Co. has positioned itself for future growth in two ways: One, the company has embarked on an advertising campaign that says the company is more than a fountain of sugar-drenched, carbonated beverages, or soft drinks. Two, the company is shining its spotlight on its large family of health-related beverages (or at least non-sugared beverages). Through its Venturing and Emerging Brands (VEB) unit, the company is identifying and giving a marketing push to several young or emerging brands — and various sub-brands and line extensions — already in its camp.

Among them are FUZE, NOS, Honest Tea and Zico Coconut Water, among others. For more information, visit [www.vebatcoke.com](http://www.vebatcoke.com), and talk to your supplier about special discounts, incentives and rink signage and mar-

and others — homeschool activities, family sessions and your offerings for your under-7 customers, as with Monsters, Inc. films and licensed products courtesy of The Little Mermaid, among many other animation-based winners.

This year and into the near future, Warner Bros. Studios is releasing 20 films in 3-D and IMAX formats, so cross-couponsing with a local cinema looks to have great potential. The roster of most-promising movies in 3-D and IMAX versions (from any number of studios) includes Captain America: The Winter Soldier; Iron Man 3; Man of Steel; Oz the Great and Powerful; Jack the Giant Slayer; Pacific Rim; 300: Rise of an Empire; Gravity; Seventh Son; The Hobbit: There and Back Again (December); The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug (December 2014).

Just as promising are other superhero-based films, for this year and beyond. Among them: The Wolverine and Kick-Ass 2 (the Justice Forever team), besides the 3-D and IMAX films.

This truly is a golden opportunity for your rink to capitalize on these fictional characters, during most of your sessions.

## Dr Pepper 10-calorie line

The Dr Pepper Snapple Group Inc. is doing its part to stay relevant, provide tasty beverages and freshen its esteemed lineup of beverages. The company has developed 10-calorie versions of its 7-Up, Sunkist, Canada Dry, RC Cola and A&W Root Beer brands. This effort to appeal to consumers who want appetizing, lower-calorie beverages should have the company's 10-calorie brand varieties available nationwide this spring.

Company officials say that they expect their 10-calorie lineup to account for nearly half their sales, a bright showing in an otherwise so-so sales profile for carbonated soft drinks, which have seen only marginal growth in the last decade.

More good news: The Dr Pepper Snapple Group has enlisted marketing help from stars like Justin "Nordic Thunder" Howard, Mikaela Mayer, Misty Copeland and Armando Christian Perez, known as Pitbull, a rapper, songwriter, actor and record producer. Better yet: Jen Mayfield, a suburban mother of five by day and roller derby queen by night, is on board.

All these celebs are part of the company's marketing push this year. Contact your Dr Pepper Snapple Group distributor for the latest products, discounts, signage and other sales incentives for your rink customers.

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## Beyonce, Chex, Core Power, Dr. Pepper & Spider-Man in the news

keting materials that should help you turn a bigger profit on beverages other than mainstay Coca-Cola, Coke Zero and Diet Coke.

## Hollywood news

The best thing about Hollywood is that the film industry offers an ever-changing array of films, genres, themes and series that you can tap into throughout the week. This can include your redemption and vending areas, session ideas, birthday updates, after-school sessions, holiday parties — imagine Halloween sessions without the bounty of Freddy Krueger, Jason

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