

Texas rink successfully upgrades lighting on modest budget

By Dionne Obeso

The expenses of running a roller skating rink can be intimidating, from new skates to repairs to insurance fees. And many rinks currently are seeing their per person income fall because of the recession. Decorating or redecorating might fall low on the priority list, but it shouldn't. A modern looking rink attracts all kinds of skaters. Even parents will appreciate the effort that a rink goes to in order to up their "cool factor."

Special lighting for your rink can be a big expense if you buy it as part of a "system," but with a little bit of do-it-yourself spirit and some careful shopping around, the cost of fun and energetic lighting can fall into a very reasonable range. The effects of updated lighting in the rink can really help your business and help you to make your investment back; after all, everyone wants to bring their friends to the place that makes them say "wow."

Walt and Patsy Hedrick are the owners of Forum RollerWorld in Grand Prairie, Texas. When their rink needed a bit of a face lift, the Hendricks wanted something cheap that would really impress the customers. Their choice was lighting to help them highlight



Flexible tube lighting accents the walls around the skate floor at Forum Roller World in Grand Prairie, Texas.

certain parts of their rink, and their solution to their budgetary needs was to use 42" tube lights.

"We put the tubes around our fun shop-skate rental and out in the lobby," said Walt Hedrick. The lights are visible from the street as people look through their front windows, adding a facelift to both the inside of the building and to the street appeal without extra expense.

The flexible light tubes can be used to create all sorts of patterns, and come in a range of colors. Anyone with a little creativity and drive can install the lights easily, and bring a new and interesting element to a rink with details that range from pointing arrows to cursive writing announcing "snacks." There is very little that cannot be done with the lights, all at minimal expense.

"My son said 'let's put them around the floor,' (which is 180 ft x 80 ft), so we needed more lights! We did the length and across the back of the skate floor, up on the walls, and changed the entire look of our building. Plus, we did it ourselves with a few extension cords (no electrician needed)," Hendrick said.

The lighting does not need to extend around the entire skate floor as long as it is visible from the rest of the rink, although there is nothing to say that you cannot or should not place it all the way around. The zig-zag pattern on his back walls adds a dynamic element to the rink and really wakes it up.

Altogether, Hendrick saved a lot of money by installing the tubes himself, and because the lighting is composed of flexible tubes that he has hung all around his rink, it is cheaper than neon and just as customizable. "We spent less than \$1800 on the whole thing, and fellow operators who have seen it really like it; I think with a little imagination and hard work you can put a new look on the rink inside and out, and at a great price," said Hendrick. For between \$16 and \$18 per tube, the lights were a wonderful investment in the look and feel of Forum RollerWorld.

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