

# INDEPENDENT VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY! RINKSIDER

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November–December 2008

## Celebrating kids and community is primary focus at The Golden Skate

By Suzy Weinland

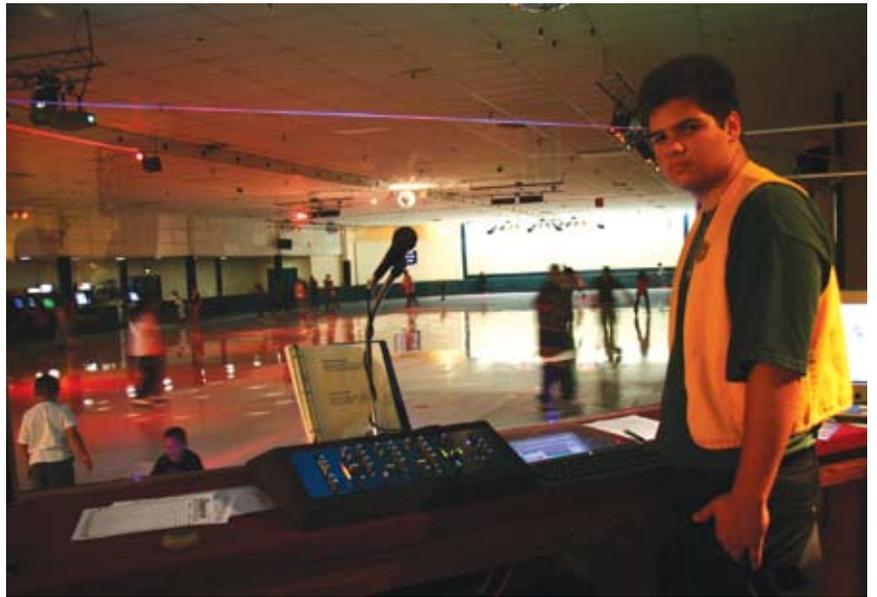
At The Golden Skate in San Ramon, Calif., owner Hassan Sharifi and his crew are all about the kids.

From unique academic programs to a twice-monthly Battle of the Bands, The Golden Skate staff “take pride in contributing what we can to our local schools and community,” said Natasha Biggs, the rink’s director of customer service.

The 24,000 square foot facility includes a standard 80 ft. by 178 ft. skating floor. The skating center, which opened 31 years ago, is located in a suburban area, but since it’s the “only rink around for miles,” according to Biggs, it pulls from areas such as Oakland, Berkley and even San Francisco.

Sharifi, who has owned The Golden Skate for 13 years, admits he’s not originally a skater, but he does have a shrewd business sense.

One unique program they offer at The Golden Skate is the Academic Excellence Program. Biggs said, “To support aca-



Kids of all ages love the skating and music at The Golden Skate.

demical excellence, we offer every teacher in our surrounding area half price admission coupons as a reward for students who show improvement in their academic skills. Many teachers request coupons for their

entire class and all requests are immediately granted. We receive a high volume of these coupons throughout the school year.

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## ‘Come, Mr. DJ won’t you turn the music up? Come, Mr. DJ..’

By Jim Morris

The way Steve Earley looks at it, roller skating rinks have one main thing they are selling to their customers – entertainment. And the most important person, he says, is the guy or gal behind the microphone – the DJ.

“The DJ is in charge of the entertainment,” said Earley, general manager of



Skateland in the Los Angeles suburb of Northridge. “And that’s what we are really selling.

“If our food is good and our entertain-

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From left to right, Northridge Skateland DJs Gail Zweben, Cameron McGee, Michelle Hardy and Joyce Hall rock the rink just outside of Los Angeles.

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The RINKSIDER’s new year-long holiday calendar includes secular, non-secular and promotional holidays to get you on the right track to planning a year’s worth of fun and profitable skating sessions.

### Go beyond.....7, 13

Ever consider adding “kid-die attractions” to draw the youngest skaters – and their parents – in throughout the week? Two operators offer tips and tales of success with such additions as mult-level soft-play, indoor themed mini-golf and bumper cars!

### Offer unique sessions.....16

While scheduling sessions with local schools and community groups, don’t forget to consider the fun and fitness benefits you can offer to those with special needs. Regular skating helps these individuals practice their gross motor skills and stay fit, while the chance to socialize with peers will bring smiles to everyone’s faces.

**Golden Skate** (cont'd from page 1)

Students benefit and parents and teachers love it!"

The Golden Skate also encourages their employees to be good students through their Employee Academic Bonus Program. Each employee who can demonstrate that he has improved his academic standing by raising his grade point average from one semester/quarter to the next, receives a bonus in the following scale:

- \$100.00 for an employee who maintains a 4.0 GPA,
  - \$100.00 for a GPA increase of 1.00,
  - \$75.00 for a GPA increase of .75,
  - \$50.00 for a GPA increase of .50,
  - \$25.00 for a GPA increase of .25.
- To receive the bonus, employees

present a staff member with transcripts of successive quarters or semesters. "We love to see the excitement on their face when we hand them cash as a reward for their hard work," shared Biggs.

Involvement with the community does not stop with academics. While the skating center gives to the children, the parents give back to the rink. "We have a successful Hockey Program that is entirely run by parents from our community," said Biggs.

"Our fun co-ed teams meet for weekly practices and games. Volunteer parents take the registration forms, design the rosters, coach, create the schedule, send important emails to all team members, and host a pot-luck here at the end of each season. Some of the hockey kids, with the help of parents,



The saloon-themed snack lounge at The Golden Skate is a great place for adults to hang out.

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even made a float and passed out fliers for us during the last Fourth of July Parade!"

But, the favorite event at The Golden Skate is the Battle of the Bands they hold every second and fourth Saturday night. The winner receives a gift certificate for eight hours in a local recording studio!

The Golden Skate's 'Battle' has been very carefully thought out and put together with the kids in the community as their central focus. According to Biggs, here are the Top Five GREAT things about The Golden Skate's Battle of the Bands:

1. There are not many places for high school children to go, other than the movies and the mall. We provide them with a fun and unique experience in a safe environment.
2. High School kids go through a lot of changes every day, learning to make difficult decisions, deal with peer pressures and discover their own identity. It is essential for them to learn safe outlets to express their emotions. Music is a great release - not only for the performers, but for the listeners as well.
3. Music builds self-esteem. The performers are very courageous for getting in front of their families and peer groups and playing the music and words they wrote themselves. Also, the music and words builds self-esteem among the listeners who get the opportunity to hear that these experiences the artists are singing about are similar to their own, giving them a sense of validation.
4. Parents attend BOTB to support their children who are playing in the bands. Often, they even invite cousins, grandparents, neighbors and teachers. Fortunately, we are lucky to live in a community where the place really comes together to encourage and support these kids. That really means a lot to us and to them!
5. Exercise is very important to a healthy life. It is great to combine fun, safety, support, community, and exercise all in one night!