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RINKSIDER

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Nov-Dec 2009

Light up your rink on a small budget.....9

The "cool factor" impresses both kids and parents. Just ask the Hedricks of Forum RollerWorld in Texas. Get the look with a little DIY spirit and inexpensive, but effective, lighting.

Entertain and market with video15

One Georgia rink doubled its Friday nights by adding large video screens and flat-panel TVs to show live video of skaters, week-end sporting events, slide shows of birthday parties and customer photos.

What can RSMC do for your rink?.....21

Introducing the new Roller Skating Marketing Council, a determined and concerned group of industry vendors who have come together for the growth of roller skating centers.

Texas FEC uses classes, 'trainers,' bounce houses to attract kids



Little tikes at Texas Skatium build confidence by using 'trainers' made of PVC pipe and wheels while learning to roller skate.

By Diane Walker

Located just outside Dallas, Texas, in Garland, is Texas Skatium, the family entertainment center owned and operated by Jeff and Patty Craft.

Texas Skatium has been family-owned and operated since 1989. The Crafts pride

themselves in having a staff that awaits each and every customer with a smile on their face.

The Skatium has recently been remodeled inside and out. With 33,000 square feet, up to 1,100 people can easily find a fun activity to participate in with their friends. The Crafts have refinished the floor, and

added all new games and skates. The rink's sound and video system is state of the art and has a large projection screen.

Classes and 'trainers' make confident skaters

The Skatium offers classes to those who want to learn how to skate. The classes are very popular, with 30 to 40 being held during the school year and 20 taking place during the summer months.

No time to take classes but still want to have fun skating? The Skatium has the answer. The Crafts added 40 'trainers' to the rink one year ago to help beginner or less-confident patrons skate a little easier.

"People have told us that they drive across town to use the trainers," said Jeff. "They (trainers) are not used in the classes, however, because the point of going to class is to learn how to skate."

Jeff hears all the time from patrons that they heard about the trainers from a friend. First time guests are coming from all over to use them, and they are a big reason why patrons keep coming back. "The biggest complaint I hear is that there just

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Get tech savvy to promote your rink successfully

By Jim Morris

"Rink owners are missing the boat if they don't stay in touch with their customers. To do that, you have to communicate with them. And how do you do that? You start using all the Internet and texting tools you can."

-- Terry Eady, Owner, Hot Wheels Skate Center, Daphne, Ala.

High Tech is here, and as Eady said, skating and family fun center owners who do not stay up with today's methods of communication are missing out on many potential customers and the revenue they represent.

That's why he and a growing number of rink owners have begun using such tools as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, tXt-blast, email blasts or different variations on these services that they have come up with on their own.

For example, Eady uses the free tXtblast.com Web site to send text messages to his customers, while Michael Couey's marketing staff at the Sparkles Family Fun Center of



Three generations of Coueys stand in and around the Sparkles Roller Rink Skate car. In the car are: (Back row, L-R) Jacob Thompson, Clint Couey and Michael Couey; (Front row, L-R) Brittany Dean and Carrie Couey. Standing in front of the car (L-R) are Jeff Couey, Ava Couey and Leita Couey.

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"Texas FEC" (cont'd from page 1)

aren't enough (trainers)," said Jeff. The trainers come in four sizes, from small to adult, and there is no age or weight/height limit. Skaters must wear skates, and if a staff member sees a more advanced skater using a trainer, he or she will take the trainer away for safety. If this wasn't enough to convince some to try skating or return to the rink after a long time away, there is more. The trainers are free to use!

The addition of the trainers has "definitely helped increase business. The word of mouth has been great," said Jeff.

Bounce around the bounce house

Another component bringing in the customers are the bounce houses. With 500 square feet to use, the Crafts did their homework and bought six of the best bounces they could find and had them installed in March, 2009.

"It is unbelievable what adding the bounce houses has done to our business. Party rental income has tripled!" said Jeff. The parties include one hour in the bounce house and then unlimited skating.

There is a 15 and 25-person limit in the bounce houses for parties. "I don't think that the bounce houses would be

good as a stand alone, but they are great when combined with a rink," he added.

The Crafts advise that rink owners be willing to do extra work to make sure they are getting the safest bounce houses they can. Jeff took an IAPPA inspectors course to get ready for the houses. All six bounce houses are certified safe.

The Crafts are lucky that they had room in their building to take 50 feet off the end and install a hockey board; the bottom is wall and the top half is clear plastic. The skaters do not seem to be distracted by the bounce houses and vice versa.

Increase revenue in all areas of your rink

Trainers and bounce houses are huge add-ons for any rink. For Texas Skatium, they have helped sell parties and increase their revenue throughout the entire rink. Due to the increased traffic, the snack area is now much busier and the Crafts have had to add two more ovens for cooking.



The Crafts tripled their party rental income at Texas Skatium by adding six bounce houses.

The building is now filled to capacity, and if the Crafts want to add anything else they will need to add on to the building.

"If there is room, rink owners would be crazy not to add bounce houses to their rink. When done correctly, they are such a revenue generator," added Jeff.

ROLLER SKATING TRIVIA!?!?
Answer to question on pg. 7:
 Milwaukee, 1913. The winner, Fred Martin, completed 253 miles.

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FREE CLASSIFIEDS!

The RINKSIDER is now accepting classified ads from roller rink operators at no charge for the 1-1/2" tall by two column size ads. Simply e-mail your ad to us exactly as you would like it to be worded and watch for your ad in the next RINKSIDER. No photos or artwork can be used in the free ads.

As always, our larger size classified ad, measuring 3" tall by two columns wide, can accept logos, art and photos. Those ads have been reduced from \$100 to \$75.

Deadline for classifieds for the January-February 2009 issue is December 1. All classified deadlines are the first of the month preceding issue month. Take advantage! E-mail The RINKSIDER at Rinksider@rinksider.com today!

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