

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2005

# ICE EDGE

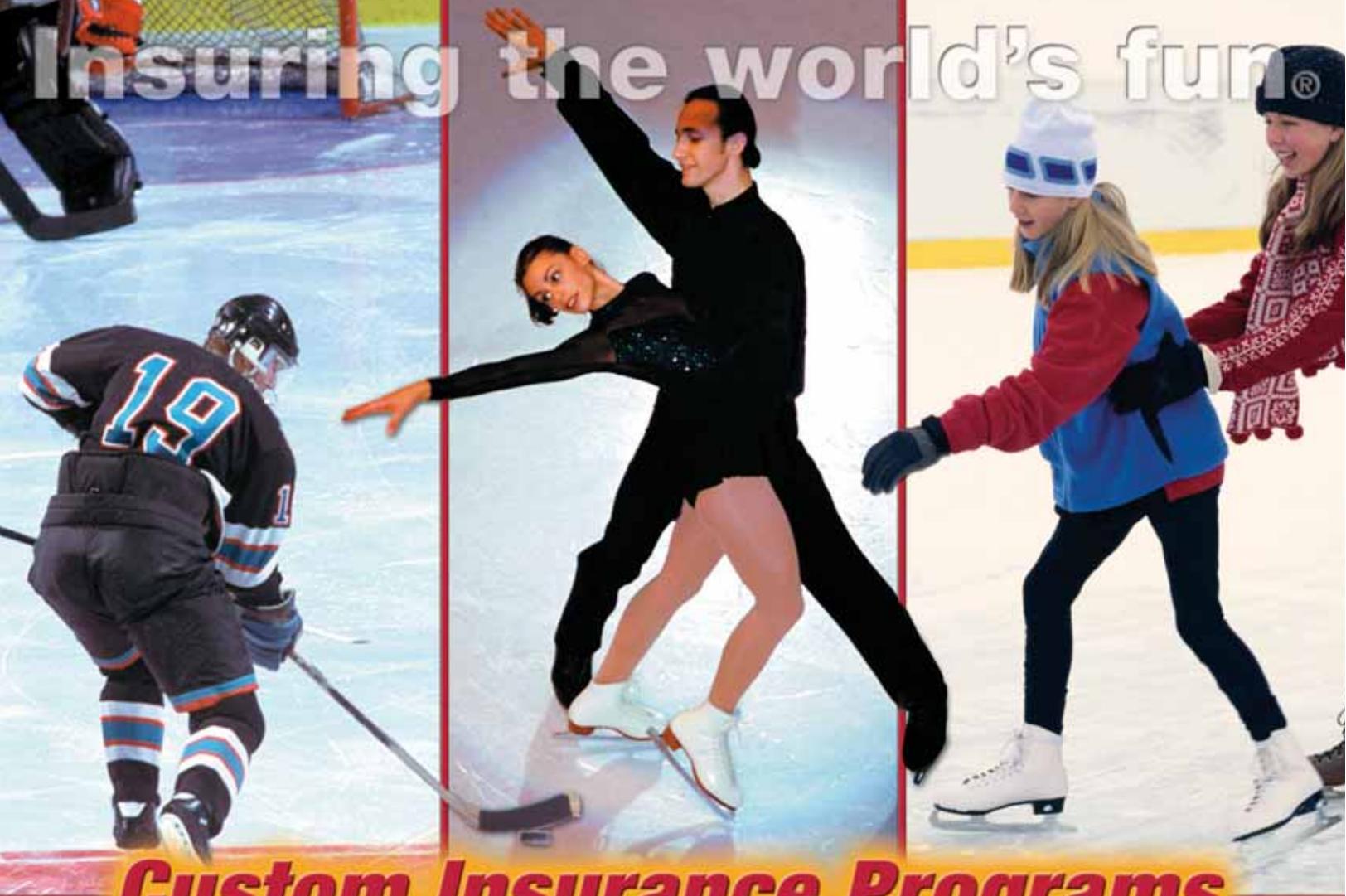
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Arena Profile

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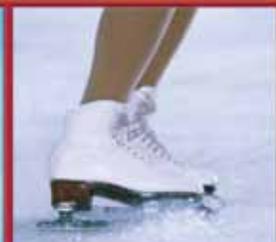
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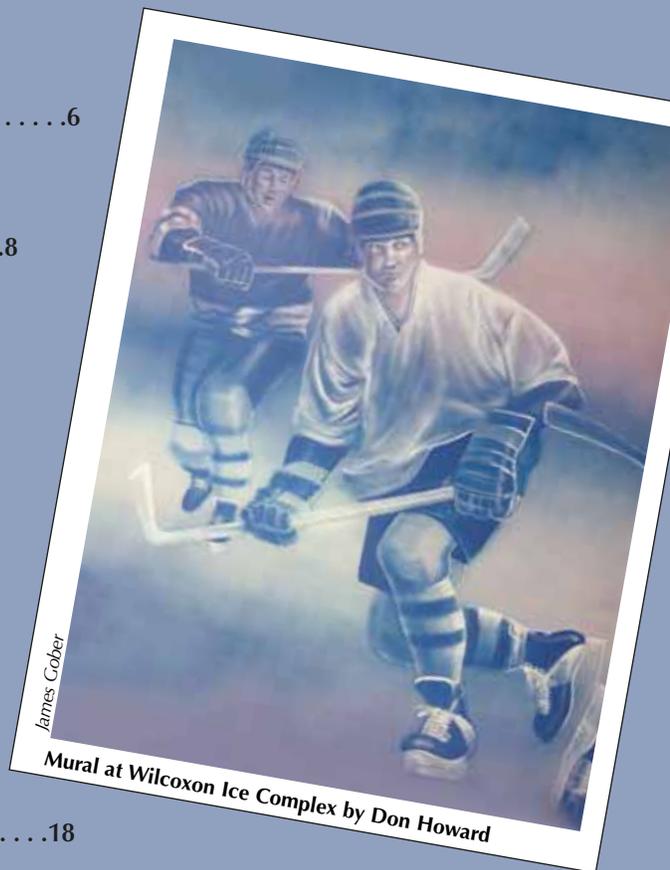
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James Cober

Mural at Wilcoxon Ice Complex by Don Howard



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# CROSSCUTS

## announcements

### ISI members support disaster relief efforts

DALLAS — A number of ISI members and member facilities have been affected by the recent devastating hurricanes, and our thoughts are with them in this time of crisis. To support disaster relief efforts, go to [www.skateisi.org](http://www.skateisi.org) and click on the red Hurricane Relief button. The page offers fundraising ideas, recognizes the efforts of ISI member facilities and provides a link for making a donation to The Salvation Army. Logging in to the ISI portal allows us to recognize members making contributions. Please send a brief description of your facility's efforts to [emily@skateisi.org](mailto:emily@skateisi.org) so we can post your ideas on the ISI Web site to inspire others.

### Jon Larson named manager of new Greeley Ice Haus

GREELEY, Colo. — The City of Greeley Recreation Department has selected Jon Larson of Tulsa, Okla. to manage the new Ice Haus arena. Larson recently served as the general manager of the Oilers Ice Arena, home of the Tulsa Oilers of the Central Hockey League. He was a co-founder of the Tulsa Youth Hockey Association and introduced the adult hockey program in the Tulsa area.



### The Skate School LLC partners with Elmhurst YMCA

ELMHURST, Ill. — The Elmhurst YMCA has partnered with The Skate School LLC to manage its learn-to-skate program. The Skate School LLC is owned and operated by Diane Dailing, a longtime ISI member and former skater with The Ice Follies/Holiday on Ice. The Skate School also owns and operates skate schools in Geneva, Ill.

at Fox Valley Ice Arena and in Dimondale, Mich. at The Summit at The Capital Centre

### Former Great Neck Park District Commissioner Gary Maier dies

GREAT NECK, N.Y. — Rev. Gary E. Maier, retired rector of All Saints Episcopal Church and former commissioner of the Great Neck Park District, died on Aug. 23. Maier was appointed as a park district commissioner 1968 and was subsequently elected to 10 three-year terms. He was involved in the development of many recreational programs within the district and was a supportive friend of the Ice Skating Institute. He is survived by his wife, Nancy; their four children, Karen Mohr and Jonathan, David and Kathleen Maier; and six grandchildren.

### Summit Sports leases pro shop space at Novi Ice Arena

NOVI, Mich. — Summit Sports has opened its newest location at the pro shop in the Novi Ice Arena. The Novi City Council approved the three-year lease agreement with a two-year option on July 11, and after completing renovations to the existing space, Summit Sports has opened for business. The full-service store features products from major brands as well as equipment repairs and skate sharpening.

### Burleys offers financing program for arena upgrades

JOHNSTOWN, Pa. — Burleys Arena Ice Systems has introduced Arena Finance™, a financing program available to rink owners for Burleys' patented NiceUpgrade™ program. NiceUpgrade is designed for existing arena facilities requiring a custom-designed and -engineered upgrade. For information, go to [www.arenafinance.com](http://www.arenafinance.com).

*Send announcements and photos to [editor@skateisi.org](mailto:editor@skateisi.org). Look for facility news on ISI Online, at [skateisi.org](http://skateisi.org).*



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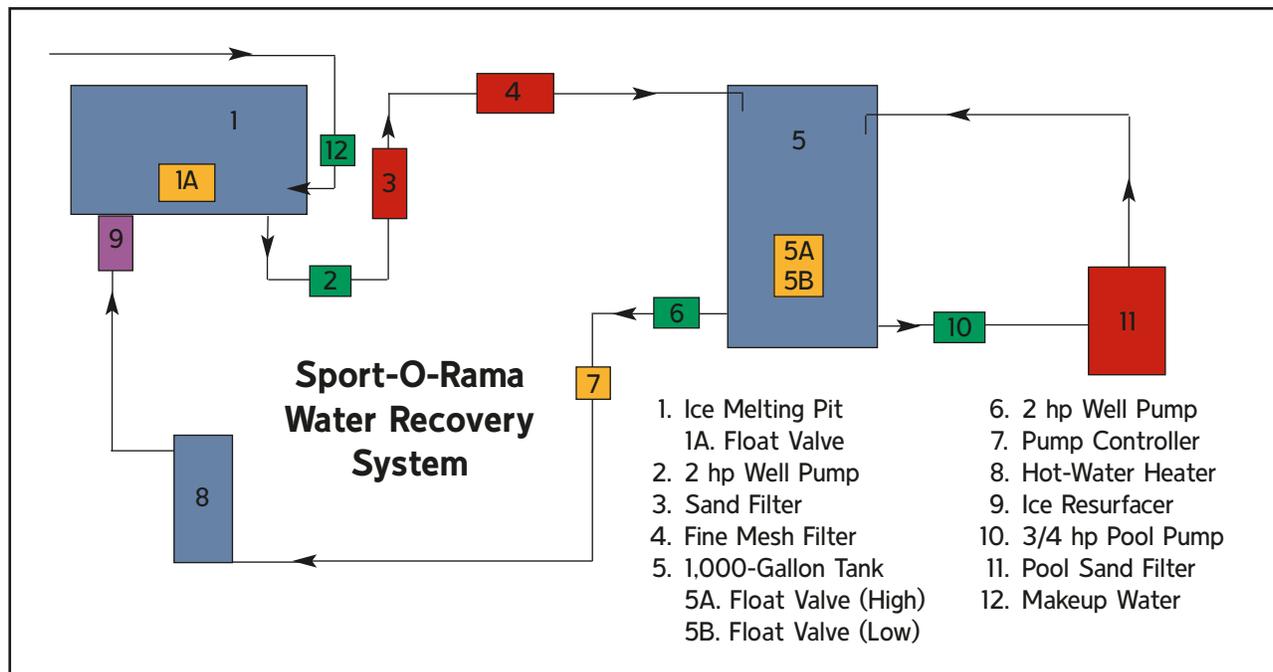
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# Water Recycling System Saves the Day

by Barry Wolkon



Sport-O-Rama Ice Rinks, a twin-rink facility in Monsey, N.Y., faced a crisis two years ago when Rockland County passed a law to institute a water-rationing program due to drought conditions in the Northeast.

The law provided for water rationing in five phases. Phase 5, which was the lowest category, called for restrictions on restaurants serving water, lawn watering, etc. Phase 4, the next step up, restricted water used by nurseries, car washes and ice rinks. At the time, they immediately instituted a Phase 5 emergency with prospects of an imminent Phase 4, which would have stopped all water to our ice rink, forcing us to close our facility.

Being one of only two ice rinks in the county, we did not have much political clout. However, the landscapers did, which resulted in the Legislature passing an alternative to the law, allowing exemptions for those businesses that could provide and institute a plan to save 25 percent of their water use in a Phase 4 emergency and 50 percent of their water use in a Phase 3 emergency.

I had no alternative at the time but to come up with some concept to substantially reduce our water use. On

analysis, we naturally found that the greatest uses of water were our cooling tower (condensation) and our resurfacing. We eliminated all showers and immediately reviewed all necessary resurfacings, but eliminating a few each day was not nearly sufficient. We could not do much about the cooling tower for our chiller system. That left ice resurfacing as our target, and recycling as our objective. With help from an irrigation specialist, our maintenance manager helped design and build a recycling system. The diagram (above) sets out the specifications for this system.

The resurfacers empty the ice shavings into our pit (1). The pit has a pipe stanchion of approximately 2 feet that allows the heavy dirt to drop to the bottom of the pit and the clearer water to be siphoned from 2 feet above the bottom. This water is pumped (2) from the pit to a sand filter (3). It further goes to a fine "mesh" filter (4). The pump continues to send it to a 1,000-gallon storage tank (5). While in the storage tank, a 3/4 hp pool pump (10) sends it through a pool sand filter (11) on a continuous basis. This is a filtering system that works just like a regular swimming pool. From the storage tank (5),

on demand, controlled by (7), a 2 hp pump (6) sends it to a hot water heater (8). In the storage tank (5) are two float valves. The high float valve (5A) shuts off the No. 2 pump and the low float valve shuts off the No. 6 pump.

If the pit runs low, makeup water from our regular supply is added to the pit (12). This is controlled by a float valve in the pit (1A).

Chlorine has to be added to the tank (5) periodically to eliminate odors and bacteria, similar to a swimming pool.

In addition, we were able to recycle additional water coming from our air handlers. We dehumidify by using a secondary system off our chiller system to run cold water through air handlers in each rink. These units produce a large amount of condensation water, which previously was just piped outside. We re-piped each unit to empty into the pit for the makeup water for our chillers.

None of the recycled water is used for anything except resurfacing.

The final result was a saving of 25-35 percent of our total water usage and, naturally, a substantial dollar saving. ■

*Barry Wolkon is the owner of Sport-O-Rama, built in 1974.*

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Q

**What are the advantages of fluorescent fixtures over traditional metal halide lighting?**

A

High-intensity discharge (HID) metal halide fixtures are the most prevalent form of ice lighting used. Their light output is superior to HID mercury vapor fixtures and the coloration is superior to high-pressure sodium fixtures. Advancements in fluorescent lighting lamp and ballast technology over the last decade have made linear fluorescent ice lighting a very appealing option for new arenas or retrofit of existing HID lighting.

T5 high-output (HO) fluorescent fixtures are high bay luminaries that deliver the same light output for about 50 percent of the power consumed by metal halide fixtures. They have minimal warm-up time and can be switched on and off the same way you would a normal room light. An ambient temperature above 90 degrees Fahrenheit is required around the T5 lamps to produce full lumen output. In the unheated ice arena application, this can be achieved by specifying a fully enclosed fixture with a high-impact polycarbonate lens that will contain the lamp and ballast heat to warm the air around the lamp.

The advantages of T5 HO fixtures over traditional metal halide lighting include:

**Better light quality.** The coloration and dispersion of the light is superior to metal halide. T5 lamps have a color-rendering index (CRI) of 85 vs. a CRI of 65 for metal halide. This makes colors appear more vivid and whites appear brighter with T5. A CRI of 85 provides similar brightness impressions using 25 percent fewer lumens than lamps with a CRI of 60. Since the fluorescent light is not as directional as HID, it disperses far better, virtually eliminating the bright spots and shadows that are inherent in HID.

**Lower radiant heat load.** Fluorescents operate at a substantially lower temperature than HID, significantly reducing the radiant heat load that is transferred to the ice sheet (lighting radiation accounts for 7 percent of the total refrigeration heat load).

**Better control options.** Dimming HID fixtures results in power losses greater than the light output reduction. With T5 technology, individual lamps in a fixture can be turned off with a direct power savings that is commensurate with the light reduction. If 50 percent of the lamps are turned off, the light output and energy consumption are reduced by 50 percent. While HID dimming has been known to shorten ballast and lamp life, switching off the T5 lamps will lengthen both the lamp and ballast life. The instant-on operation of the lamps allows greater switching flexibility without the warm-up time required for HID fixtures.

**Improved power factor.** T5 fixtures use high power factor electronic ballasts that reduce power losses and utility penalties that result from low power factor.

**Reduced lamp depreciation.** The lumen output depreciation factor for T5 lamps is substantially less than for HID lamps. A T5 lamp loses approximately 5 percent of its light output over the 20,000-hour life; metal halide lamps lose approximately 40 percent of their light output over the same 20,000-hour life. This increases the average maintained lumen output over the life of the lamp and eliminates the need for intermittent re-lamping to maintain light output.

**Ice rink applications.** Be sure to use a fixture that is appropriate for humid environments (aluminum construction, gasketed covers, etc.).

**Lamp options.** In direct retrofit applications, select the number of lamps in

the fixture (four or six) based on the required light level for activities. Generally speaking, four-lamp fixtures will produce the equivalent mean lumen output of a 400-watt metal halide fixture; this is usually sufficient for community and recreational ice arenas. Arenas that may host high school or college hockey or televised events should consider replacing the 400-watt HID fixture with a six-lamp T-5 fixture. If you are replacing 1,000-watt HID fixtures, eight-lamp T-5 fixtures are available from some manufacturers.

**Retrofit cost.** Installed costs for T5 high output fixtures average \$450 to \$650 per fixture, depending on the fixture model, additional wiring required and accessories. Controller costs average \$75 to \$125 per fixture controlled, depending on the features and complexity of the system. An NHL-size ice surface (85' by 200') would normally require 40 total fixtures (four rows of 10).

**Utility incentives.** Electric utility rebates are offered by many utilities to help defray the cost of upgrading from HID to fluorescent lighting. The utility programs tend to be prescriptive (averaging about \$125 per fixture). Some utilities also offer a customized lighting incentive program. A customized program may allow you to receive a rebate of up to 50-80 percent of the installed cost. In addition, some utilities will also finance the net cost of the lighting upgrade after rebates.

*Response excerpted from the "Facility Facelifts" manual by Rob McBride, CAE, President of Facility Management Corp.*

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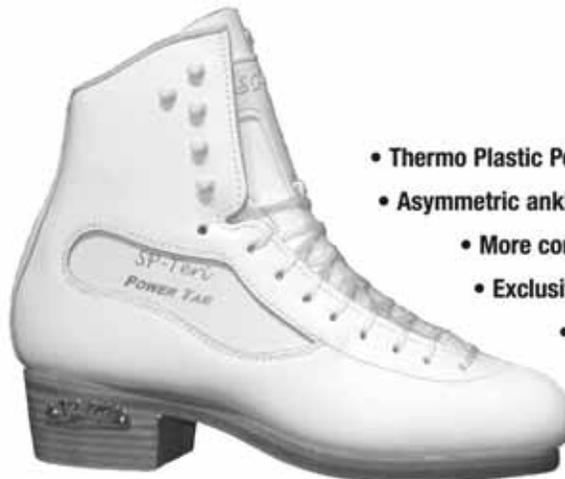
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# Are You Prepared for Winter Storms?

by Joan Rice

**D**o you have a plan in place to deal with threats to your facility from severe winter weather, such as record snowfall and high winds, which could result in power failure and outages?

The key to minimizing damage from these common winter storms is *planning*.

Obviously, not all ice arenas need to have a winter weather plan, but those located in areas that have severe winter storms better have one!

There are three key parts to an effective emergency plan: preparedness, response and recovery.

## Preparedness

Being prepared includes assessing your facility and operations and identifying trouble spots. Once identified, prioritize these weak links and make preparations to mitigate the loss potential. For example, if you have determined that loss of power due to a severe storm will cause the refrigeration system to fail, you might consider having some type of insulated ice covering material to ensure you don't lose ice. Have a plan to evacuate the building if necessary. If you know there is potential for heavy snowfall, you know you have to

get it off your roof. Do you have a snow removal service ready to go in this case? Don't wait until the snow is falling!

Once you have prioritized your trouble spots and made preparations to alleviate the potential effects of weather-related losses, write out your plan. You cannot predict when severe weather will hit, so have a plan for all employees to follow. If the manager is not on the premises, employees need to be trained to carry out the plan. Have a storm response meeting with your staff to discuss your emergency plan to deal with storm damage.

## Response

Once you are prepared, you can rest assured your response will be effective. Make sure your plan includes means to secure the facility to prevent further damage. Keep emergency numbers near every telephone and make sure all cell phones, pagers and walkie-talkies are charged and ready to go.

## Recovery

Recovery after storm damage can be tough. Certainly, your insurance agent should be called as soon as you are reasonably able to do so. The property must be secured from further damage,

which includes boarding up broken windows and doors, emergency roof protection, etc.

Please note that claims due to general power outages are not automatically covered by your property insurance. Property insurance coverage terms are not standard on this issue. You may not have any damage to your building but still suffer a loss of income due to lack of power. If you are not sure of the details of your coverage, check with your insurance agent — *before* a loss occurs.

For more information on winter storm hazards and planning, go to [www.fema.gov/hazards/winterstorms/wntsft.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/hazards/winterstorms/wntsft.shtm).

*Joan Rice is with Rice Specialty Risk, a provider of all forms of insurance to professional and amateur sports and leisure facilities across the nation.*



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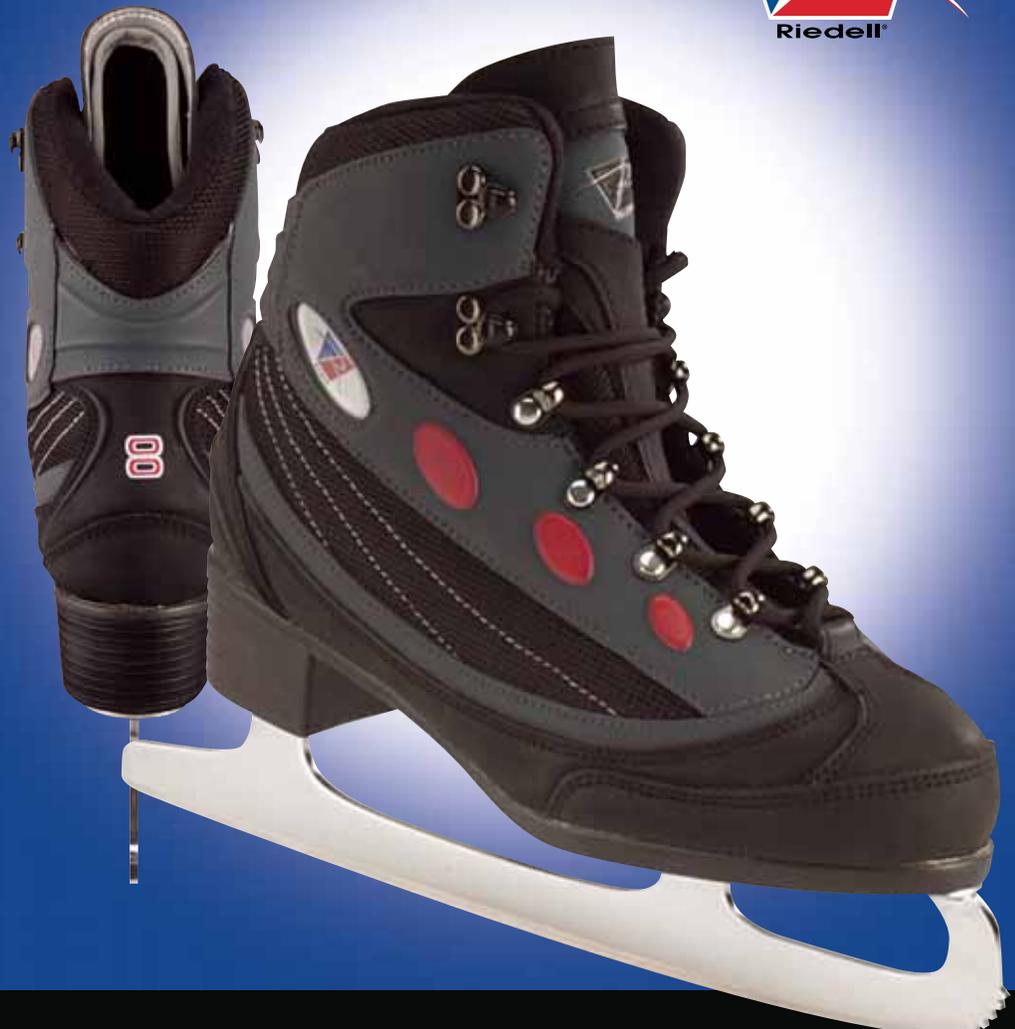
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# “I Just Work Here”

## Creating a Frontline That Improves Your Bottom Line

by John Skabelund

**H**ave you left a convenience store lately, wondering why the cashier seemed so put out, even hostile, while ringing up your purchase? Do you long for a simple “Thank you” or a “Have a nice day” when your change is handed to you at the video rental store? Have you had the impulse to reach across the counter and tickle the disgruntled robot who’s handing you your change, just to see if you could get a smile or even eye contact?

What has happened to America’s frontline?

Throughout the country, at every sort of retail business, fast food and other restaurants, and customer service departments everywhere, to name just a few of the affected industries, on-the-job apathy runs rampant. Unreliable, bored, unmotivated, unfriendly and even openly antagonistic frontline employees give your customers a bad impression of your business and make it difficult for them to want to come back, only to have to deal with this same attitude again. You may already have experienced the tremendous impact your frontline’s attitude can have on your repeat business and, thus, your bottom line.

clocking out mentally. What can you do about it?

In the long term, money alone appears to do little to improve the frontline’s motivation. If a bigger paycheck doesn’t cure the “I’m just here for the check” attitude, then what will? Here are some suggestions for working with your employees to get your frontline to start caring about your bottom line.

### Share the vision

Show your frontline employees the Big Picture, and help them to realize their role in the workplace and the impact of their work on the business. Rather than letting them feel like a dispensable cog in management’s machine, make clear the tie-in between good customer service and repeat business. Most frontline employees, when they understand how necessary repeat business is to keep the company running, will respond positively, if only to ensure that they will continue to have a place to come to work each day and a steady paycheck.

While encouragement for a job well done makes an individual feel good in the short term, employees need *proof* that they are integral to the business’ success if you are to achieve

petitive receptionist’s salary hired the least expensive employee he could find. After a few months, however, a colleague called him to say that not only was he treated rudely by the receptionist, but he was told, when he tried to order a product, “We ain’t got none of them.” Lesson learned, the owner hired a “Director of First Impressions” to answer phone calls and take orders. He explained the impact of the position on the company and how important it was to make a great first impression on every customer. Now, the employee who answers the phone not only hears praise from management for doing a great job, but is given *proof* that he or she is a valuable asset to the company’s continuing success.

### Invest in your employees

A retail business owner with high turnover blamed “today’s kids’ lack of loyalty” instead of looking for substantial root causes for his inability to maintain a reliable staff. Though it is easy to attribute high employee turnover to a Generation Y characteristic, the real cause of the problem often lies with the employer and a lack of effort to encourage employee buy-in.

You may never have thought about it in these terms, but management usually makes decisions based on information that the frontline doesn’t have. So, feeling misunderstood and unheard, frontline employees retreat to an extremely unproductive “us versus them” stance in relation to management. Employees who feel detached from the organization’s decision-making process find it very easy just to show up for a paycheck, give minimal effort, and, finally, not show up at all.

If your employees are stale, revive them by giving them an opportunity to be heard. Invest some time and involve your staff in the decision-making process whenever

**Don’t despair** that there just aren’t any good workers out there. **You can have the frontline staff you want** and that your business needs **by taking action.**

More and more frontline employees are clocking in for work while

long-term results. A business owner who couldn’t initially afford a com-

*Continued on page 16*

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possible, and you'll see the payoff; they will, in turn, invest in you and your company with their time, energy, skills and loyalty.

When you simply take the time to ask employees their views on matters affecting the business, they will feel more involved and empowered; their loyalty is a natural byproduct of those feelings. And when you make decisions that are contrary to the frontline's point of view, explain the factors that went into the decision-making process and how their input shaped the final decision.

### Reward performance

Telling an employee that they have done a great job makes them feel good for the short term, but eventually wears off. Excellent frontline employees might not be with your business for long, as your customers see an exceptional level of service and try to woo *your* people over to *their* businesses. So it's essential for you to establish a rewards system that works in order to keep your best employees.

A skilled clerk who'd been working at a convenience store for a year had a stack of business cards from the store's customers who had offered him jobs in a wide variety of industries. He hadn't left yet, even though he hadn't received a pay raise he'd been promised three months before. More than the money, he appreciated his employer's flexibility with scheduling; he valued his time more than money, and his manager had discovered what he valued most, then developed a way for him to earn it.

Remember, it isn't always money that motivates your frontline. Whenever possible, reward improved and consistently good performance with whatever each employee wants most.

### Create the frontline you want and need

Don't despair that there just aren't any good workers out there anymore. You can have the frontline staff you want and that your business needs by taking action. Start today by explaining your organization's Big Picture to every

employee. Ensure that they understand their direct impact on your business' bottom line. Follow that up by making each employee feel like he or she is a part of the business by giving everyone a voice in decision-making whenever you can.

Finally, develop a reward system for improved performance. Whether it is profit-sharing or something else they value, you will develop employee loyalty by making an effort to recognize and compensate superior performance. If you follow these steps, you will find yourself with a frontline that cares as much about your company's bottom line as *you* do.

*John Skabelund, president of Altima Consulting Inc., is an authority on employee performance and productivity. He previously held executive- and management-level positions with Stonewater Development and Qwest Communications. He speaks on leadership and performance improvement to business organizations, educators and students. For more information, visit [www.altimaconsulting.com](http://www.altimaconsulting.com) or call (888) 925-8462.*

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# Excitement



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# Capitalizing on Olympic Fever

*Ice sports get a concentrated dose of free publicity every four years, and ice arenas get the opportunity to make the most of it.*

*Are you ready for the 2006 Winter Olympic Games?*

**Do you anticipate the 2006 Winter Olympics to spark increased interest and participation in ice skating and/or hockey at your facility during the coming year?**

**ANASTOS:** Yes I do. I believe that the increased television visibility and international focus on the Olympics will help us stimulate interest.

**BARTELSON:** Absolutely. This is my 12th Olympiad in the ice skating industry, as either a coach or a facility owner. I'm anticipating a 30 percent increase in business January through April, and I look for a 12 to 15 percent increase in gross revenues for 2007.

**DAILING:** I certainly hope so! We have noticed an increase in our learn-to-skate classes just from the release of the *Ice Princess* movie. I also think the state of the economy before, during and after the Olympics will be a deciding factor in how much this Olympic exposure boosts our industry.

**JONES:** Of course, our jump in business, as we all expect will happen, will depend on how well the U.S. figure skating and hockey teams perform. In the early 1990s the Olympic year was a great boost to our business, but after that time the jump hasn't been as great.

**QUIGLEY:** As we are just in the process of restarting our ISI learn-to-skate program, we see the upcoming Winter Olympics as an advertising bonanza

(and at no cost to the facility). In the past, we have experienced similar boom times during the Olympics.

**ROGERS:** Obviously, the increased interest in figure skating and hockey will have the greatest impact on our business and those are the areas we need to focus on the most. However, based on our experience from the last Winter Olympics, I'm anticipating huge interest in both speedskating and curling. They both have such a unique novelty appeal that I expect our phones to ring off the hook with people interested in giving them a try.

**SLAVENSKY:** We anticipate an increase in interest in ice-related activities.

**How do you plan to capitalize on "Olympic fever"? Do you plan to adjust programs, schedules or fees?**

**BARTELSON:** The biggest change patrons are going to see in our facility for this Olympiad is that they're going to be entertained when they come in. We're going to be doing major light shows during all public sessions. This is the type of environment that parents are looking for, and we can provide that within the wholesome atmosphere of an ice rink. I've done a lot of research, visiting entertainment venues to pick up ideas that I feel we can use in our business.

I only change my schedule once a year — every September — and I have built in exactly what we're going to be

doing this winter. We've added more public sessions and more skating school slots, and we're targeting prime times that parents are available to come to the rink, rather than setting the times that are convenient for the ice rink. Our schedule is user-friendly.

We absolutely will have no rate increases. I have selected a price point that is profitable for the rink, yet very attractive to young families in households with multiple children.

**ROGERS:** The first thing we plan to do is increase our advertising leading up to, during and immediately following the Olympics. Our advertising will focus on Olympic themes and be targeted to air, on occasion, during major events featuring our sports. We also have to adjust our programming to make sure we have ample offerings for new participants to go into. Obviously, there's nothing worse than bringing in a lot of potential customers and then having to turn some away because you didn't have enough classes, enough instructors, or you didn't plan ahead for the demand. We're also participating in the Arnold Classic Fitness Expo for the first time next March. The Arnold Classic is one of the largest fitness shows in the world, hosted by Arnold Schwarzenegger and featuring 30 sports. We are putting together a hockey skills event, figure skating competition and speedskating meet all in one weekend. The Classic brings unbelievable amounts of promotion and PR, so coming off the Olympics, this event should bring huge exposure for our programs.

**DAILING:** We want to maximize class offerings and participation within our

# The Participants



**Tom Anastos**  
Suburban Arena  
Management LLC  
Farmington Hills,  
Mich.



**Donald Bartelson**  
Ontario Ice  
Skating Center  
Ontario, Calif.



**Diane Dailing**  
The Skate School  
LLC  
Geneva, Ill.



**Glyn Jones**  
Tampa Bay Skating  
Academy  
Oldsmar, Fla.



**Patrick D. Quigley**  
Cleland Multipurpose  
Sports Complex  
Fort Bragg, N.C.



**Jeremy Rogers**  
Chiller LLC/  
CoreComm  
Ice Haus  
Columbus, Ohio



**Scott Slavensky**  
Skatetown  
Roseville, Calif.

current times, with no changes in our pricing or scheduling. We will be offering Olympic family enrollment incentives for our learn-to-skate programs. We will be focusing on participation and preparation for our in-house and open ISI competitions, which will take on an Olympic flavor. Special classes will be offered to prepare for competitions. We will time the introduction of our tot figure skating program during the Olympic exposure. Our focus for this class will be frills, twirls, music and fun. For our hockey skaters we will be having ongoing friendly, in-class skill competitions. We also plan on exposing our programs heavily in the local media at this time in hopes of some free publicity.

**ANASTOS:** Things we are considering include creating a mini Olympics competition in our arena and adding some Olympic theming to the decor of the arena. We are also talking about the possibility of creating a “corporate Olympics” and ice-sport related events that could be used as a fun team builder for various local corporate partners.

**JONES:** We have already secured dates for a number of our coaches to go into the schools and give talks on skating. We are very fortunate to have professionals on staff that have either competed at the Olympics or have had skaters participate at the Olympic Games. At the schools we will be giving out discount coupons for our learn-to-skate and Hockey 101 and 201 programs. We will, of course, be contacting the local media the closer it gets to the games.

## How will you convert new impulse traffic to regular customers?

**ROGERS:** We plan to give customers the opportunity to try Olympic sports during special public skating sessions and open clinics. For example, we’ll have speedskates available to rent, coaches available to instruct, current students available to demonstrate/perform and opportunities for people to push pucks and throw curling stones.

**QUIGLEY:** We are aiming to expand our group lesson program to accommodate additional classes to serve the new market. We also expect to see a rise in the hockey side. After our winter house league season ends in late February, we will be instituting a cross ice program for the younger ages to capture and retain some of the new hockey players.

**SLAVENSKY:** Our belief is that most-people come to our facility initially for a public session or birthday party. The trick is taking the steps to make sure that they have a good initial experience. Some of the things we do include:

- Make sure that the facility is immaculate
- Make our birthday parties and public sessions nonstop fun
- Minimize time guests have to wait in line
- Have plenty of friendly, trained staff on hand
- Provide quality rental skates with sharp blades

- Personally fit everyone with skates and make sure they are properly laced
- Have a fun DJ on staff to entertain the crowd, play games, run the light show, promote programs, etc.
- Make sure that we have plenty of literature on hand for our programs, and trained staff who can answer questions about our programs
- Have EZ gliders available for new skaters; we section off one end of the rink with border patrol pads where EZ gliders can be used
- Complete quality assurance surveys on weekends
- Schedule events opposite our public sessions that will promote those events

Once people do get involved in one of our programs, they must continue to have fun or they won’t stay involved.

**BARTELSON:** We have hosts and hostesses that work our public sessions during the Olympics season. They will start Thanksgiving weekend. They work the floor, helping put skates on and checking to see that everybody’s skates fit. They carry printed materials for our programs on them. They go around and help the beginners. We also give free coffee and cookies on skate school evenings, with a host or hostess working the crowd. You’d be amazed at the response you get.

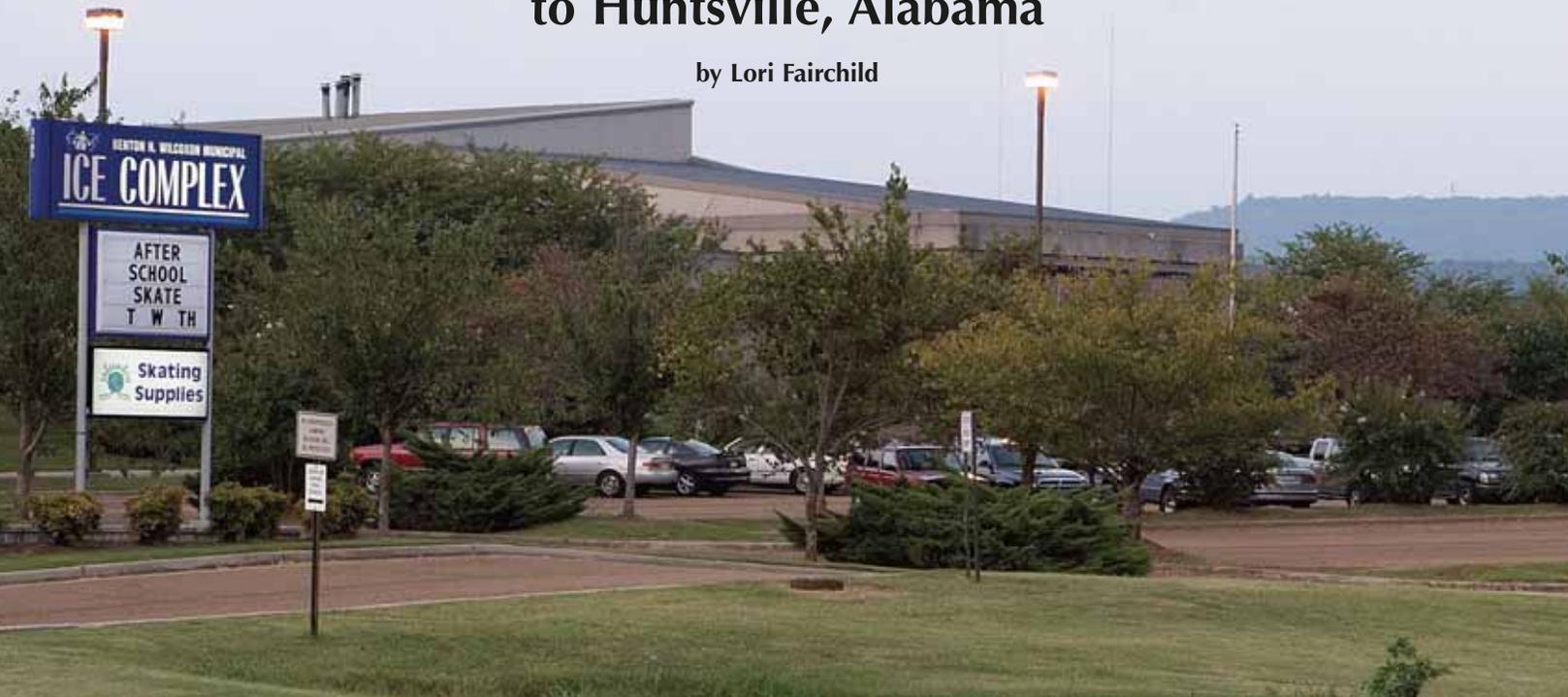
**ANASTOS:** Like we always do — try to create a fun and entertaining environment that provides great service.

*Look for more responses in an upcoming edition of ISI Online.*

# Ice Skating and Rocket Science

Brilliant minds brought both  
to Huntsville, Alabama

by Lori Fairchild



Wilcoxon Ice Complex is a twin-sheet facility, with a proposal in progress for a third-sheet expansion.

James Gober

Huntsville, Alabama was an unlikely location for an ice rink back in 1959. Ice skating was considered a northern sport, and arenas in the sunny South were nearly unheard of. But even 46 years ago, Huntsville was not your typical little southern town.

Home of the Redstone Arsenal, where German rocket scientists led by Dr. Wernher von Braun were developing U.S. Army rockets and other aerospace technology, Huntsville was fast becoming a cosmopolitan melting pot. And its European residents missed their winter sports.

So did Benton H. Wilcoxon, a chemical engineer from California who loved snow skiing and ballroom dancing. He decided ice skating would be a good way to practice and stay in shape for his other hobbies, not to mention a wonderful sport for his four children. So he built a small indoor ice rink and called it the Ice Palace. It would be the only ice rink in Alabama for the next 14 years.

## Where there's a Wilcoxon ...

"Ice skating was completely new in Huntsville," says Robert Unger, who developed the early ISI skating program at the Ice Palace. "Ben took one step at a time. He built the Ice Palace with used equipment from another rink that had closed. He started with a small rink to keep the costs low, and then enlarged it a little bit at a time."

Wilcoxon's wife, Margo, kept the books for the Ice Palace and the couple ran the business on a tight budget. Yet always eager to share the joys of ice skating, they offered free admission for patrons who brought a friend, and Wilcoxon thought nothing of pulling an acquaintance off the sidewalk and into the rink for a quick lesson. He staged ice shows and

brought in professional performances to expose the community to world-class ice skating.

"Mr. Wilcoxon was not just a brilliant engineer; he was also an entrepreneur. He was relentless in his dedication, and he was determined to provide the community with a wonderful atmosphere for ice skating. He also wanted to develop programs and see figure skating and hockey become a part of the community," recalls Editha (Dita) Dotson-Bowser, a former national and international figure skating medalist who learned to skate at the Ice Palace and now serves as Wilcoxon Ice Complex's skating director.

Dotson-Bowser says Wilcoxon was as artistic as he was technical, a true Renaissance man, with both sides of his brain equally engaged. He built an ice resurfer from an old Jeep — and listened to classical music as he resurfaced. He performed equipment and facility repairs himself — and wore a patch bearing the French ballet title *Les Patineurs* ("The Skaters").

Huntsville resident Keith Schonrock took his two children to the Ice Palace several days a week, eventually signing up for his own lessons and years later leading the efforts to build a municipal facility in Wilcoxon's name. He remembers the Ice Palace owner as "a charming jack-of-all-trades with a wonderful sense of humor, and someone who always seemed younger than he was." A visit to Wilcoxon's Ice Palace, he says, was "like going home to a big family, where everybody knew everybody."

## Pioneering programs

The Ice Skating Institute of America was born the same year ice skating was introduced in Huntsville. The first annual ISIA conference was held in 1960 in Chicago, and

founding member Ben Wilcoxon was among the attendees. He would later serve on the organization's board of directors, and an award for excellence in management would be named for him.

In 1963, Wilcoxon contacted former Holiday On Ice star Robert Unger, a German who had settled in Knoxville, Tenn. to teach private ice skating lessons at the new Ice Chalet. In addition to the talent and reputation Unger could bring to the Ice Palace, he also shared a native language with the many German scientists who patronized the rink.

They struck a deal for Unger to make the 200-mile trip to Huntsville every other weekend to begin a figure skating program at the Ice Palace. His Huntsville schedule eventually grew to three and four days per week, and the arrangement continued for nine years. During that time, Unger developed the original ISI recreational skater testing program.

Unger's professional ice show experience was instrumental in the development of skating events in Huntsville. "The annual ice show grew from a little exhibition-style show to a high-class show with full-fledged costumes," he recalls.

He also established adult ice skating classes, and developed precision teams for exhibition and, later, for competition — a new concept in the United States at that time.

### The next generation

After 27 years of operating the Ice Palace as a profitable private corporation, Wilcoxon donated the rink to the city of Huntsville in 1986. He stayed on as manager, working only for a performance-based bonus. The city appointed a board to run the facility as a municipally owned nonprofit corporation.

"Ben's enthusiasm for managing and running the facility never went away," Schonrock says. "After he retired, he stayed on for several years and kept repairing things and continued to be the person keeping the rink alive."

A coalition of regular Ice Palace patrons formed FRIA (Friends of Recreational Ice Activities) and worked with the Ice Palace Board of Control on a five-year plan to replace the original rink with a larger, more adequate ice skating facility for the city of Huntsville. FRIA raised \$1.6 million of the \$3.2 million needed to build the facility, and in 1991, the Benton H. Wilcoxon Ice Complex opened. The city provided the land and matched FRIA's construction funding.

"Since becoming a municipal facility in 1986, neither the Ice Palace nor the Ice Complex has ever

requested or required city funding to sustain operation," Dotson-Bowser notes.

The successful public/private partnership has become a shining example for other major construction projects in Huntsville, Schonrock adds.

Wilcoxon Ice Complex offers two NHL-size ice sheets, with seating for 1,000 in the main arena. Special lighting and sound systems enhance the public skating experience, including DJ skates and the monthly "Glaciers" event featuring live bands on the ice. Other first-floor amenities include a well-stocked

*Continued on page 22*

Right: Marie Sutton (left) is the facility manager at Wilcoxon, and Editha Dotson-Bowser is the skating director.

Below: Margo and Ben Wilcoxon, pictured above the bulletin boards at the Wilcoxon Ice Complex, brought the first ice rink to Alabama in 1959.

*Photos by James Göber*





sessions, as they are where we get our future hockey players and figure skaters."

"School Daze" sessions offer special after-school admission rates three days a week, and the new Polar Bear Club annual membership costs less than \$20 for a package of special offers to keep skaters coming back.

"Our 'community' includes parts of Tennessee and the entire north Alabama area," Sutton points out. "Our customer base encompasses all races and economic classes. We are able to touch the youngsters' lives when they come through our doors with their class on a field trip, and they often become regulars."

### The legacy lives on

With 160 hours of public sessions, 150 hours of skating school and more than 200 hours of hockey each month, plus shows, competitions, workshops, regional training camps, judges' schools and other events, Wilcoxon Ice Complex is fully utilized. It remains the only twin-sheet ice arena in north Alabama. The Von Braun Civic Center's single-sheet arena is only a few miles away, but the closest twin-sheet facilities are two hours to the north and south, and four hours to the east.

**Above: One Saturday night each month, "Glaciers" features a live band on the ice.**

**Left: The multi-age Theatre on Ice team practices a new routine for its upcoming competitive season.**

*Photos by James Göber*



*Continued from page 21*

pro shop, four main locker rooms with full facilities and three smaller locker rooms, plus a referee's room and locker/storage areas designed specifically for figure skaters and hockey players. Four party areas can accommodate as many as 16 parties per public session. The second floor features a ballet room, weight room, large conference room and extra storage space, and a third floor is for storage only.

The facility was the first to use a split-faced block interior finish and received the Alabama Masonry Award for its innovation. It was also one of the first to feature an open, patron-focused layout, with rinks, pro shop, admissions office, skating and hockey schools and concessions readily visible from the lobby.

Wilcoxon Ice Complex is home to the 45-year-old Huntsville Skating School & Training Academy, which serves 200 to 400 skaters each month. The arena has hosted numerous well-attended events, including two ISI Winter Classics, in 1994 and 1996.

The thriving Huntsville Amateur Hockey Association registered more than 700 players last year. The Huntsville Hockey Development Center, headed by Nathan Bowen, is focused on growing grassroots programs for all ages and skill levels. The Alabama Chargers, the University of Alabama-Huntsville's NCAA Division I hockey team, also trains at Wilcoxon.

Public skating is a priority at the Huntsville arena, says Marie Sutton, facility manager. "Our focus has always been on the community first. I fight long and hard to keep the public

Huntsville's population has grown to 168,000, with a healthy economy driven by aerospace and military technology. Well established as "Rocket City" and "America's Space Capital," it's a destination that attracts thousands of visitors, particularly to the renowned U.S. Space & Rocket Center.

"We draw skaters from across the South, thanks to the local space camps that run year-round," says Sutton. "The campers often will spend their free time on the ice."

After nearly 15 years of serving the community as a twin-sheet facility, increasing demand for ice time has prompted the Wilcoxon Ice Complex Board of Control to propose a \$9.3 million expansion, which would include a third sheet and seating for 3,600 to accommodate the growing needs of amateur ice sports. A feasibility study has been presented to the city and funding options are being considered. Community support for the project is strong.

Ben Wilcoxon, who died in 1997, would be thrilled with the current status of the unlikely pastime and passion he brought to Alabama in 1959.

"Mr. Wilcoxon was instrumental in my life, and a real father figure to many of us. I hope that, in my efforts at the Ice Complex, I am carrying on his spirit," says Dotson-Bowser. "He didn't just take the standard approach to life. He wanted to make people consider the diverse possibilities for enriching their lives. He was always thinking outside the box. I'm very protective of the name of this rink and I always want 'Wilcoxon' to be part of it." ▀



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# Skating Scholars Need YOU!

It's no secret that young ice skaters are typically disciplined, motivated and involved in the classroom and their community as well as on the ice. They are a credit to the sport and the industry of ice skating, and we're proud to play a part in their development.

Contributions to the ISIA Education Foundation offer groups and individuals a way to invest in the educational future of ice skaters. Thanks to the generous support of ISI members, the Foundation has been able to award college scholarships to more than 60

deserving skaters. We have watched these young people grow into strong, contributing adults, many of whom have gone on to become leaders in their fields. Many also continue their ice skating pursuits, including coaching and volunteering at ice arenas, and later, encouraging their own children to participate in ice sports. (To read about this year's scholarship recipients, go to the ISIA Education Foundation tab on the ISI Web site, skateisi.org.)

This is the perfect time of year to make a tax-deductible contribution

to the ISIA Education Foundation. Donations made in honor of a special occasion or in memory of a loved one are especially meaningful. Congratulations and special thanks to Donald and Elizabeth Weiner who celebrated their 20th wedding anniversary with a generous donation to the Foundation.

All donations, of any size, are greatly appreciated and contribute to a worthy cause, so please don't forget the ISIA Education Foundation and its scholarship applicants!

## 'Skate Strong' Fundraiser

The Education Foundation launched a new fundraising campaign this year, chaired by Jimmie Santee and Robyn Bentley. The Foundation began selling "Skate Strong" bracelets at the 2005 ISI World Recreational Championships, where they received a "STRONG" response. Thanks to those who helped sell bracelets at Worlds: Sandy Wittman, Lisa Fedick, Jimmie Santee, Don Bartelson, Judy Sniffen, Barbara and Boyd Wietecter and Samantha Bentley (who single-handedly outsold all the adults).

If you didn't get yours at Worlds, it's not too late — look for them at upcoming ISI national events.

The popular bracelets, available in either glow-in-the-dark or blue/white swirl styles, sell for \$3 each or two for \$5, and proceeds benefit the ISIA Education Foundation Scholarship Fund.

The Foundation is also offering the bracelets to member facilities, clubs or districts that wish to help raise funds for the scholarship program and for their own programs. Why not sell them at your local competition or district championships? It's easy and we can help!

For more information, contact Jimmie Santee at prrvnufac@aol.com or Robyn Bentley at RobynBSK8R@direcway.com.

## Recent Education Foundation Contributions

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## **FMC Arenas Expands Rink Partnership**

*Arena operator to add three Massachusetts facilities*

Boston, MA – On July 29<sup>th</sup> the Massachusetts Department of Capital Asset Management (DCAM), along with the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), awarded Facility Management Corporation (FMC) of Norwell, Massachusetts, 25-year leases to operate and improve three former Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) ice skating arenas in the Boston area.

The company, which has been operating many of the states' DCR skating rinks for the last 13 years, has agreed to terms on the Simoni Rink in Cambridge, the Connery Rink in Lynn and the Cronin Rink in Revere, MA. The Cronin rink has been closed for the past year and will be completely rebuilt by the state prior to turning it over to FMC in 2007.

As part of the agreement, FMC will invest over \$4.35 million dollars in capital repairs and improvements to the facilities. The improvements include new ice slabs and chiller systems, roof replacements, dashers, dehumidification and other mechanical and architectural upgrades. In addition to capital investments, FMC will also pay the state a monthly lease fee.

Legislation was enacted last year to allow the state agencies to enter into strategic partnerships with public and private organizations to operate and improve eight of the DCR's metropolitan Boston ice rinks. The success of the long term "Rink Partnership" in DCR ice rinks outside of the metropolitan Boston area was the impetus for the state's legislature and executive to expand the program.

DCR oversees the largest public ice rink system in the

nation with 43 facilities located across the state of Massachusetts. Twenty seven of these rinks are now operated through partnerships between DCR and public or private rink operators. Most of the DCR facilities were built in the 1960s and require significant investments to replace aging equipment and building components.

The partnership program maintains the core mission of the public ice arena system with minimum public skating requirements, affordable user fees, and priority scheduling for youth. At the same time it provides the operating partners with the security of a 25-year agreement to amortize major capital investments and rebuild the aging facilities.

FMC has been operating community ice arenas since its inception in 1992. The primary focus of the company has been the development and expansion of affordable skating opportunities and the extension of the ice operating season, providing year-round programming to ice sports enthusiasts.

"We are truly excited to have this opportunity to be part of the renewal of these former MDC rinks," said Rob McBride, President and Founder of FMC.

"We look forward to the challenge of renovating the facilities and expanding programming to turn these seasonal arenas into year round providers of affordable high quality ice sports and recreation."

Partnership agreements were also entered into with the Newton Country Day School (Daly Rink), the town of Arlington (Veteran's Rink), the town of Canton (Metropolis Rink), the City of Everett (Allied Veteran's Rink) and the town of Waltham (Veteran's Memorial Rink).



# COACHES' CORNER

by **Barb Yackel**

*ISI National Events Coordinator & Skating Program Director*

**T**wo months, 61 days, 1,464 hours — and I will stop calculating here since my mathematical skills are not the best — until the start of another new year. That saying, “Time flies,” is truly an understatement.

Fall was busy, as usual, with most ISI districts holding their annual instructor seminars. Kudos and accolades to those who hosted these continuing-education sessions, which provide a chance to network with other professionals and to stay updated on rule changes while working together to make upcoming events successful. Attendees received the new 2005 Instructor Seminar Manual, which will be a wonderful resource for information throughout the year.

The *weSKATE* kit is the hottest product in town, and the announcement of the reorganization and combining of the Skaters & Coaches Handbook, Competitors Handbook and Special Skaters Standards has been well received. The new comprehensive manual is now available for \$18. Order yours today online ([www.skateisi.org](http://www.skateisi.org)) or call the ISI office at (972) 735-8800.

The fast pace of September continued when the adults took center stage in Las Vegas for the annual ISI Adult Recreational Championships. Just as everyone anticipated, the camaraderie, sportsmanship, creativity and fun were A+. Here’s a thought for next year’s event in Nashville (which, by the way, has a date change, to Sept. 8-10): Let’s do a coaches’ interpretive event!

E-mail me your thoughts. Could be fun!

Looking ahead to 2006 and the Olympics, we can all expect an increase in skating school numbers with skaters hoping to be the next Michelle Kwan, Sasha Cohen or Timothy Goebel. Start brainstorming now with management to take advantage of gold-medal opportunities from Olympic fever! Start your creative planning by: :

- Developing co-op marketing opportunities with local media
- Offering “rec classes” through your city’s recreation department
- Updating or developing your arena Web site
- Creating and using an arena mascot for entertainment and publicity
- Offering free introductory lessons on weekend public sessions
- Creating monthly or weekly themed public-skating sessions
- Developing Olympic promotions with local merchants
- Using coupon books

The list is as long as your imagination, so get going for the gold in promoting your programs and facility!

The ISI national events for 2006 will move us from coast to coast, so make sure you have deadlines, event dates and locations entered in your planners and PDAs (see list, below).

As we approach the holiday season and its hubbub, please take a few minutes to count your blessings. As the nation watched the destruction and devastation of Hurricane Katrina, it made us realize how very lucky we are and to appreciate the simple things in life. Many ISI member facilities, clubs, schools and coaches are helping to rebuild the lives of the hurricane victims and are to be commended. Some ideas being shared from around the country are:

- Holding benefit “skate-a-thons”
- Donating proceeds equivalent to an hour of ice time
- Coaches contributing an hour of private-lesson income
- Donating a public session to the cause

Helping those in need will make your holiday season extra-special. I guarantee it!

## 2006 ISI National Events

### Winter Classic

March 3-5

Melvindale, Mich./Melvindale Civic Center

Deadline: Dec. 1, 2005

### Synchronized Championships

April 7-9

Bensenville, Ill./The Edge Ice Arena

Deadline: Feb. 1

### 2006 iACT/NEISMA Conference

May 31-June 3

Boston/Seaport Hotel and World Trade Center

Deadline: April 1

### World Recreational Team Champs

July 24-30

Marlboro, Mass./New England Sports Center

Deadline: May 1

### Adult Championships

Sept. 8-10

Nashville, Tenn./Centennial Sportsplex

Deadline: Aug. 1

### Artistic Challenge

Nov. 3-5

Denver/South Suburban Ice Arena

Deadline: Sept. 1

# REVISED DATE FOR ADULTS 06! Sept. 8-10, 2006

## Adults scoot your boots over to Nashville!

Wherever you see a group of adult figure skaters you're sure to find mega doses of excitement, laughter and entertainment. Join the group at Adult Champs in Nashville and you're in for a whole year's worth of FUN, FUN, FUN – on and off the ice!

Adults '06 will give you the chance to scoot your skating boots across the ice at the Centennial Sportsplex, central Tennessee's historic ice rink. The Centennial is the ultimate fitness complex, with two sheets of ice surrounded by an aquatic center, tennis center and fitness facility.

Don't forget to pack your western boots in with your skates – after all, country music is the lifeblood of Nashville. You can explore musical attractions like the Grand Old Opry, the Ryman Auditorium and the Country Music Hall of Fame. There are plenty of other attractions too, from legendary musical venues to art museums, natural beauty to plantation homes and historic sites to professional sports.

Adult Champs also gives you a unique way to mix and mingle with outstanding skaters from all over while you get your party on. You'll have the time of your life, because in

Nashville skaters aren't the only stars that'll be out at night. Where else can you step into a honky tonk, look around and see famous faces? Sometimes the stars will even give an impromptu performance!

And the honky tonks aren't the only place to go to hear great music and hang out. There are also small dives tucked away throughout the city where the legends of Nashville go to make music. In addition to country establishments like the famous Wild Horse Saloon, the Nashville scene also boasts blues, jazz and other trendy clubs.

Day or night – regardless of your taste in entertainment – Nashville promises a memorable time for Adults '06 participants! What are you waiting for? Shine your boots, perfect your program and sign up for Adults '06 today!

For tourist information:

[www.nashvillecvb.com](http://www.nashvillecvb.com)  
[www.nashville.citysearch.com](http://www.nashville.citysearch.com)  
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Nashville, Tenn.  
 Sept. 15-17, 2006

»» **Now Sept. 8-10** ««  
 Centennial Sportsplex  
 Entry Deadline: Aug. 1



# Want More Dynamic Practices? Planning is Key!

by Jim Thompson

**I**n my many years of coaching, I took the trouble to prepare a written practice plan about 75 percent of the time. Whenever I didn't have a written plan, I regretted it. The time seemed to flitter away and, at the end of practice, I felt that we hadn't learned as much as we might have. Having a written plan helps you to stay on task and keep from being buffeted about by the whims of the moment.



Jim Thompson

What happens when coaches commit themselves to a written plan for every practice? They have to think through what is going to happen in the limited time available for practice. The first benefit of a written plan is that it forces us to come to grips with how little practice time we actually have, compared with how much there is to learn about our sport. We have to prioritize to make sure the most important priorities get done. And we need to recognize that we can't do everything. If a particularly important drill takes 15 minutes for players to benefit from it, then allocating only five minutes is a waste of time.

## How kids learn sports

There is another important reason to do the hard work of planning. Kids learn sports best through action, by doing rather than by standing around listening (or, as often is the case, *not* listening!). Yet in most practices I observe, most of the players are standing around most of the time. When I see a team where most of the players are involved and active, I know I am watching the fruits of a coach who

has spent significant time planning practices.

Many times it can be as simple as adding one or two additional steps to a drill. For example, players always love shooting drills. Rather than simply having a line of players waiting to take shots, add a line of passers who start the drill by passing to the shooter. Also, add a line for an outlet pass from the goaltender. If the goaltender makes a save, she passes to the outlet, who passes to the passer, who passes to the shooter. Each player can follow her pass/shot to the next line, so players keep moving. You can have one player behind the goal who feeds passes to the outlet line when shots are not saved by the goaltender.

## The spice of practice

As with life, the spice of practice is variety. Mixing up activities makes practice more fun. A team that spends an hour straight on a single activity is going to be less excited about it than a team that spends the same amount of time on the activity but in smaller chunks, and approaching it from different angles. Using a variety of drills to teach the same skill also keeps it interesting for players. Again, it is planning that allows a coach to build variety into and across practices over time.

## Why coaches don't plan

In workshops all over the U.S., I have asked coaches if they regularly prepare a written practice plan. Rarely do more than 10 percent of the coaches raise their hands.

If there are so many benefits to planning practice sessions — and there are — then why don't more coaches plan more often? We could say that it's because most youth coaches are volunteers who have lots of other things they have to do. That is true, but the real reason why coaches don't plan their practices more is because planning is hard work! Plan-

ning, for most people, is not fun. Thinking is hard work, and planning is thinking of the highest order. It involves trying to anticipate the future ("I think we can get this conditioning drill done in 10 minutes, which leaves 15 minutes to scrimmage if the defensive drill doesn't take more than 15 minutes ...").

If you plan your practices, you have an opportunity to gain a competitive advantage because most coaches don't do enough of it. And there is some good news: Your plan doesn't have to be good to be effective.

## A written plan

A written plan, even a bad one, gives you a framework from which to tackle a problem. You can always deviate from your plan, which shouldn't be set in stone. For example, you may have thought you could cover a new skill in 10 minutes, but after the 10 minutes you realize your players haven't gotten the hang of it. You can make an adjustment and allow more time for it (which means something else will not get done). Or you can make a note to cover this skill again at the next practice.

A written plan is a tool a coach can use to make the best use of a very scarce resource — practice time — either by following the plan or by selectively deviating from the plan when it makes sense to do so. Without a written plan to guide your daily practices, your team is simply not going to achieve its potential. ▀

*Jim Thompson is the founder and executive director of Positive Coaching Alliance. To learn more about the ISI-PCA partnership and the advantages of Positive Coaching, visit [www.PositiveCoach.org](http://www.PositiveCoach.org) or contact PCA at [pca@PositiveCoach.org](mailto:pca@PositiveCoach.org) or (866) 725-0024.*



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# CALENDAR

## ISI-endorsed competitions & shows/exhibitions

(Deadline for the January/February EDGE calendar: Nov. 1)

### COMPETITIONS

#### NOVEMBER

- 1** **Renton, Wash.**  
Castle Ice Arena  
Fall Fling '05
- 3-6** **San Francisco**  
Yerba Buena Ice  
Skating Center  
Skate SF 2005  
ISI Technical
- 
- 4-6** **Orlando, Fla.**  
RDV Sportsplex  
Ice Den  
ISI Artistic Challenge
- 4-6** **Alpharetta, Ga.**  
The Cooler  
7th Annual 2005  
ISI Invitational
- 4-6** **Joliet, Ill.**  
Inwood Ice Arena  
Harvest Gold  
ISI Competition
- 5-6** **Yorktown, Va.**  
Hampton Roads  
IcePlex  
4th Annual Fall  
Classic Open
- 6** **Anaheim, Calif.**  
Anaheim ICE  
5th Annual  
Synchronized Team  
Championships
- 11-13** **Northbrook, Ill.**  
Northbrook Sports  
Center  
Winter Open Team  
Competition

- 11-13** **Portland, Ore.**  
Lloyd Center Ice Rink  
18th Annual Ice  
Crystal Classic
- 13** **Anaheim, Calif.**  
Glacial Gardens  
Skating Arena  
2005 ISI Open  
Competition
- 19-20** **New Ulm, Minn.**  
New Ulm FSC  
New Ulm Skaters  
Fall Festival
- 19-20** **Kansas City, Mo.**  
Line Creek Ice Arena  
City of Fountains  
Fall Fling
- 20** **Dallas**  
Galleria Ice  
Skating Center  
Galleria Holiday  
Audition  
Competition
- 26-27** **Skokie, Ill.**  
Skatium  
All America  
Competition

#### DECEMBER

- 2-4** **Webster Groves, Mo.**  
Webster Groves  
Ice Arena  
Show Me State  
Games
- 2-4** **Wayne, Mich.**  
Wayne Community  
Center  
In The Arctic
- 3-4** **Fort Myers, Fla.**  
Fort Myers Skatium  
5th Annual ISI City of  
Palms Invitational
- 10** **El Paso, Texas**  
El Paso County Coliseum  
Sun City Blades 2nd  
Annual Fall Ice Fest

#### FEBRUARY

- 3-5** **Glenview, Ill.**  
Glenview Ice Center  
February Freeze

- 10-12** **Niles, Ill.**  
Niles Park District  
Iceland  
26th Annual  
Sweetheart Open
- 18-19** **Nashville, Tenn.**  
Centennial Sportsplex  
21st Annual ISI  
Invitational

#### MARCH



- 3-5** **Melvindale, Mich.**  
Melvindale Civic  
Arena  
ISI Winter Classic
- 4** **Columbus, Ohio**  
CoreComm Ice Haus  
Arnold Classic  
Skating Competition
- 4-5** **Irmo, S.C.**  
Ice Land Irmo  
Palmetto Classic
- 31-4/2** **Knoxville, Tenn.**  
Ice Chalet  
37th Annual  
Mississippi Valley  
District Competition

#### APRIL



- 7-9** **Bensenville, Ill.**  
The Edge Ice Arena  
ISI Synchronized  
Championships
- 8-9** **El Segundo, Calif.**  
Toyota Sports Center  
6th Annual Spring  
Fling Competition

#### MAY

- 1** **Irmo, S.C.**  
Ice Land Irmo  
Summer Sizzle



- 24-30** **Marlboro, Mass.**  
New England Sports  
Center  
ISI World  
Recreational Team  
Championships

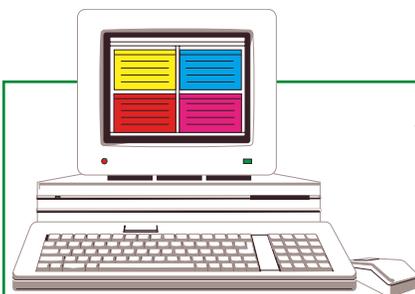
### SHOWS & EXHIBITIONS

#### NOVEMBER

- 25- Dec. 17** **Dallas**  
Galleria Ice Skating  
Center  
Galleria Annual Tree  
Lighting Show

#### DECEMBER

- 3-4** **Springdale, Ark.**  
Arkansas Figure  
Skating Association  
A Swingin' Christmas
- 6-10** **Knoxville, Tenn.**  
Ice Chalet  
Nutcracker on Ice
- 7-8** **Honolulu**  
Ice Palace  
Winter Recital
- 9** **Renton, Wash.**  
Castle Ice Arena  
Holiday Gala '05
- 9-10** **San Francisco**  
Yerba Buena Ice  
Skating Center  
Holidaze Ice Show
- 9-11** **Evanston, Ill.**  
Robert Crown Center  
31st Annual  
Nutcracker on Ice
- 10** **Peoria, Ariz.**  
Desert Schools  
Coyotes Center  
Polar Express
- 10** **Highland Park, Ill.**  
Centennial Ice Arena-  
Highland Park  
An Evening at  
Centennial-Winter  
Exhibition
- 10** **Oldsmar, Fla.**  
Tampa Bay Skating  
Academy  
Holiday Recital
- 11** **Frisco, Texas**  
Dr Pepper StarCenter  
Rudolph on Ice



Visit the ISI  
Web site:  
[skateisi.org](http://skateisi.org)

- 16 **Glenview, Ill.**  
Glenview Ice Center  
Winter Figure  
Skating Exhibition
- 16-17 **Breckenridge, Colo.**  
Stephen C. West  
Ice Arena  
Holiday on Ice  
Extravaganza
- 17 **White Plains, N.Y.**  
Ebersole Ice Rink  
Holiday Show
- 18 **Arlington, Texas**  
ICE at The Parks  
Holiday in The Park
- 18 **Irmo, S.C.**  
Ice Land Irmo  
Holiday Ice Show
- 29 **Glenview, Ill.**  
Glenview Ice Center  
Winter Carnival  
Synchronized  
Skating Exhibition

### MARCH

- 25-26 **White Plains, N.Y.**  
Ebersole Ice Rink  
End of Year Show
- 31-  
April 1 **White Plains, N.Y.**  
Ebersole Ice Rink  
Night in the Spotlight

### APRIL

- 9 **Highland Park, Ill.**  
Centennial Ice Arena-  
Highland Park  
Spring Exhibition

### MAY

- 17-21 **Glenview, Ill.**  
Glenview Ice Center  
33rd Annual  
Ice Show



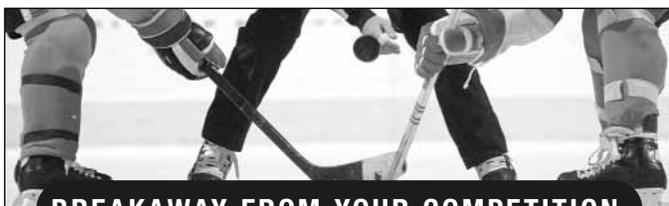
- 31-  
June 3 **Boston**  
Seaport Hotel/World  
Trade Center  
2006 iACT/NEISMA  
Conference &  
Tradeshaw

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\*ISI Administrative Members only.





## Mid-Atlantic Arena Managers Association (MAMA)

by Trudy Ivory, Co-director

The October MAMA meeting was held at Ice Land USA in Strongsville, Ohio. The arena has two NHL sheets and a studio rink. Our host was Jim Neiheiser, president of JDN Consulting and the vice president of operations for Ice Land USA. His company specializes in arena construction and management. The facility is "top of the line" and offers a variety of programs, including hockey, learn to skate, a figure skating team and public skating sessions. MAMA appreciates Jim's offer to host our meeting and the effort he made to welcome us.



Trudy Ivory

All of the MAMA arenas are looking forward to the 2005/06 season, the 2006 Winter Olympics and making this the best year yet. There are arenas in all of our areas that are struggling to keep their heads above water. The Pittsburgh area in general is feeling the effects of over-saturation with new facilities that have opened up in the past four years. When one arena fails, we all look bad.

Final words: I would like to personally invite and encourage the facilities in MAMA's Pennsylvania and Ohio region to join our organization. Our dues are affordable — only \$25 per year — and the information you will receive will more than pay for itself at your first meeting. Join us. We're a fun group!

## Minnesota Ice Arena Managers Association (MIAMA)

by Tom Moriarty, President

We held our 30th MIAMA Fall Conference Sept. 7-9 at Ruttger's Sugar Lake Lodge in Grand Rapids. Thanks to all those who participated, and a special thanks to our co-chairs, Walt Bruley of the Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center and Doug Brady of the St. Croix Valley Recreation Center, for their hard work. This was Walt's last "hurrah" as a board member. He co-chaired the last two fall conferences and we will miss his tireless enthusiasm and energy. He certainly put his heart and soul into the conference, thinking of ways to have all members take something back to their facilities and incorporate into their operations. Thanks, Walt!



Tom Moriarty

Those attending the fall conference had many tales to share. Even the members no longer able to attend hold a place in MIAMA lore. Thanks to everyone who has made our organization what it is today. In addition, our speakers brought new employee motivation ideas, our vendors offered "how-to's" for many of us, and we all enjoyed the chance to visit with members old and new. That aspect alone rekindles the enthusiasm in each of us.

Thanks to the staff at Sugar Lake Lodge for their efforts; we appreciate the hospitality and enthusiasm. Thanks also go to the vendors and managers who offered door prizes.

We have changed our site for 2006 to Ruttger's Bay Lake Lodge, the site of previous conferences and a favorite of many members. In 2007, we will co-host the annual ISI Conference

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& Tradeshow to be held the last week of May at the Sheraton Bloomington Hotel. This will certainly provide an opportunity for many from our state to attend a national conference.

We added two new board members in September. You can read about them on our Web site: [www.rinkfinder.com](http://www.rinkfinder.com). Mike Bauer of the Eagan Civic Arena and Dean Mulso of the Burnsville Ice Center continue to work on Web site upgrades and modifications for all our users. The site has been a priority for the board, and we continue to explore the various components and financial undertakings associated with it.

With the closing of our fall conference, we head back to the upcoming season in our arenas. Games have been scheduled, sign-ups are taking place and facilities are putting the final touches on the ice. Remember, this is recreation, and kids are there to have fun. I hope that those who take part in the sport of skating will remember this.

### North East Ice Skating Managers Association (NEISMA)

by Tom Morton, President

Like many organizations, NEISMA has both short-range and long-range plans. It is also necessary for ice rink managers to have short-range plans for the upcoming fall and winter skating season as well as some long-range plans for future seasons.

In keeping with such planning, NEISMA is coordinating with ISI in making final arrangements for the joint NEISMA/ISI 2006 Conference & Tradeshow. Director Jeff Doucette chairs the NEISMA committee that is working with the ISI to plan educational seminars, tradeshow exhibits and social activities. The event will be a major highlight of 2006 for the ice skating industry.

However, NEISMA is also looking toward the future and planning for 2007 and beyond. Expanded services for members are part of our long-range plans. Each association director has been challenged to come up with new ideas, propose new services and develop programs of action for the future. NEISMA Director Arthur Ales is the chairperson who has been designated to coordinate with all of the directors and to present a proposed plan of action for our 2007 spring conference.

Part of NEISMA's long-range planning will include more membership involvement. The directors are unified in their efforts, and they are looking to the future with anticipation and determination.

### Metropolitan Ice Rink Managers Association (MIRMA)

by Lisa Fedick, Secretary

To help our member rinks more effectively navigate the new, more complex challenges that we are facing on a daily basis — particularly skyrocketing energy costs — MIRMA will be sending our resident technical guru, Burt Sniffen, out into the field. For a small daily fee, any MIRMA member arena will be able to schedule a visit with



Tom Morton



Lisa Fedick

Continued on page 34

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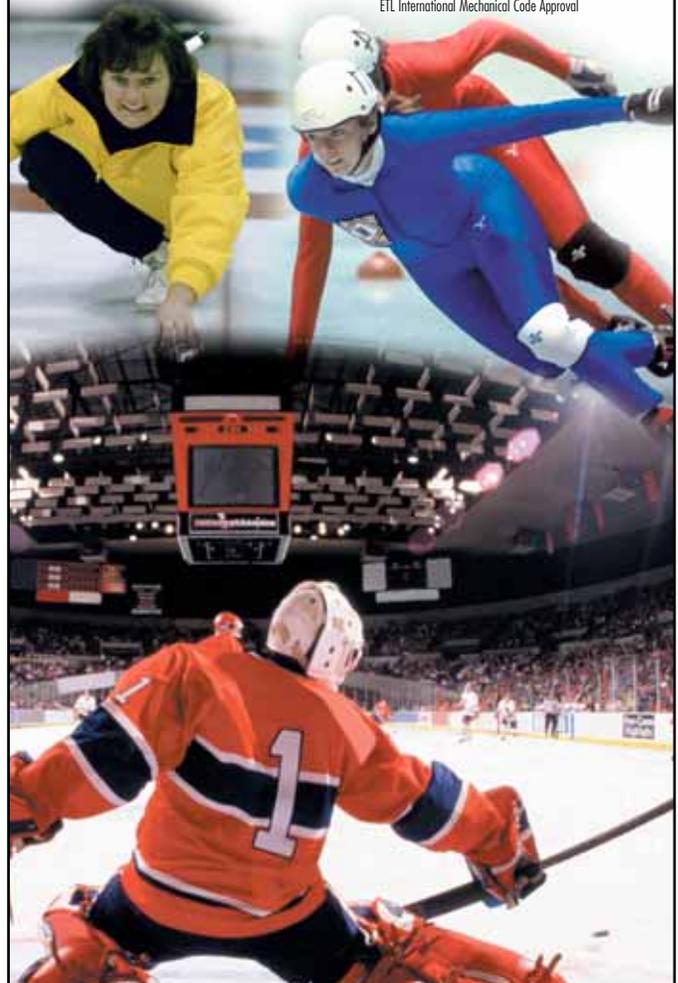


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Continued from page 33

Burt at their facility to draw from the experience and wisdom he has gleaned from decades in the industry. For information or to schedule a visit, please contact Burt at COOLSNIFF@aol.com.

The MIRMA instructors' seminar, which was hosted by Moriko Nishiura-Betz of the Great Neck Park District at the Stergiopoulos Arena, was a great success with more than 50 ISI associate members in attendance. Guest speaker Barbara Files, a Russian-trained ballerina, gave an informative presentation on how formal artistic and ballet training appears in skating, and how to recognize it almost immediately. Barbara also sat in as the fourth judge during the video-judging workshop. Her observations of each skater provided all attendees with a new and diverse set of comparative judging perspectives, while her ranking of the skaters was totally in sync with the gold judges. A dozen judge's certification tests were passed during the seminar. ISI Treasurer Richard Arenella joined all attendees for a diet-busting lunch buffet, sponsored by our Great Neck hosts.

Dean Hall and the Westchester Skating Academy hosted the fall MIRMA/District 3 meeting and mini-tradeshaw on Oct 25. Despite the cutting-edge, informative programming and diverse tradeshow vendors, the highlight of the day, once again, was the tour of the mega-million-dollar practice facility shared by the New York Rangers and New York Knicks. "Taj Mahal" is the only thing that comes to my mind ...

Please take time this holiday season to enjoy each and every day, the simple things and the NHL, all of which we must not take for granted. ▀

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The deadline for the next issue of the *EDGE* is Nov. 15.  
Call Carol Jackson at (972) 735-8800, fax to (972) 735-8815 or send e-mail to [cjackson@skateisi.org](mailto:cjackson@skateisi.org).

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# AND ANOTHER THING...

by Peter Martell  
ISI Executive Director

I write this having recently returned from the 25th Annual ISI World Recreational Team Championships in southern California. The weeklong competition was an unqualified success, with nearly 2,600 skaters competing in more than 4,800 events, on six sheets of ice, in four facilities, over six days. The numbers are impressive in and of themselves and I was very pleased with the ability of the ISI staff and the host facilities to conduct such an enormous event with relatively few problems.

However, what really pleased me was hearing from many of the rinks that sent teams what a positive impact the event had on their business for several months prior to the competition, and their optimism that the positive energy will continue, leading into the fall season and next year's Olympics.

When the ISIA Recreational Team Championships event was originally conceived by then-President Michael Booker and the first competition held in La Jolla, Calif. in August 1981, the idea was for the ISI to sponsor an event that would allow recreational skaters from all parts of the country could attend a national event without having to qualify. The goal was to offer a venue for participants who wanted to experience the enjoyment of skating and the thrill of competing beyond their local events. Also, being an arena operator by trade, Booker realized that such an event could serve to stimulate business — ice time, lessons, merchandise sales and more — not to mention help sustain excitement and enthusiasm during the off-season.

That original vision still holds true today, as was demonstrated recently in California. The feedback that I received from both local and out-of-town arena owners/operators included statements such as:

"Thank you for making my year. Our skating school business has been up over \$10,000 a month since January and I'm sure it's due, in large part, to Worlds."

"For the two months prior to Worlds, our private lessons were up 32 percent, public skating up 33 percent and freestyle sessions up 72 percent."

"Over and above the additional income generated, one of the best benefits of Worlds was the positive effect it had on our coaching staff — bringing them together more as a team and reducing some of the competitiveness between teachers and their students."

So, if your arena has not yet discovered the positive effects that participation in ISI activities — especially national events — can have on your business, consider getting involved in 2006. Does it take time and effort on the part of your skating director and staff? Yes. Is it worth it? Absolutely. Not only will you see immediate results on your bottom line, but your skating program will also realize the long-term benefits of heightened excitement and enthusiasm among your customers, continued participation by skaters of all ages and abilities, increased cooperation and teamwork within the staff and the development of a team or "family" bond between those who travel to the event, sharing rooms, meals, practices, coaches, fun and friendship. By the end of each event, every team — regardless of its final standings in the competition — seems to have found plenty to share and celebrate.

One participant summed up her Worlds experience this way: "I had the time of my life and can't wait until next year!"

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