



## *Adult Skating: A Win-Win For All*

### **Adult Skating in Your Club – the answer your club (and adult skaters!) have been looking for!**

Do you have a community of adult skaters or potential adult skaters requesting ice time?  
Would you like to provide some positive role models for your club's young skaters?  
Would you like to inject some new life into your club's programming?  
Would your club like to stabilize its membership base?

Then read on – here's what you might not know about adult skating ...

### **The Current Market**

We are all becoming aware that the skating market is changing. Statistics Canada figures indicate that our population base is getting older. There is concrete evidence for this in the fact that adult skating is now undergoing a growth explosion both in Canada and the U.S. Skate Canada reports approximately 5100 registered adult skaters in 2002-2003, with calls and e-mails daily from adults either looking for a place to learn to skate or pick up a sport they were involved in as youngsters.

The majority of registered adult skaters in Canada are recreational skaters (majority in CanSkate, synchronized skating and STARSkate) who wish to skate for fun and fitness and perhaps to keep up with their children. One father we know of started skating because his daughters challenged him to try. They thought he would never be able to do it, and now he is working on Senior Bronze dances and Preliminary free skate!

There are also small pockets of adult skaters who compete in local competitions – these skaters may or may not have skated as children, or started figure skating later in their youth or teens.

These two groups are starting to grow in numbers and are actively seeking clubs with ice and adult programming time.

From an operations standpoint, your skating club might be dealing with limited ice time or financial restrictions that make it a challenge to offer traditional adult programming. The good news is there are different ways to achieve the goal! A little creativity and planning is all you need. Take a look at the benefits for all involved and you'll see that the effort will be worth it.

### **The Benefits of Adult Skating**

The benefits to adult skaters, skating clubs and the community are many-fold. Here are just a few examples:

#### ***For adult skaters***

##### *Adult skaters love to skate*

- Adults enjoy skating just as children and youth do, and never take it for granted! They are thrilled to be out on the ice, able to be involved in a sport they are passionate about, whether it be to keep fit, develop their skills, take tests, compete in adult competitions, participate alongside their children or grandchildren or just for the joy of it.
- Adults want to skate with other adults for the social benefits of meeting new people and being part of a group of like-minded athletes.
- Adults want to be active; they want to stay healthy longer, which will help them secure their independence.
- Adult skaters are skaters, too. They pay taxes and deserve a place in the municipal sport and recreation scheme.

### *Adult skaters are role models*

- Adult skaters take great pride in being role models for younger skaters, and can pass on their love and passion for the sport, their perseverance and work ethic.
- Young skaters will see that skating is a lifelong sport that doesn't end when they turn 18.
- Many adult skaters are also skating officials, coaches or club executive. Young skaters will also see that being involved at different levels and giving back to skating in some way is a positive experience and very much appreciated by the sport.

### **For Clubs**

Adult skaters can bring a fresh and exciting dimension to your club...How?

#### *Adults ARE fresh and exciting!*

- Adult skaters enjoy coming to the rink, and they skate because they love it, not because they have to.
- Because they love it, they are easy to teach and motivate. Coaches find this very refreshing because adults are so interested in how a skill is done and why, and are able to comprehend more detailed explanations of the cause and effect of their own body placement.
- Their enthusiasm is infectious!

#### *Adult programming can help stabilize or increase club membership*

- For clubs that may be experiencing declining numbers in children's CanSkate or STARSkate, it may be time to consider another segment of the population, as per the changing demographics, to stabilize club membership and to service the emerging need.
- With higher registration numbers comes potential for allocation of additional ice time by the municipality, which can only help adult skating!

#### *Adults make an excellent volunteer base*

- If they are not already involved in this way, adult skaters are knowledgeable people, dedicated to and passionate about the sport, who are potential club executive members, committee volunteers, Program Assistants, coaches or officials.

### **For the Community**

#### *Adult programs service the need*

- A skating club has a great opportunity to broaden its scope and service the needs of a community as a whole in offering programs for the entire family.
- with active and healthy citizens comes less stress on the health care system. A recent Ontario study estimated that increasing physical activity saves \$364 annually per person for medical costs and industrial injuries. A 10% increase in the number of physically active Canadians could save the health-care system \$800 million per year (*Economic Impact of Physical Activity in Ontario*).

## **HOW TO INCORPORATE ADULT PROGRAMMING INTO YOUR CLUB**

So now that you know the benefits of adult skating programs, how can you make it happen?

Here are some ideas to start you off:

### **Do some homework**

- Find out more about the adult population in your community – i.e. is it a university, industrial, or retirement town? Are there new sub-divisions with young families? Go to a real estate agent or municipal office that can provide information on the local demographics and trends. This will give you a general idea of when adults in the area are available for recreational activities.

- Take a survey or have sign-up sheets posted in strategic areas e.g. arena, skating club web site, municipal buildings, town recreation web site etc. for adults interested in participating at which level, and at which times would be most attractive.
- If you are not sure what to offer, offer an Open Session to start, and go from there, as per developing interest.

### Obtaining ice

- If your club is like most others, obtaining new ice might be a challenge. Skating clubs are constantly in competition with hockey, ringette, speed skating and other municipal recreation programs for additional ice time. However, **non-prime time hours** are most likely to be available, such as early morning, later evening or lunch hour. Day time hours will attract stay-at-home parents, retired adults, university students and shift workers. Lunch hours could be even better as your clientele could also include 9-to-5 workers who wish to build in fitness activities into their work day.
- On this thought, numerous corporate hockey teams rent ice during working days – why not for skating? Perhaps the skating club and a local business could team up to provide their employees /adult skaters with skating time and perhaps even some lessons!

TIP: If the ideal ice time slot is not available for a given year, or the municipal ice allocators are unwilling to give more ice because of your club's small adult numbers, don't give up - prepare for the next year. To lobby for future ice, hold a **Pre-Registration** in March. Many other sports already do this. With numbers in hand, it is easier to prove to the municipality that there is demand!

- You might also consider approaching your region or Section on this topic. Explain your desire for a regional or central adult skating location. They are in regular contact with clubs and they might know of a club that is considering giving back ice because of low registration, for example. This would be a perfect opportunity for an adult group to take over the ice time for the club (clubs really do not like giving back ice if they don't have to because it's hard to get it back!)
- Another avenue you might think about is approaching the local politicians in the municipality and lobbying for additional ice time, either as an adult group or on behalf of all the local skating clubs in the area – remember there is more power in numbers! Adults are the city's ratepayers and ideally should have some input into the process. Some municipal recreation departments have a written mandate to service all ages of their community, so work with them on this front.
- If this doesn't yield results in the short term, have a well-versed spokesperson become involved and learn about the ice allocation policy in-depth so that for the next ice allocation meeting your group is prepared, well in advance to request again. Also build a case for adult skating – tell the municipality or city why it is a good thing to have active, healthy adults participate in physical activity (e.g. lower the health care budget, active & fit adults are more productive at work, more apt to volunteer, better contributors to society, make good examples for our children, etc.). Whatever you do, don't give up hope!

### Incorporating Adult Skating into an Existing Schedule

Although adult-only sessions are ideal, many clubs share ice among programs very successfully. Here are some ideas to consider:

#### *Adult learn-to-skate with CanSkate, Preschool CanSkate:*

- Adults at one end, regular or preschool CanSkate at the other – tried and true
- Try a different spin on this - - offer an Adult and Tots' Preschool CanSkate session at one end of the arena at the same time. This has proven to hook the parents in the Adult and Tot session to stay on and become active adult skaters once their preschoolers no longer need their assistance.

#### *Adult Primary STARSSkate with CanSkate*

- Preliminary level adult figure skaters may still fit in well on one end of the ice doing Skating Skills exercises, drills, free skate elements, dance steps and partial patterns while CanSkate operates on the other end.

- As adult figure skaters progress and wish to practice dance patterns and programs on full ice, arrange the schedule (perhaps eliminate a flood) such that once the CanSkaters are off the ice the Adult skaters have 15 minutes or more alone to use the entire ice surface.

#### *Adult STARSSkate with STARSSkate*

- Once they reach a certain level of proficiency, adults generally feel more comfortable skating on a free skate, dance and skating skills session environment with Bronze or Silver level skaters. Some clubs have successfully combined adult free skaters with senior competitive skaters.

#### *Adult Synchro*

- Synchronized Skating is unique within the sport as it is the only team oriented discipline. What better way to attract adults than to invite them out for a night of skating together on a team.
- Try introducing Synchronized Skating to adults at your club by adding an adult number to your club ice show or carnival. The social aspect of Synchronized Skating will interest people. You will can be sure that adults will want to get together later to celebrate their accomplishment and talk about expanding the program for next season.
- If you already have adult programming at your club, try adding a 15-20 minute session of Synchronized Skating to the adult ice scheduling.
- Some clubs are fortunate to be represented at Synchronized Skating competitions with a number of different teams at various levels. It is great to see clubs that include an adult team. The teams travel to events together and often times the skaters in the lower events are the children of the adult teams!

#### *Combining Disciplines*

What happens when adults want to do all three disciplines but with not a lot of ice to do it on? Can free skate, dance or skating skills sessions be combined somehow?

- Dance and Skating Skills - can work well together because of the similar flow of patterns in many cases, as well as the ability to practice steps in lanes up and down the ice
- Primary level free skate, dance, Skating Skills - if elements and steps are practiced in isolation e.g. spins, footwork, dance and skills steps, even low level jumps in a small area
- Full dance and free skate sessions - are difficult to combine. Dance patterns and jumping tracks don't blend well and the result can be a safety hazard. The solution? Create a rotating weekly schedule to cover each discipline if necessary.

#### **Now that you have an adult program scheduled...**

Market the program

- Tell everyone you can, however way you can! Advertise in places adults would typically frequent or in publications they would read – school bulletin board, school newsletter, day care, community centre, the gym, grocery store, shopping mall, doctor's office or clinic, local newspaper, municipal web site.
- Market also to older teenagers who are "almost" adults
- Provide a sample session free so adults can try it
- To lower costs and maximize participation, consider a register-a-friend discount , a pay-as-you-go system or shorter commitments i.e. offer sessions in 10-week blocks

#### **Once you get them in the door...**

- Keep them in! Just like in CanSkate, the program must meet participants' needs and be worth while for them to come every week. It must be a fun, social time where they are active and learning something new. If possible, consider the little extras occasionally that people will remember and appreciate, as well as some team-building activities i.e. organize a coffee club, potlucks or skating-related outings, host a seminar or off-ice class, prepare a number for club ice show, order club clothing for the group, fundraise for a local charity, etc.

- Consider adding some adult events to your club or local invitational competition. Categories such as Adult Open, dance and interpretive are popular, or other fun events such as Pick your Partner, Parent 'n Child, etc. to promote participation.
- How else can you help? If you are the Membership Chair or the Registrar for your club, ensure that the adult skaters in your club are registered correctly with Skate Canada!

**Did you know** that Adult Skaters are to be registered in the respective program they are participating in, and not the “ADULT” category? The Adult Member category on your registration sheet or template is for non-skating adults that assist with club operations who are not on the club executive. SO - it is very important to record adult skaters in the right program category as well as their ages – even if people don't like revealing this personal tidbit!

**Also** – if your club executive members or other volunteers are also adult skaters, remember to register their secondary activity. Without these important pieces of information we can't generate accurate statistics. For adults in particular we need to be able to gauge the popularity of adult skating via the membership numbers - which will be vital if we are to move toward offering more opportunities for adult skaters, perhaps even a future national competition.

So as you can see, there are many advantages for everybody, when adult programming is included on a club's schedule. The adult population is growing so now is the perfect time to plan!