



'Round and 'round — It's spinning your wheels

Good times greet roller skating buffs

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If the idea of roller skating conjures visions of shakily circling a dusty floor on squeaky wheels while being barraged with the kind of organ music played during hockey games, a visit to the Bonaventure Roller Skating Center in Farmington Hills could switch your mental gears.

After nearly eight months of construction, Louis Armbruster's \$1 million investment is the latest in contemporary design. A round, geometric floor plan is carried out in lighting, plant stands and division of space, while a huge wall carpet graphic dominates the rotunda-style maple rink.

Disco music, some light organ music, and the top forties will be playing while skaters circle the large rink which will be coated with plastic for a completely dust-free surface.

"Bonaventure" means good times to an Italian, says Armbruster, and good times are the object of leisure activity at the rink.

"Skates can be rented at the center, or customers can bring their own.



LOUIS ARM BRUSTER

One caution, however—you have to be on skates in the building, and an admission price is payable at the door. Armbruster's intent is to avoid "hanging out," a problem other rinks have encountered.

Opening his own rink has been Southfield resident Armbruster's dream for some time, and he chose the Farmington Hills location because "the need is here," he says.

"There aren't any recreational facilities out here, and no roller skating rinks within 10 miles," he explains.

Although the rink has scheduled family and ladies' day hours, the business is aimed at young people, who have been slighted in the recreational department in the suburbs Armbruster says.

"I have five children, the oldest is 19, and it's easy to see that there's very little for them to do," he says, which is another motivation for the roller skating center.

Because the skating crowd is mostly young people, Armbruster has established some strict rules for behavior to avoid the kind of roller rink reputation that often scares away parents.

"We want the business to be run so parents can feel confident their children are safe here," Armbruster says.

A no-smoking sign at the entrance means smoking is taboo in the entire building, mostly to avoid the marijuana problem.

"The best way to curtail pot smoking is to ban smoking altogether,"

Armbruster says, which may please many a non-smoking customer.

Gum chewing is out also, for obvious reasons. And once a customer leaves the building, he cannot return without paying another entrance fee.

"We don't want to be constantly policing the parking lot," Armbruster explains. "And I want kids to have a good time without getting carried away."

At 41, Armbruster hopes the rink's success will get him one step further in attaining his goal of semi-retirement, to which he'll devote his spare hours to golf, probably at Bald Mountain Golf Course in Lake Orion, which he owns with two partners.

His interest and knowledge of roller skating stem from his ownership of Midwest Skating Co., a wholesale skate supply outfit for roller and ice skating equipment. But he navigated a circular route in getting into the skate business.

As a teenager, he was a Golden Gloves welterweight boxing champion in Pennsylvania. But after a boy was killed in the ring prior to Armbrus-

ter's bout, his parents became disenchanted with the boxing scene and Armbruster relocated to Detroit, where he started working for the Arcadia Roller Rink in downtown Detroit.

He concentrated on the "business end of things" at the rink and gradually expanded his knowledge of the business and moved up the ladder. His ultimate dream was realized with the planning of the Farmington rink.

"I've always wanted to build my own rink with my own floor plan and do my own thing in the way of promoting," he says.

Robert Alpern Associates of Birmingham presented Armbruster with a floor plan and design totally incorporating a geometrically round theme, which "appealed to me so I went with it."

Now, he's waiting for his investment to pay off, although he expects to wait through the traditionally slow summer months.

"September is when the business really starts picking up, so we'll see then how this area responds to roller skating."

Armbruster selected his manager as carefully as he watched over the rink's construction, offering the job to Virgil and Sue Dooley, amateur skaters who've grown up around a rink," says Ms Dooley.

THE ENTIRE DOOLEY family, including five-year-old Angie, are roller skating experts. Angie recently won a speed skating competition for teenagers, the five and under age group. And Angie loves to make friends and teach other kids how to skate, says her mother.

She'll have plenty of opportunity as the Dooleys expect to put in 60-hour weeks, managing all facets of the business. Dooley will be spinning discs, switching over the skate rentals and generally managing the operation, while Ms Dooley trains snack bar employees as well as managing the pro shop where skating equipment can be purchased.

The Dooleys will be supervising about 25 full and part-time employees. "We love being around the rink, and it's the next step to learning more about the business," says Ms Dooley.

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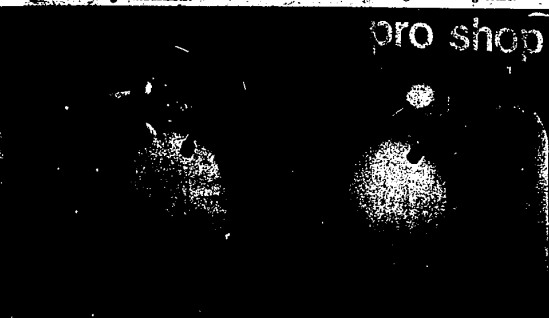
Men's fashion show with designer Luciano Franzoni. Come Saturday, May 14 at 2 p.m. to see the Christian Dior, Hart Schaffner & Marx and Jack Nicklaus collections.



At 5 years of age, Angie Dooley has already turned some heads among roller skating enthusiasts.



In place of traditional organ music, manager Virgil Dooley spins the discs for the skating crowd, while disc jockeys will be on hand during the evening hours.



Various types of roller skating equipment can be purchased at the pro shop managed by Sue Dooley (left).



Roller skating has been lifted out of the dark ages as the contemporary design of the Bonaventure Roller Skating Center clearly indicates.

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