

# Give it a try

## INTRODUCTORY MEMBERSHIP A GREAT WAY TO GET STARTED

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The new introductory membership program is an overwhelming success for clubs across the country. Many clubs have packaged this membership with other programming, special benefits and services to attract new skaters.

The following are testimonials from club officials on different ways they set up their bridge programs while utilizing the introductory membership offer to attract and increase membership. All of these clubs earned the new membership recognition award called "Plus 10."

### BURNSVILLE-MINNESOTA VALLEY FSC

Burnsville-Minnesota Valley FSC enjoyed success in our partnership with the City of Burnsville's Basic Skills program. We hold quarterly clinics during junior club ice sessions and invite their skaters to experience junior club activities at no cost. This invitation includes treats, prizes and educational time for parents. Additionally, we have coaches and board members attend Basic Skills on the same quarterly basis. It allows us to advertise our clinics and talk with parents who want to know more about club ice opportunities.

Our synchronized skating program has also inspired growth. For the past couple of years, we've had beginner lines composed largely of new skaters to the club. We hold a synchronized skating exhibition at the end of the session. It generates excitement amongst the younger skaters. In the end, it's been our efforts in engaging younger skaters in a partnership with the city's program that has shown to work in increasing our clu-



The FSC of Park City features its Bunny Hops program as part of its introductory membership package.

numbers and creating a group of excited skaters and parents who are engaged in the process.

### PASADENA FSC

Pasadena Figure Skating Club board members spread the word that U.S. Figure Skating offers an introductory membership to all new club skaters. Our membership chair, with alternating board members, set up a table in our rink lobby during public sessions, passing out membership forms and talking about the club. We found that many parents are confused about how to begin with U.S. Figure Skating. By talking with prospective members, we are able to highlight the benefits of being part of a club and share our experiences.

Our club hosts an annual spring show, in which we require participants to be club members. Every year, we have skating school students who become members because of their desire to be a part of the production. We offer a small discount off of the show application fee if a non-club skater becomes a member.

Also, last year, the Pasadena FSC included Basic Skills for the first time in our annual competition. It was a smashing success. It brought U.S. Figure Skating to the attention of our beginning skaters and helped bridge the gap. By giving them the option of participating in Basic Skills, a lot of our competition skaters joined the club once they realized the benefits of full membership.

### BOURNE SC

Bourne Skating Club of Bourne, Mass., im-

plemented our version of the introductory membership two years ago. We called it "Beginner Membership" and charged \$50. We implemented this membership category as a way to ease the transition from Basic Skills into full club



Officials at the Pasadena Figure Skating Club passed out information about its club, while sharing details with parents regarding membership options for their children.

membership. Board members met regularly with parents in the Basic Skills program to explain the steps into transitioning their skaters. Our numbers speak for themselves. In the 2008-09 season we had four members enrolled in this category. For the 2009-10 campaign we had nine members. This season we have 20 members. All the club's introductory members have come from our Basic Skills program.

Ten of the introductory members are with the Bourne Skating Club's Icing on the Cape beginner synchronized skating team. Three members are participating with the club's Cape Cod Ice Theater preliminary Theatre on Ice (TOI) team, and the rest are working on their freestyle and moves-in-the-field skills with their respective coaches.

The world of figure skating can be rather daunting for parents and skaters coming from the Basic Skills program but we have worked to educate these new skating parents. Our coaching staff has also helped in this endeavor. The club provides financial incentives to our coaching staff in the Basic Skills program and the Bridge program — for every child they transition to the introductory membership category they receive additional compensation. The club sees it as a win-win situation. The skaters become integrated into the club, the coaches have more students and the teams have more skaters to draw from.

Introductory membership is helping our club to grow and is beneficial to our teams. The Bourne SC believes that teams help the club become financially strong and a club that skaters are drawn to. Because of interest generated by the Icing on the Cape team and Cape Cod Ice Theater novice team exhibiting to our Basic Skills

classes during National Skating Month, we have generated enough interest in fielding two beginner synchronized skating teams for the 2011-12 season, and the current TOI preliminary team all came out of Basic Skills.

### FSC OF HUNTERDON

The Figure Skating Club of Hunterdon launched a three-pronged strategy to encourage introductory members to join the club: a Bridge program with parent education, a 17-month introductory membership plan and a supportive rink partnership.

The eight-week Bridge program focused on the "World of Figure Skating." Parent seminars were held simultaneously with the on-ice program. The topics covered skating organizations, clubs and their benefits, competitions, testing, PSA ratings and skating equipment. This helped in letting parents know about the skating opportunities beyond Basic Skills and also built a relationship between parents and club leadership. All of the Bridge students joined the club and began training on freestyle ice. The 17-month introductory membership plan was a key component and the membership fee was structured to provide an incentive to joining the club mid-year.

### EDEN PRAIRIE FSC

Eden Prairie Figure Skating Club used the introductory membership category to increase our Junior Club program. We offered several opportunities for skate school skaters to "try out" the Junior Club. In addition to handing out information at all of the skate school classes for two weeks prior to each of the try out dates, we also

issued a press release to local newspapers.

We had a good response to each of our try out dates and added several new introductory club members to the Junior Club program. We will continue hosting try out dates every couple of months throughout each membership year.

### TAMPA BAY SA

This new membership came at an opportune time, as our board challenged itself with the task of increasing our visibility at the rink. We added the membership to our club brochure and made them available to the skating community. Brochures were displayed on our club board, and kept on hand during well-advertised club ice sessions, holiday parties and team gatherings. Communication of the new membership was also passed on to our dedicated coaching staff, which was instrumental in getting the word out to their skaters.

### AMHERST SC

The new introductory membership has been valuable to the Amherst Skating Club. Twenty-nine introductory memberships have been purchased this season. "One important thing we did at ASC was to implement this new discounted fee right away," Stacy Petri, director of skating, said. In addition, we also offer other advantages with the introductory membership. Our Bridge program skaters, Shining Stars, are offered two hours of free ice (in ice cards) and a discounted club fee for the first U. S. Figure Skating test with the introductory membership. To have this program available has proven to be a great asset to the ASC. ■

Being part of one or two big ice shows each year is one of the incentives for new skaters to join the ranks at the Columbia FSC.