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## If You Build It, They Will Come...Back Lafayette Rink Hosts Roller Hockey

By Lucy Amaral



Photos Doug Kohen and Andy Scheck

The size of the rink became such a problem that participants began searching for a way to improve the situation.

"Most of the kids (literally) grew out of the rink and began to peel off and go other places to play," said Orinda resident Scot Ferguson, whose sons participated in the youth roller hockey league and who was involved in the planning and fundraising for the new rink. "We wanted to keep everybody together and support the program." In 2001, Michelle Edmunds, a Lafayette resident and mom of a roller hockey player, joined with other like-minded parents to see if a new rink was even possible. Inviting city council members, park and recreation commissioners, staff and other interested parents, the conversation began. "It was driven by the parent and players but it was a collaborative effort all along the way," said Edmunds, who recused herself when she became a commissioner for Parks and Recreation, but served as liaison to the group. The plans wound their way through the planning, design and review process before finally being approved. Edmunds said that the rapidly growing hockey user group was asked by the city to contribute a percentage of the cost. That's when the fundraising kicked into high gear. Jonathan Katayanagi, recreation program director for Lafayette Parks and Recreation, aided the parent group. "They were a dedicated group," he said. "They held skate-a-thons and collected donations to raise the money." Those funds along with Parkland Dedication Fees allowed the rink to be built.

The rink officially opened in September, 2007 and now hosts a three-season hockey program ranging from myriad youth classes to that long-desired adult league. "It's a good, family atmosphere out here with these guys," said Katayanagi, who also plays in the adult league, where ages range from high schoolers on up. "The competition level is great but nobody is too hard on each other."

Ferguson, who honed his roller hockey skills as a coach for his sons' teams, now plays on the adult league and sees the popularity of the local sport picking up. "There are some of us that will play as much as we can," he said. "[Along with the Tuesday night league games], there are pick up games on Thursday's and Saturdays where at least 20 players will show up."

Katayanagi emphasized that the rink is truly a multi-use community destination with a much broader reach than exclusively hockey. "We have basketball camps, box lacrosse, summer camps, birthday parties, an open night for skateboarders and scooters called Wheels On Wednesdays," he said. "Even dog obedience classes."

For more information go to <http://www.ci.lafayette.ca.us/> and click on Recreation Programs.

The outdoor rink at the Lafayette Community Center is a regulation-sized roller hockey rink that behaves more like an industrial-strength magnet, drawing back dedicated Lamorinda players who 'aged out' and searched for a rink that, well, fit them.

When the roller hockey program started 16 years ago, plastic-covered hay bales formed the rink's edge and occupied a small, lesser-used portion of the community center's parking lot. The hay bales gave way to plastic boards which were put up and taken down for each game. That was fine for the younger players, but once they hit about 16 years old, it was the rink's size that stopped their game.

Kyle Gagnon, 19, a Campolindo graduate, started playing roller hockey at the community center when he was eight. "I got aged-out when I was about 16," he said. "Once you started skating, you'd end up having to stop immediately because the rink was so small."

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