



The ice IS CALLING.

Capitalize on Olympic buzz with U.S. Figure Skating's National Skating Month and Destination PyeongChang Skate-A-Thon

BY SUSI WEHRLI MCLAUGHLIN, BRENT DIEDERICH AND ERIKA LEHMAN



WITH THE WINTER GAMES JUST A FEW MONTHS AWAY, Olympic fever is in full swing. The 2018 Winter Olympics, officially known as the XXIII Olympic Winter Games, will be held in PyeongChang, South Korea, February 9-25, 2018.

Never is ice skating on the public's radar more than during the holidays and in the few months leading up to the Olympic Winter Games, and U.S. Figure Skating is celebrating the excitement with the 2018 National Skating Month campaign, which has been extended this year to include January and February.

→ **NATIONAL SKATING MONTH IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR RINKS**, clubs and programs to celebrate skating and invite new families to the ice by offering free lessons and skating demonstrations, and by promoting skating through local media outlets. During National Skating Month, through a series of activities, everyone can have

the opportunity to enjoy a fun-filled day at the rink.

Every Olympic year, there's an up-tick in skating memberships because of the excitement surrounding the Games. This year promises to be no different, with programs across the country reaping the rewards. National Skating Month

brings that excitement to your facility, and registration is easy. Just go to usfigureskating.org/NationalSkatingMonth. You can even pay \$40 to receive a National Skating Month kit, which includes everything you'll need to host a successful event.

New this year, each National Skating Month kit will include

instructions for hosting a Destination PyeongChang Skate-A-Thon as an alternative to hosting a traditional Open House. Skate-A-Thons can be a fun event for skaters of all ages and abilities, a way to generate excitement and tie your event directly to Team USA and the 2018 Olympic Winter Games in PyeongChang, South Korea.



HOW TO HOST A NATIONAL SKATING MONTH *open house*

Block out time to host at least three separate free-skating events before, during and after the Winter Olympics. Use this easy formula:

Set aside at least one hour of ice during a weekend afternoon. Promote the event to the public for free skating lessons—nothing captures people's attention more than the word free. When people register, ask them what their skating experience/skill level is by using these questions: Have you ever skated before? Can you skate forward and backward? Can you stop comfortably? Have you learned crossovers and turns? Give them a colored nametag based on their answers.

SKILL LEVEL GROUPINGS:

- Never skated and public skated only, no formal instruction = GREEN group
- Forward skating, backward skating and stops = RED group
- Crossovers and turns = BLUE group
- Advanced skaters = GOLD group

Instructors will meet the participants in the lobby or rink-side with a colored piece of paper to match the skill groups on their



nametags. All GREEN groups must go through a quick off-ice orientation about proper fit and lacing of skates, attire, falling and getting up, marching/walking off ice in their skates, balance on blades, one-foot balance, proper posture on ice, and penguin walks (rock or a waddle motion with feet in a V position). This begins their free half-hour introductory lesson.

Within the kit, programs will receive a sample outline for the day, and are encouraged to improvise and scale the curriculum up

It's even a source of revenue for both your program and U.S. Figure Skating's Destination PyeongChang Family Tree Program.

Also new to the kits this year are two options for a bulletin board takeover, which includes fun materials and instructions for your rink's bulletin board. For the month of January, invite new people to your facility, then guide them into your learn to skate program with a fun, reader-friendly Learn to Skate USA, powered by

Toyota, takeover. Next, swap out your display for the February takeover, designed to inform new members how their lessons can bridge into the figure skating, hockey or speed skating pipeline. Both takeover kits are designed to turn one-time visitors into lifelong participants, and materials can be used in your facility for as long you wish (or reused for future sessions).



This year's kits will also include a photo booth kit to add a free, fun and interactive component to your National Skating Month

event. Each kit includes eight props, including word bubbles of the celebration's official hashtags, #TheIceIsCalling and #NationalSkatingMonth. The easy-to-use kits (simply cut them out and attach sticks) promote social engagement from attendees, generating social media buzz around your event, your facility and ice skating across the United States. Sign up through Nov. 30 or until supplies last.

TO-DO CHECKLIST FOR YOUR OPEN HOUSE:

Immediately

- Determine your target participation number.
- Book ice time.
- Secure enough instructional staff and volunteers based on target numbers.

45 Days Before Event

- Create a marketing plan. Start getting word out to the community, schools and current skating participants.
- Set the schedule for the event.
- Do a flowchart of the event: Registration, skate rental, meeting spot, off-ice orientation, etc.
- Determine registration process. Create forms, rosters and waivers.

30 Days Before Event

- Finalize site, schedule, ice time, and snacks.
- Promote and publicize to the community. Send out registration link to prospective skaters.

Two Weeks Before Event

- Send out information packet to instructional staff and volunteers with a detailed schedule, roster and other information. Assign skills or jobs to each instructor/volunteer.
- Confirm all arrangements for ice rental.
- Secure additional materials and/or equipment are needed.
- Personalize and distribute the press/media information from the NSM promo-

tional packet to advertise.

- Start pre-registration process.

Day of Event

- Have an on-site instructor and volunteer meeting to make sure everyone knows their role and what they will be teaching or assisting.
- Train registration volunteers.
- Be ready with everyone in place at least 45 minutes before your event begins to meet the first arrivals.
- Have a knowledgeable volunteer in place to answer any questions in lobby and in rink arena. Smile and greet everyone as they show up. Make everyone feel welcome.

Immediately After Event

- Get testimonials, share posts on social media channels, thank all participants for attending.
- Connect with all participants inviting them back to your programs.
- Thank your instructors and volunteers, ask for feedback for improvement for next time.

For Event Sites:

Additional resources are available for download at usfigureskating.org/NationalSkatingMonth.

or down depending on the level of participants. Have pre-registration and encourage commitment for participation. This will allow programs to plan ahead for groupings and staffing requirements. And don't forget to get participant contact information for further communication pre- and post-event.

All registered events associated with National Skating Month are insured and sanctioned.

After the free lesson, instructors and assistants should be available to answer questions and offer advice. Make sure everyone leaves with an understanding of skating, programs offered, information to take home and share with others, and most importantly, a smile on their face.

This formula has been successfully used for all U.S. Figure Skating SkateFests, bringing between 60 and 450 skaters to the ice in a 1- to 3-hour time frame, depending on the event.

THE NATIONAL SKATING MONTH CAMPAIGN AIMS TO ACHIEVE THE FOLLOWING OBJECTIVES:

1. To promote and celebrate ice skating as a family recreational activity.
2. To promote skating at the national and local level.
3. To encourage new skaters to sign up for lessons.
4. To offer growth opportunities for all ice sports.

HOST A *DESTINATION PYEONGCHANG* Skate-A-Thon



→ With the help of longtime corporate partner, Smucker's, U.S. Figure Skating is calling on skating clubs around the country to help support Team USA and their families on their journey to the Olympic Winter Games. Destination PyeongChang Skate-A-Thons will serve as a way for U.S. Figure Skating member clubs to help raise funds and awareness for the Destination PyeongChang Family Tree Program and the 2018 U.S. Olympic Figure Skating Team throughout National Skating Month, giving programs a unique opportunity to generate revenue and tie the Olympics into their celebration with a fresh, new event.

Fifty percent of proceeds raised at Destination PyeongChang Skate-A-Thons will stay local and support the host club and its efforts to give local skaters more on-ice opportunities; the remaining 50 percent will support the Destination PyeongChang Family Tree Program. Skaters of all ages and abilities can be invited to participate.



→ Fifty percent of proceeds raised will stay local to assist community efforts to grow the sport.

In support of clubs' efforts nationwide, Smucker's will match up to \$10,000 raised by Skate-A-Thon participants. In addition, all registered Skate-A-Thon participants will be entered to win a year's supply of Smucker's Uncrustables and four all-session tickets to the 2019 U.S. Figure Skating Championships.

U.S. FIGURE SKATING WILL PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING:

- Destination PyeongChang stickers (included in National Skating Month kits).
- Social media shout-outs from U.S. Figure Skating for your donation.
- The opportunity to receive a visit from a 2018 Olympian next summer!
- Recognition in *SKATING Magazine* and DestinationPyeongChang.com.

GET STARTED and register your event at usfigureskating.org by clicking the Destination PyeongChang logo at the top of the page.

DIGITAL *strategies*



Keep pace with Olympic resources:

Follow NBC Sports, Team USA, U.S. Figure Skating, USA Hockey and US Speedskating on social media.

Don't reinvent the wheel:

Share content from NBC Sports, Team USA, all three ice skating sports, and individual athlete pages on your social media channels.

Show, don't tell:

Always include a photo or a dynamic website link in all your social media posts.



Maximize hashtags:

Create unique hashtags for your in-house events and encourage your patrons to use them along with #NationalSkatingMonth when posting to social media.

Plan to succeed: Determine a posting schedule and prepare your posts in advance.



Decorate your facility and share pictures on social media to maximize exposure.

ADDITIONAL OLYMPIC CALIBER IDEAS:

Set the tone: Get patrons in the Olympic mindset by decorating your facility in red, white and blue.

Show future Olympians where to start: Leverage the turn-key bulletin board takeover supplies included in each National Skating Month kit.

Build your fan base: Offer Olympics 101 sessions at the rink, and teach your patrons the basics for each ice skating sport. Don't have the time? Share similar content on social media.

Educate your fan base: Leverage the Team USA website and share athlete bios on your social media pages.

Become an Olympic zone: Schedule viewing parties for specific events at the rink.

Leverage your online presence: Interest in ice skating lessons will spike in the months surrounding the Olympics. Make sure your website is up-to-date and information about ice skating lessons is readily available. 📌

Now is the time, make the most of the season to grow your programs!