

Ice skaters swelter for cool reward

Figure Skating Club of Memphis raises money for rink time

By Chris Van Tuyl

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What they all came seeking Saturday wouldn't have lasted very long under the intense heat.

Members of the Figure Skating Club of Memphis converged on the Southaven AutoZone off Goodman Road near Getwell for a car wash to raise money for one necessary thing -- ice time.

The only current option in the Mid-South is the DeSoto Civic Center in Southaven.

"We moved here from Arizona where they have 12 sheets of ice. I couldn't believe Memphis doesn't have an ice rink," club president and Germantown resident Terri King said. "Therefore, we do what we can to skate, when we can, however we can at the civic center."

The dollar amount to do so for the nonprofit organization doesn't come cheap from October to March.

"It's \$300 an hour," said coach and Southaven High graduate Carla Bressler. "All the money that's raised -- from membership dues and fundraisers -- that's how we get our ice."

Saturday's car wash represented a good start. Arriving on the scene first was a Toyota 4Runner. Minutes later, Olive Branch's Larry Dixon pulled up in his Toyota Camry.

"I saw them out here, and they're a lot younger than I am," said Dixon, "so with this heat today, I figured I'd let them do it."

Upon inspecting his freshly scrubbed vehicle, Dixon proclaimed: "I should've stopped in here with my pickup truck. It's hard to wash. I might go get it and come back."

Soon thereafter, the eager group of youngsters began working on a red Ford F150.

"It's pretty fun," said 8-year-old Ben King. "And you get to get sprayed (with the hose)."

On this day, \$305 was collected. The event also generated interest in the FSCM, which offers basic skills classes, private lessons and freestyle ice time.

Dani Mitchell, a 23-year-old skater from Cordova, went professional right after the Mall of Memphis closed in December 2003. Her father Dale was a former club president.

"It's a different kind of sport," Dani said. "I think a lot of people would want to come and see what skating's about. It's made me the person I am today. I've gotten to travel the world, and skating is what made that happen."

The club averages around 100 members. Several recently went to competitions held in Nashville and Little Rock.

"They did great," Bressler said.

"I'm talking up against kids who skate every single day. I'm telling you, the talent is here.

"It's kind of like a painter without paint or a canvas. But with the right training facility, this could put Memphis on the map."

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