

Convention Hall roller-skating a 50-year tradition

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Roller-skating and Convention Hall go together like peanut butter and jelly.

As far as memory serves among city employees, local children, teens and parents have been skating in two different versions of Convention Hall for at least 50 years.

In the dead of winter, when walking outside may be uncomfortable, let alone exercising, roller-skating inside Convention Hall offers a place to meet friends and skate to music with a beat.

Special Events Coordinator Terry Brown began working for the city in 1976. He said he was told roller-skating began right after a new Convention Hall opened in 1965. An earlier Convention Hall was destroyed by a winter storm in 1962.

Brown said he believed former mayor Angelo Infanto organized skating in Convention Hall. Lower Township police officer David Douglass, who was killed in the line of duty, and his wife, Debbie, were also instrumental in bringing roller-skating to the hall, Brown said.

How has roller-skating in Convention Hall changed over the decades?

"The music's better," Brown noted.

In the '60s, the music was organ music on tape.

Longtime city employee Linda Ewing, who also serves as the crossing guard at Cape May City Elementary School and as a parking enforcement officer, recalls the music being played from a reel-to-reel tape recorder years ago. She was on duty Sunday afternoon renting skates to participants, playing the music and making announcements to clear the floor.

"I started coming here when they first opened the other building in the '60s and then I brought my children," Ewing said.

In the previous hall, a lighted sign indicated when it was time for "all skating" or "couples," she said. Ewing said she sees the children of skaters from decades ago.

The original skating floor in the previous Convention Hall was a gymnasium floor from the Coast Guard base that dated back to when the training center was a naval base, Brown said.

"I think over the years participation has actually increased," he said. "We do quite well with it now."

Initially, roller-skating was held every Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Brown said over

the years, special parties were developed for children on school holidays such as Presidents Day.

He said skating was held from November into the middle of April but Convention Hall's events and programs became more diversified. Skating season now starts in December with the bulk of activity in January, February and March, Brown said.

Taxpayers do not support roller-skating. Skating admission is \$5 and skates are available for rental at \$2 for traditional roller skates and \$4 for roller blades.

City Marketing Director Laurie Taylor said participants travel from as far away as Atlantic County and beyond to skate.

"We had a record number of attendees in our two sessions last weekend," she said. "We hit 402 in two sessions."

Skating is held in two sessions, 1 to 3 p.m. and 4 to 6 p.m. Brown said a group of hardcore skaters will attend both sessions and wait an hour for the second session to begin so they can be first in line.

Attendance has grown for a toddler skate on Friday mornings, according to Taylor. She said it is another generation of skaters on the way.

A teen skating session is



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Roller-skating has been held at Cape May Convention Hall — the current one and the previous one — for more than 50 years.

held from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Fridays. Brown said teen dances are no longer held in Convention Hall but some dancing in the center of the floor has been incorporated into the night.

"We've seen a lot of beginner skaters this year, a lot of kids that are new to it," he said. "Not just young kids but also older kids and adults."

Wheels can be tightened on skates for beginners for better control, Brown said.

He said he saw a child using skates with training wheels. "By the end of the night,

he was really doing good," Brown said.

Taylor said roller-skating in Convention Hall provides a safe environment. Kids do not leave or they must pay to re-enter the hall, which they do not wish to do, she said.

Hot dogs, soft pretzels, chips, water and soda are available for sale. Taylor said local pizzerias deliver to Convention Hall. The hall is available for roller-skating birthday parties. She said the hall is unable to accommodate all the requests for birthday parties. Brown estimated the hall hosts about 150 birthday parties each year.

Taylor said roller-skating fundraising events may be held in the hall.

After roller-skating season ends, the main hall is closed for a week and the wooden floor is burnished, she said.

Information on roller-skating is available at discovercapemaynj.com.

County poster contest deadline is March 2

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE — The Constitutional Officers of Cape May County are sponsoring their 26th annual My County Poster Contest, open to fourth-grade students countywide.

Surrogate Dean Marcolongo, County Clerk Rita Marie Fulginiti and Sheriff Robert Nolan sponsor this annual event to bring awareness of the function of county government to fourth-graders, who regularly study the topic as part of their curriculum.

The object is for the student to depict his or her concept of what is unique about Cape May County and how it relates to county government.

"We encourage students to think about what is special about Cape May County government and draw it," Fulginiti said. "This year's national theme is 'Serving the Underserved,' focusing on county responses to multigenerational cycles of poverty."

Any poster drawing that relates to any aspect of Cape May County or county government is acceptable.

"Past contest winners have been highly creative with posters depicting our county's coastal, agricultural, historical and recreational venues, as well as county government services our citizens rely upon," Fulginiti said.

Leiah Pawlus, of Cape Trinity Catholic School, received first place last year for her poster depicting a Victorian Era property.

The Constitutional Officers have notified the county's elementary schools of the contest.

Many fourth-grade teachers encourage the students to create posters for the contest as an in-class project. Other students create their posters at home. Students are eligible to submit only one entry. Group entries are not accepted in this contest.

Twelve winning posters will be selected by a panel

of independent judges. The winning posters will be displayed in the courthouse lobby during the month of April to commemorate County Government Month. These winning posters will be featured on a 2019 color poster calendar distributed to the winners and 2019 fourth-grade class. All 12 winners will receive a tote filled with items and a personalized mug.

The first-place winner will also receive a \$100 gift card plus a pizza party with his or her homeroom classmates; second- and third-place winners will each receive a \$50 gift card.

There will be nine honorable mention winners. All winners, along with their families, friends and school personnel, will be invited to participate in the My County Poster Contest Awards Ceremony at 3:30 p.m. Wednesday, April 18, in the Cape May County Courts Facility.

The guidelines for the poster contest are as follows:

— Artist must be in fourth grade in Cape May County and the poster must be entirely the work of the student.

— Posters must be on 22x28 inch white poster board

— "Cape May County" must appear in 4-inch black letters at top of poster.

— Poster must depict student's concept of what is unique about Cape May County and how this relates to county government.

— Student and teacher name as well as the name of school must be printed on back of poster.

— Please do not use three-dimensional objects glued onto the poster.

— Deadline to submit entries is 4:30 p.m. Friday,

March 2, at the office of County Clerk Rita Marie Fulginiti, 7 N. Main St. in Cape May Court House, NJ 08210.

For information contact Rita Fulginiti 465 1018 or rita.fulginiti@co.cape-may.nj.us.

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BRADLEY FOURNIER
was named to the
DEAN'S LIST
at Jacksonville University's
Davis College of Business
for fall 2017 semester.

Bradley, a Junior International Business major, achieved a 3.6 GPA. He is currently President of the campus Inter-Fraternity Council (IFC) and Vice President of the National Pi Kappa Alpha (PIKE) Fraternity. He is a 2015 LCMR graduate and the son of Bruce and Karen from Lower Township, NJ.

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