

METROPOLITAN

St. Johns Fair Share solves skating dilemma

by Bonnie Seal

For Kimo and Arianne Tichgelaar, ages 16 and 17, roller-skating is a favorite pastime. Like a large number of other youths in St. Johns, they would like to have a chance to skate year-round, but for years, the nearest public skating rink has been over an hour away by Tri-Met, and winter weather conditions often prohibit outdoor skating.

Starting at the end of January, there will be at least one night a week when Kimo and Arianne and their peers will no longer have to board two buses in an hour-long hike across Portland to skate. The James John School gym will be open for roller-skating on Friday nights through a mutual agreement between St. Johns Fair Share, the Portland Park Bureau, and James John School.

Sarah Tichgelaar, president of St. Johns Fair Share, estimated the gym will hold between 25 and 40 skaters, and said there will be a minimum charge, probably fifty cents, to help with the maintenance of equipment.

According to Ms. Tichgelaar, the opening of the gym to roller skaters culminates a year-long effort on the part of St. Johns Fair Share to establish roller-skating in the area.

The idea for a skating facility originated with Fair Share member Verdeen Eckhoff, who, in the past, had served as a volunteer at a skating facility at Portsmouth School,

which closed several years ago.

"There were so many people we had to turn them away," she recalls. "There's nothing for kids to do in the winter time. The only activities in this area are the pinball machines and the movie theatre."

Fair Share circulated a petition and collected over a thousand signatures supporting the facility. The group held a public meeting, and sixty persons attended. Later, the organization sponsored a Skate-a-Thon in Columbia Park, and managed to collect over \$200 in spite of bad weather and the fact that half of the participants did not collect their money. According to Ms. Eckhoff and Ms. Tichgelaar, this showed strong community support for the project.

Eleven different sites were considered, but all were either too small, had too many posts, or were already being leased for other purposes, said Ms. Tichgelaar.

The target site for the project had been the St. Johns Racquet Ball Center. According to Ms. Tichgelaar, the racquet center lost \$10,000 last year. "The tennis courts are too expensive for the people in St. Johns, and there is not enough interest in tennis here," she said. The group felt that the space would be of more use to the people of the community if it were turned into a skating rink.

Rich Gunderson, recreation division manager for the Portland Park Bureau, said the tennis courts are not losing money, and that use of

the tennis courts is "over and above expectations in that area." He explained that the present tennis court surfaces would not be appropriate for skating, and there would be a large cost to re-surfacing the floor, and that the building had only enough fire exits for the 21 to 25 people it is now expected to hold. Changing it into a skating area would bring in a larger number of people, and require more fire exits.

The group considered eleven other sites, but they were either too small, had too many posts, or had already been leased, said Eckhoff.

After continual negotiations with politicians and park bureau executives, it was determined that the gym at James John could be used on Friday nights during the winter months.

"Our original intent was to have something that could be open three nights a week, and we would have liked to have found something the size of a skating rink." At this point, Ms. Tichgelaar claims the group's main objective is to "prove that there is interest."

Both Ms. Tichgelaar and Ms. Eckhoff said they are pleased to get the use of the James John gym, but ultimately hope for a site that will hold a larger number of skaters.

They plan to continue looking for other sites. "We are not looking at just the racket center. If something comes available, we are definitely open to it."

Surplus cheese available to low-income persons

Surplus American pasteurized cheese -- about 10 train car loads -- will be available for distribution to low income individuals and families in early February.

Eligibility criteria for cheese is similar to that used in the Low

Income Energy Assistance Program. To be eligible, individuals or families must have incomes at or below 125 per cent of the poverty level according to guidelines established by the federal government.

A three-member family would be eligible if its income were \$8,838 per year or less; a single individual would qualify if his income were \$5,388 per year or less. Central referral telephone numbers will be published later in January.



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Cathedral Park, located under the ramps of the St. Johns Bridge, adjacent to the Willamette River, is the result of years of community organizing and planning

(Photos: Richard J. Brown)

Kaiser expands Montana facility

A 43,000 square foot, \$4.3 million addition to the Kaiser Permanente Medical offices at 3414 N. Montana opens January 15th, adding several new health services at that location. The building now has space for up to 62 health professionals.

New services offered at the Montana facility are mental health, oncology, home health, allergy, cancer counseling and eye care. The new functions add to existing services at the Montana Avenue site: internal medicine, pediatrics, dermatology, alcohol treatment, and ancillary services such as

laboratory, x-ray and pharmacy.

Most of the new services have been transferred from tow facilities which are being phased out: Kaiser-Permanente Broadway Medical Offices, 2606 N.E. Broadway and the Mental Health Center, 20th and Sandy.

New lab equipment, the most sophisticated available, provides a 12 parameter complete blood count in 40 seconds. These results provide quick information to physicians about infections, leukemias, anemias and bleeding disorders.

The changes at the Montana Avenue facility complete another

step in establishing a Kaiser-Permanente medical campus in the Interstate-Montana area. The campus plan includes the Region's administrative office building now under construction on an adjacent site, the 37-doctor Interstate Medical Offices and the Kaiser-Permanente "Town Hall" Education and Conference Center.

The Kaiser-Permanente Medical Care Program builds and staffs its own facilities to provide health care for approximately 252,000 member in the Portland/Vancouver/Salem area.



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