



A few members of Lakeland Skating Club take a quick time out from rehearsals for their holiday ice show, Polar Express.

Holidays on ice

December 14, 2008

by Sharon Dargay

O&E STAFF WRITER

Hollie Campagna wants all of her figure skaters at Lakeland Arena in Waterford to shine.

So she re-packaged the rink's annual winter skating recitals into a full-blown show - the Polar Express - complete with costumes, music and lighting.

"This is the first year we've done a theme show. This is the first time we've taken that extra step and done a theatrical show. Typically, we'd just have an exhibition," she said.

Campagna, skating director for 25 years at Lakeland, has always produced a spring show that requires skaters to audition for solo and featured roles, but it didn't give beginning skaters equal time in the spotlight.

"We really receive a lot of great feedback from that and I watch the experience the skaters have during that weekend. I wanted

an avenue for our younger skaters to share in the spotlight as well as give back to the community," Campagna explained. A canned food drive is being held in conjunction with the show, which starts with an exhibition of synchronized skating at 4:30 p.m., and then segues into Polar Express from 5-7 p.m., Monday, Dec. 15, at the arena, 7330 Highland Road , between Williams Lake Road and Airport Road in Waterford . Admission is free.

"It's a busy time of year but it's been a very nice venture because our club is very family-oriented and the show has brought that Christmas spirit through a little more. Everyone is busy but everyone is pulling together."

Mia Christ, Alyssa Bremner, Shannon Manz and other skaters from West Bloomfield as well as surrounding communities, will perform in both the synchronized exhibition and the Polar Express show.

Their synchronized team won a gold medal in competition last weekend.

"It's really exciting," said Mia, 10, who has skated for four years.

She says the Polar Express audience can expect to see "good skating and good jumps and spins." Mia and the other performers in her group routine will execute lunges, spins and spirals among other skating elements in the show.

The fifth-grader takes private lessons, skates four times a week and also horseback rides in spring and summer.

"I'd like to compete on horses. But with horseback riding (competition) is hard," she said, pointing out that an uncooperative horse can contribute to a competition loss.

"In skating it's all yourself and your team."

Mia has learned to stand up after a skating fall and keep going. It's a philosophy she has applied to other areas of her life, including school.

"When I get off the ice I'm proud of myself," she added.

And that's just how Campagna hopes her skaters feel.

"When I pick a show theme and have the skaters work on their routines I want them to have a sense of what they are doing this for. Believe is the magic word of Polar Express and is the epitome of what these kids grasp. I want them to take that theme with them so that later in life they can look back and reflect.

"The Polar Express is about believing in the spirit of Christmas. No matter what age you are, people can connect with it, with that spirit. My motto here has been, regardless of the age of participants, to allow the child within to shine through, whether you are watching or participating."

The Lakeland Skating Club will perform its spring show April 25-26.



Synchronized skaters glide together in "spiral" position.