

Values of cooperation, gratitude guide members of Columbia Figure Skating Club



Pat Muth, artistic director for the Columbia Figure Skating Club, teaches members as they rehearse for “Movies & Minions” at the Columbia Ice Rink. (Karen Osborne | CR Staff)

By Mary K. Tilghman

Special to the Review

COLUMBIA - When the Columbia Figure Skating Club glides onto the ice for “Movies and Minions” March 21-22, its young skaters will represent local Catholic institutions, from St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Fulton, to Resurrection-St Paul School in Ellicott City, to Maryvale Preparatory School in Lutherville.

To view a photo slideshow, navigate the arrows below.

Bright-eyed skaters have rehearsed for eight weeks to create an entertaining show, according to Pat Muth, the club’s founder and the show’s artistic director - and a parishioner of St. Paul in Ellicott City.

The kids have practiced hard and their parents have helped behind the scenes, for which Muth is grateful.

“These people are professional,” said Muth, who sports pink skates.

She moved to the United States from England as a child and discovered skating. Except for the brief time she lived near a year-round rink in Texas, skate time was limited.

“Skating,” she said. “I just adored it.”

When Muth and her husband moved near the Columbia Ice Rink she could finally skate whenever she liked.

“I’ve lived at that rink ever since I’ve lived here,” she said.

She formed the skating club in the 1970s. Twice a year, the woman skaters call “Miss Pat” has organized the “Nutcracker” and a smaller spring show so everyone can show off their accomplishments.

“Most children aren’t going to regionals,” said Muth, who noted that those who do compete can relax a little at the shows.

“It gives you the freedom to express yourself. You can focus on the artistry,” said

Katie Pistner, a parishioner of Church of the Resurrection in Ellicott City.

This year's production combines movie favorites - the minions of "Despicable Me," the orphans of "Annie" and Disney princesses - with the lively rhythms of "Footloose" and "Grease."

"I think there's something appealing to everybody," said Kelly Timlen, a Mount Hebron High School sophomore.

Though the children skate with ease, it has taken lots of practice. Some moves present special challenges.

"When we do them it's a really good feeling," said Allison Betler, a Resurrection-St. Paul eighth-grader.

With every spin, glide and jump, skaters rely on their athleticism and grace - and each other.

"People I see every day inspire me and motivate me," said Tess Terpos, a Maryvale senior, who includes Muth in that group. "I know she believes in me. She helps me believe in myself."

"We all want each other to succeed. It makes it more fun," said Abby Green, of St. Francis of Assisi in Fulton.

Muth tries to instill values of cooperation, gratitude and community in her skaters. She reminds them not to take opportunities for granted, sends "get well" cards and offers support in times of need.

When Muth learned Katie Tincher's dad was serving in Iraq, she felt a special bond. Her son was in Iraq, too.

"We just latched on to each other," Muth said.

Tickets to "The Nutcracker" led Tincher onto the ice. Now an eighth-grader at Resurrection-St. Paul, she's still skating.

Skaters say their faith plays a part in their preparation.

Kelly said skating is mentally demanding. "You have to be very trusting in God," she explained.

Prayer before competition helps, added Green. "Prayer would really calm me down," she said.

"(Skating) is something God put into my life for a reason," Terpos said "It's definitely a blessing. It's a really good feeling to skate and express yourself."

"Movies and Minions" will be held at the Columbia Ice Rink, 5876 Thunder Hill Rd, March 21 at 3 and 6 p.m., and March 22, at 2 and 4:30 p.m. For tickets and information, go to www.columbiafsc.com

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