

Skate park, shop roll into Kirksville

BY CHRIS BONING
Assistant News Editor

It's a good time to be a skateboarder in Kirksville.

Just months after the city finalized plans to build a skate park, Kirksville's first skate shop has opened on the Square.

The Kirksville Skate Park, as it will be called, is the result of a joint effort between the city and a community group called the Organization of Kirksville Skateboarders.

Alex Calloway, chairman of OKS, said area skateboarders have been asking for a park since 1996, but little action was taken until a few years ago.

Calloway said two years ago he and his friends passed around a petition that received many signatures, which he then brought before city council. When the council rejected it, Calloway said that was the turning point for him.

"I realized I have a lot of pull in the skateboarding community, not only [in] Kirksville, but in surrounding communities as well," he said. "I've been skateboarding for a while, and I'm held in higher regard than some other skateboarders, I guess."

Calloway said last fall he and OKS Vice Chairman Alex Meneely organized a skate jam — a cross

between a concert and a skateboard demonstration. That jam brought in nearly 300 people, plus a number of professional skateboarders, he said. Calloway said he brought the success of the jam before city council as proof of the popularity of skateboarding and of the need for a park.

The council finally gave his group the go-ahead, on the condition that it must pay for some of the cost of building the park, he said. OKS officially formed in October to spearhead fundraising, Calloway said.

Meneely said the park will cost \$120,000 to construct, \$30,000 of which is from a Missouri Department of Natural Resources grant, and another \$50,000 is from an in-kind donation from the city. The remaining \$40,000 is the responsibility of OKS, and they have raised about \$4,000 of that so far, he said.

Meneely said there are no concrete plans for the specific equipment the park will include, although the builder has been selected. Construction is due to begin in spring 2008, he said.

Meneely said benefits to having a skate park include keeping kids off of business properties and freeing up time for the Kirksville Police Department, who must answer the calls from angry business owners.

"A skate park is a safer place [to go] because the equipment is actu-



Amanda Busch, co-owner of Woodpushers, takes stock of her skateboard decks.

ally designed to be skated on — [it's] not just a random ledge," he added.

Meneely also said demonstrations from professional skaters and groups at the park potentially could bring in tourism dollars. Meneely said he was excited about the skate park as well as having played a role in bringing it to Kirksville.

"It's kind of cool to be doing this, whenever you're a teenager, you know — actually doing something to help the community," he said.

Calloway agreed. "To say that I have such pull in the community to raise 100,000-plus dollars to get a skate park as a 17, 18-year-old kid, that's amazing," he

said. "That's something that I can tell my kids [and] my grandkids, and it'll be here forever. ... It's just a really cool thing to be a part of."

Calloway also pointed out that skateboarding takes kids away from dangerous activities such as drinking and allows them to be more physically active.

"This is an awesome way for kids to get on a positive track and do good things," he said.

In support of Kirksville's skating community, Kirksville resident Amanda Busch and her fiancé Ezekiel Sevits opened the skate shop Woodpushers on May 12.

Busch said she opened Woodpushers because there have never been any skate shops in Kirksville, and she saw a need for one because of the rising popularity of the sport.

"We decided to try it out," she said.

Busch said her store, located at 117 W. Washington St., sells wheels, bearings, helmets, pads, apparel and decks, which is the board part of the skateboard. Woodpushers also offers repair services, she said.

Busch said most of her customers hear about Woodpushers via word of mouth, and some of them come from as far as Columbia, Mo.

"[Out-of-town customers] actually prefer to come here because we offer a greater variety of decks," she said. Busch added that she tries to keep at least a hundred styles of decks in stock.

Busch said she has worked closely with OKS, holding raffles with proceeds going towards building the skate park and even becoming a member.

New gyms expand options

Fitness becomes themed and hourless for citizens

BY DIANE POELKER
Assistant News Editor

Residents looking to stay fit have some new choices for flexibility. Two new local fitness centers have opened, providing students with a choice when it comes to where to workout.

Kirksville native Roger Casey's 24-Hour Fitness offers a solution for those who stretch to find the time to exercise.

"So many people have schedule issues," Casey said. "[With a] 24-hour fitness center, ... there's no excuse for not working out."

24-Hour Fitness opened in February 2007, but it went unno-

ticed by much of the population until this summer, when Casey installed a sign outside of his Jefferson Street business. In addition to treadmills, weights and stair steps, 24-Hour Fitness includes unlimited tanning in its monthly membership fees.

"We do a month-to-month membership," Casey said. "[The fitness center] saves money: Work out and tan for \$35 per month. We also have showers so if you need to go back to work or to class."

A new studio has appeared on the Square for those more concerned with physical flexibility than free time. Truman junior Ashley Tomten and senior Sarah Martin have opened Fitness Fusion, a dance and yoga studio, on Washington Street in the storefront formerly occupied by Troester's.

"I've always planned on open-

ing a dance studio when I graduate," Tomten said. "I approached Sarah and asked if maybe someday she wanted to do this with me, and she said, 'Well, how about now?'"

Fitness Fusion was developed with a Middle Eastern theme in mind. Along with several other instructors, Tomten and Martin teach classes such as yoga, belly dancing, core strength and kickboxing. They also provide an Australian class called "poi."

"It's like balls on a string that you spin," Tomten said. "They're originally on fire, but that's kind of dangerous. It's for coordination."

Fitness Fusion offers classes for all ages, from toddlers to senior citizens, and Tomten and Martin are looking to give some classes in Spanish. The studio opened its doors Aug. 1, and although business has started slowly, Tomten

said she expects business to pick up once school starts again.

"We're having a grand opening Aug. 17 and a carnival in the street," Tomten said. "Right now [our clients are] mostly adults in the community. We expect to get more people when school starts."

Although the businesses cater to community members and students alike, more fitness options could mean more competition for Truman's Student Recreation Center.

Susan Limestall, director of campus recreation, said new fitness choices will not result in major losses for the rec center: students, faculty and staff comprise the majority of memberships. The center only sells about five additional memberships annually to Truman alumni and major University donors. All rec center



Michael Aschroft, professor of philosophy and religion, fits in a workout at 24-hour Fitness.

patrons must have some connection to the University.

"I'm all for the new dance studio," Limestall said. "I'm all for the new center. Whatever

people need to do to be active and engaging for their health, I'm in support of that. [The new centers] are not really having an effect that we've noticed."

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