CLUBS SHARE SUCCESS STORIES
ABOUT INTRODUCTORY MEMBERSHIP

compiled by BRENDA GLIDEWELL

Introductory membership continues to be a successful tool for clubs across the country wishing to attract new skaters. Many clubs choose to package this membership with other programs, special benefits and services.

The introductory membership is a full membership available to first-time full members at a discounted rate. This membership is available only through a member club. Introductory membership carries the same privileges as a full membership, including a subscription to SKATING magazine and all testing and competition rights.

Annually at Governing Council, the Membership Committee presents “Plus 10 Award” and “Plus 10 Encore Award” honors to clubs that excel in using the introductory membership category.

Plus 10 recognition is given to clubs that register 10 or more introductory members during the season. Plus 10 Encore recognition is awarded to clubs that register more than 10 introductory members during the previous season and retain 75 percent or more of those members the following year.

The following is a sampling of the testimonials from various figure skating clubs that have enjoyed success with introductory membership and received awards this past season.

To view other testimonials about introductory membership, visit U.S. Figure Skating’s Fanzone blog at usfigureskatingfanzone.com.

Baltimore FSC (“PLUS 10”)

Baltimore Figure Skating Club’s success with introductory membership began with a member survey in 2012. We asked members how we could increase membership and participation; they told us we needed more ice time for less-experienced skaters. The board worked with our rink partners at the City of Baltimore’s Mount Pleasant Ice Arena to find an additional hour of ice time and to create a low freestyle session. The session targets younger skaters and acts as a bridge from the rink’s learn-to-skate program.

With the support of the rink and our coaches, in two years, the session has grown from a few skaters to more than 20 on a regular basis. We also price the introductory membership attractively, including it in all of our membership materials and market it at all of our other sessions and events.

We invite every learn-to-skate participant to our parties and exhibitions. We run a used skate and clothing sale during learn-to-skate sessions to get young skaters the equipment they need and to connect them to the club. We reward volunteers who dedicate eight hours to our annual fundraiser, the Chesapeake Open, with free membership and test sessions.

— Brian Menar

Brazos Valley FSC (“PLUS 10”)

“Life is more than just skating, but skating brings so much more to our lives.” This is the philosophy Brazos Valley Figure Skating Club in College Station, Texas, has adopted, and it has helped grow our organization to a vibrant, active club. Once skaters join the club, we have a high retention rate. Yet a few years ago, we found a need to build the foundation of our club, engaging beginning skaters. We established an introductory membership, offering a discounted rate for first-year members. While the discounted price is appealing, we recognized that we also needed to promote this type of membership to prospective members. Since we pride ourselves in maintaining a positive working relationship with Spirit Ice Arena, we collaborate with the figure skating director. During our rink’s Christmas and spring shows, Brazos Valley FSC hosts a milk and cookies night and a pizza night, feeding all show participants during dress rehearsals. Likewise, we work with the rink to have bridge classes that benefit both our skaters and our club. Our Brazos Blades Synchronized Skating Team and our Theatre on Ice team, IT’S HOT, have increasing involvement, many taking advantage of the introductory membership to the club in order to join the teams.

— Margo Dailey

CAROLINAS FSC (“PLUS 10 ENCORE”)

Our rink, Extreme Ice Center in Indian Trail, North Carolina, has a strong learn-to-skate program, in which the director (Jenny Gwyn, Basic Skills director of the year) communicates effectively to the parents and skaters about when they can and should join the club. Our introductory membership is available for about half the cost of a full membership, and potential new members are encouraged to try it out for a year at the lower rate. Learn-to-skate students who are in private lessons also hear from their coaches about the advantages of joining the club, and are encouraged to try out the introductory membership. The coaches are so great at reminding existing club students to renew. Over the last year, the Carolinas FSC board took a close look at our club and did some strategic planning as encouraged by U.S. Figure Skating, and used some of the material that it provided. At our annual banquet, we passed out club logo magnets, and later in the summer, reusable grocery/cooler bags with our club logo on them. We also made our club merchandise available for immediate purchase instead of online only. Our club brochure was updated and made readily available to anyone who walks into the rink.

— Wendy Thompson

FSC of Southern California (“PLUS 10” AND “PLUS 10 ENCORE”)

The Figure Skating Club of Southern California in El Segundo created a special category for
introductory members at less than half the cost of our regular membership. Once a skater has joined our club, we have many ways to recognize each skater and keep him or her involved. Every June we host the Southern California Open, our club’s signature competition. This event gives the introductory skater an introduction to competition and being evaluated by judges. We also host exhibitions and evaluations so skaters can be critiqued by judges to improve their programs. Our board and volunteers work tirelessly to host test sessions, so our introductory skaters can move up the rankings. In October, we have a special regional/regional send-off party for our skaters and give jackets to regional competitors and gift bags to the nonqualifying-level skaters. Our club also supports our synchronized skaters on Team Fusion. Synchronized skating is a great way for beginning skaters to learn the sport, surrounded by teammates from whom they can draw support. We keep track of our skaters’ competitions, celebrating their achievements on Facebook and our website. We regularly send letters of congratulation and encouragement to our skaters. We even send a birthday card to every member, a reminder that we are thinking of them and their club supports them.

— Antoinette Aubert

GATE CITY FSC
("PLUS 10" AND "PLUS 10 ENCORE")

Gate City Figure Skating Club in Nashua, New Hampshire, has featured the introductory membership since it began being offered by U.S. Figure Skating. Our skating director, Lisa Langley, has an integral role, encouraging skaters who are approaching the end of learn-to-skate classes to join the club and continue to develop their skills. We offer our members numerous off-ice skill-building classes, club-only events, a holiday show in which every member can perform a short solo, and an end-of-the-season awards banquet. The club has been able to keep adding new members by increasing our efforts in three main ways. 1) Every year we host a skating party immediately after learn-to-skate classes, featuring open skating time with on-ice games and activities, a decorated party room and refreshments. 2) We set up a club information table and board members are available to talk with families about the club. The decorations and activities are managed by our Junior Activities Committee: skaters from ages 11–18, who help plan and conduct events and encourage new skaters to attend. 3) A new idea this year was to donate an introductory membership package to a local school fundraising auction. We have also established a representing relationship with a synchronized skating organization, Synchro Stars, and as they continue to grow, we continue to bring in new members.

— Karen Simms

LOUISVILLE SA
("PLUS 10" AND "PLUS 10 ENCORE")

Since the inception of the introductory membership category, Louisville Skating Academy (LSA) in Louisville, Kentucky, has used the lower-cost option to bring in new skaters who want to participate in LSA training programs and shows. LSA offers a reduced membership rate for first-time members, as well as a special reduced 14-month membership for skaters who join just prior to the summer training season. This helps new skaters jump into the extensive summer programming and realize more rapid success. Most importantly, the goal for LSA is to retain these members and increase their participation in LSA activities. LSA underwrites all of its ice time and programming. Increasing participation of newer skaters is necessary to cover costs, to create opportunities for the coaching group and to develop future competitors, show skaters and test-takers so that these opportunities are sustained for all. In the last year, LSA increased retention and participation by reinventing the Junior Academy program to create a fun and inclusive learning environment for the newer skater and by increasing parent education efforts with direct emails to a target group of parents. In addition, LSA attributes much of the enthusiasm among the newer skaters to the success of the beginner synchronized skating program, which helps many new families feel part of a cohesive group.

— Becca Hatch-Purnell

Penn State FSC
("PLUS 10 ENCORE")

The Penn State Figure Skating Club in Boalsburg, Pennsylvania, saw a need for additional practice time for the Basic Skills skaters at our rink, and developed a club-beginner program to meet the needs of these skaters and also grow our club membership. We provided a low-cost package deal that included an introductory membership to U.S. Figure Skating and a half-hour of ice time once a week to any skater in Beginner 5 or above. During this beginner time, our other skaters welcomed the new club members and helped them feel comfortable. The club provided a coach to help the new skaters learn the rules of the ice, and navigate the session with the more-experienced skaters. We also gave each skater a personalized notebook with our club ice rules, a checklist of skills that they could work on and several forms from the U.S. Figure Skating website to help educate the skaters and their parents about how to make the transition from Basic Skills to a full membership. We’re thrilled to report that most of these skaters have rejoined our club this season as first family members and we plan to continue this program for a new group of beginner skaters this year.

— Cathy Holing