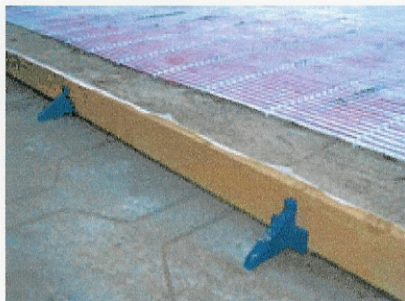


Ice Skating Comes to Bay City



Tubes filled with antifreeze liquid are laid over a sand box (left) and then chilled to 10 degrees before flooding the rink area with water (right) to create and maintain the ice skating surface. photos courtesy of Ice Rink Events

Terence Lyons, Mirror Staff Writer

When the Bayside District found a downtown lot that was suitable for a seasonal ice skating rink for the holidays, it went to Ice Rink Events, a company that last year installed 27 seasonal rinks and this year expects to install about 40, to actually make the rink and keep it from melting in Santa Monica's Mediterranean sun.

Beginning Wednesday, November 21 (the day before Thanksgiving), Bayside will present *Ice at Santa Monica* – ice skating in the shadow of palm trees (and ficus trees) at the corner of 5th Street and Arizona Avenue on City-owned property that usually functions as a surface parking lot. Under the principal sponsorship of Starbucks Coffee Company, the rink will remain open every day until January 6, will accommodate about 230 skaters at any given time, and will be available to one and all for a mere \$10 per session (a couple of hours), including skate rental.

The company that is charged with making the ice happen and making it stay ice is headquartered in Conroe, Texas (near Houston) and has been around for 15 years. Some of its people have been in the ice rink business for over 30 years. In addition to seasonal rinks, including one on the beach at the Hotel del Coronado in San Diego, the firm also installs permanent, competition-level rinks.

David Fies, West Region Project Manager for the company, explained the installation process, which takes five to seven days. In order to provide an absolutely flat surface, a giant sandbox is built – in this case 70 by 85 feet. Tubing is then laid on the sand and connected to a chiller unit, and a liquid antifreeze (propylene glycol, to be exact) is pumped through the tubing and chilled to about 10 degrees above zero. Then they just flood the “sandbox” with water. The antifreeze concoction is a non-hazardous material, says Fies, and is in fact used in frozen foods.

Although the rink will open to the public on November 21, a grand opening ceremony has been set for the following week, Thursday, November 29, featuring Olympic figure skaters Randy Gardner and Tai Babilonia, 1979 World Figure Skating Champions. It is fitting to have Gardner and Babilonia at the *Ice at Santa Monica* event, since they trained at the Ice Chalet rink at 5th Street and Broadway for the 1976 and 1980 Olympics, before the last Santa Monica ice rink was demolished and the site became Fred Segal.

“Starbucks is excited to sponsor *Ice at Santa Monica* and take this opportunity to give back to the community,” said Tiffany Lee, the company's Regional Marketing Specialist for the Los Angeles area. Starbucks worked with the Bayside District on the summer concert series on the Promenade, she said, and when Bayside brought the ice rink opportunity to Starbucks's attention,

the company was happy to become involved.

Both Lee and Kathleen Rawson, Executive Director of the Bayside District, promise a number of “special events” during the weeks in which there will be *Ice at Santa Monica*.

The rink will be open:

Mondays through Thursdays, 11 a.m. to 9
p.m.

Fridays, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Saturdays and All School Holidays, 10
a.m. to 10 p.m.

Sundays, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Thanksgiving Day, 1 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Christmas Eve, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Christmas Day, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.

New Year's Eve, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.

New Year's Day, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.