Great News for 2013!

This is our first edition for 2013! We have learned so much from all of you, and hopefully you have picked up some pointers and great ideas for your own programs. Your imaginative suggestions continue to inspire all of us and we welcome anything you have to contribute!

We are particularly thrilled that we have two series—Florida and Wisconsin—who have recently changed their medals and have Snowplow Sam logos! We know this is a huge adjustment, particularly when it happens after your series is already established. We are happy for Florida and Wisconsin, because they have selected a real kid-friendly design for their medal, along with highlighting Snowplow Sam.

We have wonderful news for all of you. We have established a working relationship with a vendor that will be able to service all of our needs for our events. We will be able to offer graphic art work, medals, pins, badges, lanyards, banners, gifts and tokens, all from ONE SOURCE. This is going to make the creation of future series that much easier for all those involved. It is our continued hope that we can make this process as easy as possible, so that you don’t have to worry about a lot of little details that might escape your plans. More information in the next Highlights!

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Do You Remember Your First Competition?

Do you remember what it was like the first time you attended a competition? I constantly try to remind everyone that when you attend a regular nonqualifying competition, you are required to know everything. When you attend a Basic Skills competition, you should be required to know nothing.

We have to try our best not to frighten away all those who are participating for the first time. Get your registration tables as close to the front door as possible. Don’t let new people walk away before you have a chance to smile, welcome them and ease their minds.

Many of the skaters attend their favorite competitions because they know how everything works and they can move around the rink like it’s home. Well, this new group of people doesn’t have a clue how to move around the rink, so we need to make them feel comfortable enough to ask us any questions.

We need to explain the starting orders, how results are posted, the location and presentation of awards and that every skater will receive an award. We need everyone to participate and want to get those smiling faces in photos!

We take all this information for granted and have forgotten how frightened we were the first time we went to a competition. Many parents are nervous and afraid to ask those silly questions and embarrass their skater. At your competition, the Basic Skills directors and committee members need to make sure those parents and family members are comfortable asking any questions.

The new additions are numbering in the thousands with a total of 120,000 Basic Skills skaters every year. We need to make new members feel welcome and comfortable, and be certain their experience was memorable. Most importantly, everyone needs to try their best to keep new participants skating.
Along with reporting suggestions and ideas for the Basic Skills Series, we will be dedicating a section for the competitions within the Series. This “Competition Corner” will become a new addition to the newsletter. We will be collecting our ideas from the clubs hosting competitions and hopefully some of our ideas can help your competition.

**HOSPITALITY AT YOUR COMPETITION**

Have a room or special location and assign someone to set up two different hospitality areas for coaches and officials. A warm meal with hot and cold beverages and desserts is a comfort for those working in an ice rink. Many restaurants or businesses will even donate food, if you take the time to ask. You might want to consider offering hospitality rinkside with bananas, juice and water.

Consider offering hospitality to the parents as well. This can be done by offering fresh fruit to the guests at the registration table.

It’s important to leave a lasting impression with everyone that visits your competition.

**REGISTRATION AT YOUR COMPETITION**

As we have mentioned many times before, it is extremely important that your registration is the focal point as soon as anyone walks through the front door. Have greeters at the entrance doors. The first appearance could be the lasting impression, so make your registration table remarkable. Have plenty of volunteers helping to accommodate people as they come through your entrance doors. If you are offering awards or trophies, have them on display for everyone to see while getting registered.

It would be a good idea to have two greeters at your door to welcome new arrivals and direct them to the registration table.

**RUNNERS AT YOUR COMPETITION**

Every competition needs runners. This is the perfect time to get your athlete members involved in helping your club, not to mention they will feel and look like an official member to new participants in the Basic Skills competition.

Skaters of all ages love to be involved with important tasks and being a runner is an opportunity to show your athletes the world beyond skating.

Being involved in the competition gives skaters a look at the “behind-the-scenes” activities and helps them learn the role of judges and accountants.

Remember to have an ample number of runners so everything runs smoothly. Have your referee or accountant explain exactly what is required of each runner—taking a few extra minutes can save any confusion.
Pam Nearhoof, coach at Honnen Ice Arena in Colorado Springs, Colo., has implemented “The Giraffe Award” for her students ... the completion of each stage. “We now have a 4½-foot four giraffe that follows us to the competitions,” Nearhoff said.

She also rewards students by offering manicures to the skaters who keep their hands extended throughout both their warm-ups and events. If a skater’s hands drop once, the manicure opportunity is void. This is a tough one to win, but students are certainly motivated to give it a good try.

**ALABAMA IS THE NEWEST ADDITION TO THE SERIES**

Congratulations to Alabama Grand Prix Basic Skills Series on becoming the 12th Basic Skills Series in the nation. We are very happy to see more and more clubs are recognizing the importance of starting their own series.

Paula Crumrin and Candice Duncan, series director, have been working hard to get at least three clubs to start their series for 2013.

With much success, participating clubs include Skating Club of Huntsville, Point Mallard Figure Skating Club and Birmingham Figure Skating Club.

Congratulations to everyone for joining together and offering one of the most enjoyable competitions in U.S. Figure Skating. We wish you the best of luck.

**REWARD YOUR SKATERS**

Pam Nearhoof, coach at Honnen Ice Arena in Colorado Springs, Colo., has implemented “The Giraffe Award” for her students that participate in the Colorado Basic Skills Series. Nearhoof purchases a different beanie baby-style stuffed animal for each of the series’ seven competitions.

At each competition, she awards one giraffe for elements and one giraffe for free skate to the student that competes with the best overall posture. Her students look forward to viewing the giraffe prior to the start of the competition and anxiously await Nearhoof’s decision after the completion of each stage.

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**BASIC SKILLS SERIES HANDBOOK**

Once again, we’d like to remind you that we have revised the Basic Skills Series Handbook.

Please email Sharon Kruse at Krush@bright.net.

This handbook can be a useful guide to help clubs begin their own Basic Skills Series or clubs who are looking for great ideas to better improve their current Basic Skill Series competition.

For anyone interested in receiving the latest copy, please email Sharon Kruse at Krush@bright.net.

**APP SERIES**

We are excited to say “U.S. Figure Skating has an App for that!” by offering the new Basic Skills App Series available exclusively for iPhones, iPads and Ipod Touch devices. With 12 Apps to choose from, skaters, instructors, parents and officials can see what every skill from every badge level in the Basic Skills Program is supposed to look like, all in the palm of your hand. Each App is only $1.99 and is available through the App Store or on I-Tunes by searching for U.S. Figure Skating.
All current and previous issues of Basic Skills Series Highlights newsletter can be found at www.usfsa.org. Select “Programs” tab, “Basic Skills” and on the left select “Competition Series”.

CONTACT US

Please contact us with any ideas, suggestions or recommendations you want to share with us.

We are here to help and to listen.

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