

The New Britain Herald (newbritainherald.com), Serving New Britain, Conn., and surrounding areas

---

News

## Learning how to ride

Wednesday, July 8, 2009 10:15 PM EDT

By JULIE SOPCHAK

Correspondent

---

NEWINGTON — Far from being professional, but not from having fun, kids gather at the Skyhawks skateboarding camp at Clem Lemire Recreational Complex to learn how to ride.

“At this age, we’re just really trying to see if they can ride around on the skateboard,” said camp skateboarding coach Greg Horbal. “Trying to go down ramps, but just kind of taking our time with it. Really, it’s very much a beginner’s camp and we’re pretty much starting off at square one, so it’s just making sure that everyone, by the end of camp, can ride around.”

Sarah Kelley, area manager for Skyhawks in Connecticut, said skateboarding has been a part of the Connecticut program for six or seven years.

“I think it was something different,” Kelley said. “Skateboarding was definitely becoming more popular back, probably about 10 years ago, I would say. And we wanted to provide sort of a safe, controlled environment for [kids] to learn how to skate, because you know, sometimes skateboarding gets a little bit of a bad rap with parents, and they’re nervous to just bring the kids down and let them be here by themselves with older kids, so this is more of a nice, controlled activity for them to learn and have fun, see other kids.”

Skyhawks is a national organization that provides youth summer sports camps, and offers 11 different sports for kids to try, according to [Skyhawks.com](http://www.skyhawks.com), the organization’s Web site.

This particular camp is a week long in Newington, and will travel to other towns to teach a new group of kids, but kids can travel to participate in the camps again if they want, Kelley said.

Horbal, 21, said he likes to think kids will stick with the sport, even though the camp is only a week long.

“You can always tell the ones who are definitely in it for a while,” Horbal said. “But I mean, that’s not to say that everybody will be. I’m crossing my fingers because I’d like to see everybody on a skateboard and hope that they stick it out.”

As part of the camp, the kids take a break at 10:30 a.m. to eat a snack, and after that, they play a game of capture the flag without their skateboards.

“They can burn off the energy and then they’re ready to focus on the skills,” Kelley said.

The kids run around the park for a several minutes, and Kelley said it’s a good exercise because as the kids are sliding down the ramps, even without their boards, they become less afraid of the obstacles. Horbal then yells that it’s time for

free-skate, which has the kids cheering quite gleefully.

“Everyone moves at their own pace,” Horbal said. “And the free-skate element of it is most important because skateboarding is supposed to be about whatever the individual wants to do, and it’s not about keeping up with any group at all.”

The kids themselves seem to thoroughly enjoy themselves, sliding down the ramps on their knee pads and playing games. If one of them falls, they flash a quick smile and get back up.

Camper Trevor Judd tries on several attempts to learn how to drop in and ride the curves.

“It’s the best skateboarding camp I’ve been to,” said 10-year-old Judd.

Ellia Billings, 8, another camper, and the only girl in the group, said she’s learned how to go down ramps, and that she wants to keep skateboarding when the camp is over.

“I want to do a pop shove-it,” said Billings. A pop shove-it is when the skateboarder jumps, or ollies, in the air, and spins the skateboard 180 degrees under their feet, essentially “shoving” the board.

Patricia Johnson was at the park watching her son, Sam, participate in camp. She watched with her other son who is too young to join.

“Well I asked [Sam] because I knew he loved skateboarding, and I figured if you’re going to let your kid skateboard, they better learn how to do it right,” Johnson said. “So we just signed him up to Park and Rec and he loves it, he absolutely loves it.”

---

URL: <http://www.newbritainherald.com/articles/2009/07/08/news/doc4a554c22cd523458405206.prt>

© 2009 newbritainherald.com, a **Journal Register** Property