

Valparaiso ice rink opens with community event

Dale Price helped daughter, Quinn, 14, lace up her skates shortly before the official grand opening of the new ice rink at Urschel Pavilion.

Price said the Valparaiso family came to skate on Thanksgiving, and will probably come once a week because it's so close to home. During past winters, they've hit Tower Park, which also has had a rink, or Deep River Water Park, though the ice rink there was closed last year and it's further away.

"I think it's awesome," Price said Saturday, as visitors to the rink stood three and four deep around its perimeter, watching professional skaters take to the ice to Christmas music. "The downtown has a first-class facility. I think it's a great addition to the city."

Though the rink has been open for a little more than two weeks, its official grand opening took place Saturday. The festivities included performances by professional skaters; free hot chocolate, cookies and miniature s'mores; street performances by members of the Actors Gymnasium from Evanston, Ill.; and the city's tree lighting in the adjacent Central Park Plaza.

[Skating rink grand opening ensures visitors will have an ice time](#)

Mayor Jon Costas, one of the dignitaries on hand to cut the ribbon and who was joined by an assortment of the project's financial supporters, said three years ago, he stood with City Administrator Bill Oeding and Parks Director John Seibert across the street in Central Park Plaza and contemplated a year-round facility for the community.



The result was Urschel Pavilion, which in addition to serving as an ice rink also hosts the city's farmers market, among other activities. The ice rink had had almost 2,000 skaters since it opened, he said.

"We have this amazing facility, one of the finest ice skating facilities in the country, and it's for your enjoyment," he said, adding city officials want to make Valparaiso the most vibrant city in the Midwest, and the kind of place young people will return to after they finish college.

Elgin's downtown ice rink set to open, but future seasons uncertain

Jeana Johnson and her family watched two of the street performers dance around while holding lit oil lamps and torches in Central Park Plaza. She was in town for the day to visit her brother. The Mokena, Ill. family's plans including son Ethan, 9, taking to the ice, though 18-month-old Jack was too young.

"I like that they have so many activities that are complementary for the residents and visitors," she said, noting the tree lighting and skating. "And it helps that it's not snowing."

Amy Lavalley is a freelance reporter for the Post-Tribune.

If you go:

For more on skating at Urschel Pavilion, go to www.centralparkplazavalpo.com/2147/Ice-Rink

