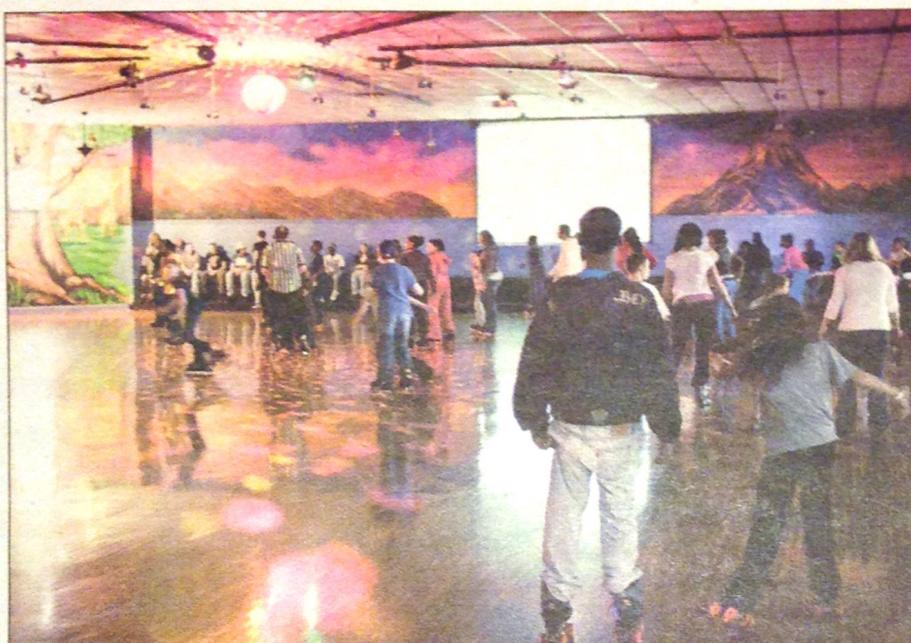


Family



Parents can relive the birthdays of their youth by throwing a rollerskating party at Horizon Fun FX.

PHOTO BY JEFF MARINI

Alternative birthday-party ideas

[ACTIVITIES] BY KATE ANTONIADES
Parents with children of a certain age might begin to suspect that there's an unwritten law that declares a kid's inalienable right to celebrate his or her birthday at an indoor inflatable playground. Luckily, that isn't the case — in fact, the Rochester area offers plenty of imaginative birthday-party options. We've rounded up several interesting, engaging birthday party alternatives, but if you know of others, head to the Family section at rochester-citynewspaper.com and submit them as comments on the bottom of this article.

If your child's birthday wish list features a request for her very own monkey or elephant, a **WOWEE Wildlife** party might be the next best thing. WOWEE (World of Wildlife Educational Encounters) brings all sorts of creatures to parties at homes, parks, and community centers. The animals may include an alligator, tortoise, hedgehog, fennec fox, or others. Children learn about each species and can even pet some of them. "We try to make it educational as well as fun," says Sally Reaves, director and founder. A one-hour party costs \$200-\$250. For more information, call 315-926-0525 or visit wowee-wildlife.org.

If your child takes karate lessons — or just loves "Dragonball Z" — he or she will probably enjoy a party at a **United Martial Arts Center** (1780 Monroe Ave. and 160 School St., Victor). Parties begin with a half-hour of karate and end with a half-hour of martial arts-related games. "There are focus games, concentration games, dodging games," says David Kalish, program director and head instructor. In

between, the kids munch on pizza, and the birthday boy or girl leads a cake-cutting ceremony with a Samurai (safety) sword. Parties cost \$199. For more information, call 461-1070 or 924-7450 or visit selfdefensecenter.com.

At **Horizon Fun FX** (675 Ling Rd.), your kids can have a blast while you relive your middle school roller-skating party memories. Party packages offer skating, laser tag, and free tokens to use in the Game Zone — and the parents of the birthday boy or girl skate free. "We do games with kids on the skate floor," says sales manager Heidi Young, "so there's always something to keep kids entertained." The cost, from \$12.25 to \$16.25 per child, includes skate or blade rental, munchies (pizza, soda, ice cream, and popcorn) and table settings, decorations, and balloons. For more information, call 865-0493 or visit horizonfunfx.com.

Another option — this one downtown — for keeping kids busy with a variety of activities is the YMCA. Four packages offered at the **Carlson MetroCenter YMCA** (444 E Main St.) give attendees the chance to swim in the pool, run the inflatable obstacle course, and play in the kids' gym. Parties include table settings, balloons, punch, pizza, ice cream, and a decorated quarter-sheet cake. "We make it happen, we set up, we play with the kids — it's all-inclusive," says Netsanet Gebregzibher, membership staff associate. Parties range from \$165 to \$265, with discounts for members. For more information, call 263-4238 or visit rochesterymca.org/carlson.

Food is a big part of any party, but at the events hosted by **Salamone's PASTAbilities**, the

food is the party. Owner and founder Deanna Salamone travels to the birthday boy or girl's home to help kids create a special pasta meal. She provides each child with a chef's hat and apron, a cookie cutter for cutting the pasta sheets, and chef's mustache (courtesy of washable markers). "I bring everything," says Salamone. "It's a nice, easygoing, fun, creative event." Parties cost \$13 per child. For more information, call 338-2558 or visit salamonespastabilities.com.

With three indoor turf fields and a basketball court, the **Total Sports Experience** (880 Elmgrove Rd.) is the perfect spot for kids to blow off steam. Choices include soccer, flag football, relay races, dodgeball, kickball, and more. "Usually we try to keep to two or three games," says Tim Yates, supervisor. Party fees range from \$120 to \$175 for an hour of activities, unless you opt for playtime on inflatable structures, which makes the total \$250. Afterward, the guests move to the private party room for chow time. Pizza, fountain drinks, and table settings are an extra \$42. For more information, call 458-4263 or visit totalsports-experience.com.

If your daughter imitates you when you're following your yoga DVD, she might want to spend her birthday at the **Victor Yoga Studio** (23 E Main St., Victor). Instructor Debbie Smith offers parties customized to each child. Smith explains what yoga is and leads the kids in a few poses and games like "Yogi Says," her version of Simon Says. "It's a fun way [for kids] to do something really healthy for their bodies," says Smith. Afterward, the children make a craft. Depending on group size, parties cost \$95 to \$150; parents can bring cake. For more information, call 234-7700 or visit victoryogastudio.com.

It's a good bet that the kids who come to a party at **Rock Ventures** (1044 University Ave.) won't forget the experience any time soon. Four party packages allow children to spend time on the climbing surfaces and ropes course at the facility. "They're active, they're involved, and there's lots of different challenges here," says General Manager Terri Goebel. After working up an appetite, kids can break for pizza and soda (paper products included). Each will take home party favors and a free pass for a future visit. Package prices range from \$175 to \$350 for up to 10 kids. For more information, call 442-5462 or visit rockventures.net.

Another sport that doesn't figure into a run-of-the-mill birthday is fencing. The parties at the **Rochester Fencing Club** (777 Culver Road) consist of one hour of instruction — including safety and etiquette guidelines — and an hour's use of the facility. "Everybody does baseball or soccer or paintball parties, but fencing is truly something that can offer a unique experience for kids," says Front Desk Manager Suzanne Dianetti. Parents can bring in pizza or cake or other food to enjoy, and decorations, too. The cost is \$10 per fencer and includes all necessary equipment. For more information, call 654-6047 or visit rocfencing.com.