



FUTURE PROSPECTS

Boro kids' first step toward Olympics starts with Wollman Rink figure skating program



**BY DENISE ROMANO
PHOTOS BY PEARL GABEL**

CALLING ALL Sasha Cohen wanna-bes.

Kids are getting the chance to learn how to figure skate with the help of Brooklyn Ice, a nonprofit that operates out of Prospect Park's Wollman Rink.

Students meet twice a week after school and learn about the basics of skating from volunteer competitive skaters, actors and teachers — for free.

"It's a great opportunity," said Hillary Rodriguez, 12, a student at Middle School 51 who lives in Park Slope. "We are going through a recession and it's the best thing that can happen to children our age."

Violet Egan launched Brooklyn Ice five years ago after working at a similar figure skating program for low-income kids in Harlem.

"The kids don't have to be good skat-

ers; they just have to want to be here," Egan said, adding that the program has grown from 12 kids to 44. "They get their 15 minutes of fame and feel good about themselves."

Besides the lessons, participants get help with tutoring and are supplied

with donated skates, jackets and costumes for their final performance. As the students advance, they receive badges from the U.S. Figure Skating Association.

"Kids who do well here also do well in school," Egan said, noting each year kids skate to a different type of music. "Last year, we had classical. Most had

never heard that kind of music before."

This year's music theme is Motown, which Raven Kartliik, 8, really enjoys. "It's so fun to skate to the songs," said the Park Slope resident, who attends Public School 39.

Cleeford Auguste, 12, from Prospect Heights, agreed.

"I like to learn new things and then show them off," he said.

Isis Gill-Reid, 12, likes to apply her skating skills to different areas.

"When I take ballet lessons, I interpret what I do," said the Prospect Heights resident. "It's tough, but it pays off."

Brooklyn Ice's Finale Show is from 6 to 8 p.m. Wednesday, March 10. For tickets, visit www.brooklynice.org or call (718) 594-7439.

Malik Harrington, 8, (l.) laughs off a wipeout during figure skating program at Wollman Rink in Prospect Park. Top, skaters hold on to each other for balance while practicing.



KSI



Raven Kartlitt, 8, steadies herself on the ice. Above, the kids take the wobbly walk to the rink. Top, Pryia Persad, 8, gets a hand from mom, Beverly. Right, time to have fun.

