

Overview

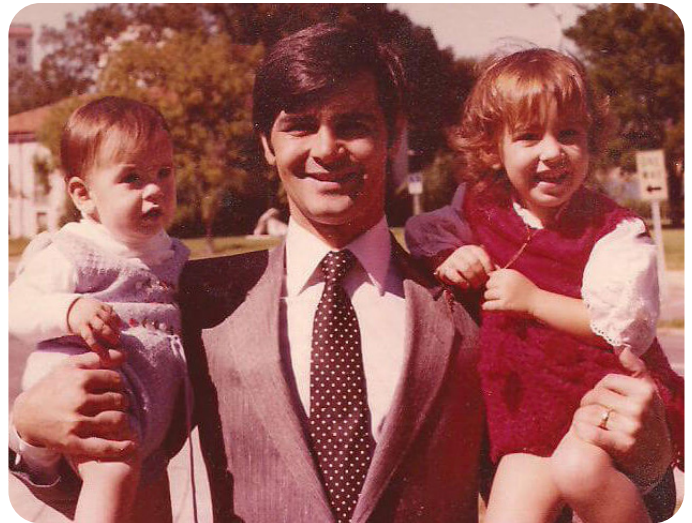
Skate World is a 15,000-square-foot family-owned skating-based family entertainment center in Lakeland, Florida, with a cafe, events, and games. As a third-generation owner-operator, Chanel Bellotto and her team continue to build on its rich history of faith, family, and friendship throughout every guest experience. We sat down with Chanel to learn more about cultivating a pivotal community icon now 50 years in the making. Read on for what she had to say.



Q&A

Question 1: For those who haven't heard about Skate World, what's the story behind it?

My grandfather, a Methodist minister, owned the original location in the 70s, and in 1973, he bought the building we still use today.



My dad, who was from a small island in Greece, bought it from my grandfather as a way to have a business in the US. He was a self-starter, a hard worker, and loved people, so he poured into this business for 30 years. Today, our mission is to create memorable experiences for all ages by providing a safe, clean, and fun facility for family and friends to enjoy.

Question 2: How did you know that operating Skate World was where you wanted to be?

After college, I moved to DC to work in politics, and then in May of 2007, we lost my dad unexpectedly.



It had never been a dream of mine to operate Skate World, so I thought I'd just run the upcoming summer camps and then sell at the end of the summer. By the end of the summer, I realized what my dad had created for this community and what a ministry it was, and I couldn't give it up. To this day, I still have people visit the facility and share stories about my dad and our rink being important in someone's life. So, for me personally, it's carrying on my dad's legacy and hearing stories from so many people whose lives he impacted.

Question 3: In those early days, what helped you the most in your entrepreneurship?

After that first summer managing on my own, I knew I needed to make changes: New carpets, bathrooms, and skates. Shortly after that, I attended my first Roller Skating Association Convention. Joining the Roller Skating Association was a great decision because it has such a unique membership of people who want to help and lift each other up, sharing ideas and lending a hand.

I learned so much from so many people who are now some of my dearest friends. They answered all my questions about vendors to use and programs to try. Today, I am honored to share my ideas and knowledge with others at conventions and other events. Sharing knowledge is one of the things I love most about our industry.



Question 4: You pour a lot back into your business and the industry. Besides physical upgrades, what other kinds of upgrades do you keep on top of?

In 2007, when I took over, we had a push-button register and didn't even take credit cards! I started there, and soon, I wanted a way to track sales beyond just what I was depositing in the bank. Eventually, I wanted everything combined, so an industry friend recommended CenterEdge.



Question 6: What has been the most impactful CenterEdge tool for you as an operator?



The CenterEdge reporting is great because you can track not just sales and revenue but also inventory. That's been a cost savings because I can be very accurate with food and beverage, redemption, and even merchandise sales. Plus taxes! I never have to worry about accuracy. I keep a backup Excel spreadsheet, but CenterEdge's and my numbers are always in sync. CenterEdge also tracks taxable and exempt earnings, such as for church events, which are a huge part of our business.

Question 5: What made you ultimately decide to choose CenterEdge?

I needed an events booking platform that was tied to my POS. My last systems didn't talk, so using both was time-consuming and inefficient. CenterEdge brought them together and added tracking for inventory as well as sales.



Question 7: What has been the most impactful Centeredge tool for your team?

Maintaining accurate inventory helps with accountability for our team. I pride myself on hiring young people, 16 and 17 years old, and giving them a space where they can make mistakes but also grow and learn. Having a system that makes it easy for them to learn and interact with guests has been key. Scannable barcodes, easy-to-read screens, etc.



Question 8: What are the plans for the future?

We've just finished adding 3,000 square feet, expanding our arcade, and adding redemption. We typically do something every year, whether it's new skates, lighting, carpet, cafe equipment, or technology. For now, we're focused on installing the last of the games and getting everyone excited about what's new.

Question 9: How else do you spread the word that you've updated your facility?

We usually get the word out through social media the most. For example, when we poured our new floor, we held a ribbon-cutting ceremony and publicized it on social.



For this expansion, we've hired a photographer to come for a grand opening event. We'll promote that, and the photographer will also capture the event and facility to get content for future marketing use. But even just word of mouth is huge; people love to see that you've invested back in your business.



Question 10: What advice would you give to a new operation or facility starting out?

At the end of the day, think about how to give back to your community. I changed the way we give back. First, I looked at how Chick-fil-A and Papa John's hold fundraisers and saw many of them were giving 10% back on fundraiser nights on certain items sold. I wanted to do more than that, so now, every Thursday night, I hold a different fundraiser. It's free for the organization; they just have to book and promote the event. Instead of the typical 10% donation, we give 25% of admissions, rentals, and cafe sales. CenterEdge makes all that easy, and the community wins. I've found that if you invest in your community, your community is going to invest in you. You'll see them return for a birthday party or a special event. Giving back and being a resource for your community is how you will be around for the long term.



Conclusion

Skate World's story truly illustrates the lasting impact of a 50-year legacy built around family, faith, and community engagement. Their commitment to innovation, industry collaboration, and community investment will undoubtedly ensure the skating-based entertainment center's position as a thriving icon dedicated to creating meaningful memories for generations to come.



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