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Ania Tosa (left) skates at a summer exhibition on Friday, July 14, at the Glenview Ice Center. Maya Tosa (right) glides across the ice. PHOTOS BY DAVID KRAUS/22ND CENTURY MEDIA

WARM-UP ON ICE

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NEWS COVER STORY

Young skaters show off moves at summer exhibition

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Freelance Reporter

Glenview's finest young figure skaters took to the ice on Friday, July 14, for a relaxed summer exhibition at the Glenview Ice Center.

Friday's exhibition featured performances by more than 50 skaters, including 23 soloists and all three Glenview Blades synchronized skating teams. Most of the skaters were between the ages of 4 and 15, with one of the performer's mothers also taking the ice.

Many of Friday's performers will compete at the Chicago Open in a few weeks, so the stress-free setting of Friday's exhibition gave them an opportunity to relax and shake off some nerves, Skating Director Dorie Cascio said.

"For those that are competing, it's an opportunity for them to put their competition program out there on the ice and see if any kinks need to be worked out," said Tracy Sandler,

a coach for The Blades. "You get to see all ability levels and all ages, which I think is really fun."

With about 150 parents and friends on hand, the skaters practiced routines and tried out new jumps in the friendly environment. The skaters even picked their own songs for the program, which would normally be decided by a coach.

Sandler is one of those coaches, and she said the exhibition was not only a fun night for the skaters but a showcase of their abilities. As a coach of several individual skaters, she appreciates the progress the young athletes have made on the ice.

"I saw a lot of girls who, a year ago, couldn't have done what they did today," Sandler said. "I saw a lot of growth and development from everybody."

The exhibition also allowed some skaters to perform in front of a large audience before taking to the ice under more stressful conditions. Cascio be-

lieves that this low-key performance in front of friends and family gave many of the less experienced skaters greater confidence in their abilities.

"We had a little girl [performing] here today who was thinking about competing," Cascio said. "Now she got her jitters out, and she skated her program. She [gets off the ice and] says 'I'm competing now.' So, it's kind of just a way to get the jitters out and do something fun and refreshing."

Sisters Maya Tosa, 7, and Ania Tosa, 10, have limited experience in competition but gained a sense of self-assurance during Friday's exhibition. Both sisters performed solo acts on Friday and will be competing in the near future. They said performing in front of people prepared them for competition and helped them see some of the minor tweaks they can make to improve their form.

Cascio also views the exhibition as a reward for

the skaters that stick with the sport year-round.

Since figure skating is often deemed a winter sport, the Ice Center loses many of its athletes during the summer months. The exhibition gives the year-round skaters a chance to relax and enjoy themselves, Cascio said.

Zoe Kaiser, 12, started skating five years ago and has become increasingly more serious about

the sport. She practices at the Glenview Ice Center five days a week and performed as a solo act and a member of The Blades on Friday. Kaiser said she enjoys performing at exhibitions because it provides a mental break from the rigors of competition season.

"I see [the exhibition] as the middle of the competition season, so it's kind of like the start to the summer," Kaiser said. "I think

it's really fun, and you pretty much know everybody. It's not like nerve-racking or anything."

The Camp Ice School, run by the Glenview Park District, capped off the performances at the exhibition. It was the first performance ever for many of the campers, who seemed to enjoy their time on the ice. Perhaps some will even find themselves performing as a solo act in a few years.



Meghan Blomberg competes at a summer exhibition on Friday, July 14, at the Glenview Ice Center. DAVID KRAUS/22ND CENTURY MEDIA