

Skateboarder paradise

North Providence has decided to build a skate park, and recently a company that manufactures park equipment made a two-hour stop in town to show off such items as rail rides, quarter pipes and other challenges.



JOURNAL PHOTOS / STEVE SZYDLOWSKI

Bill Waddington, of North Providence, gets ready to skate down a ramp at Steven Olney Park. Below is a display of skateboards given away by Skatewave, a firm that builds skate parks around the country. "I think it's really cool," said 9-year-old Damian Perrotta.

BY MARK REYNOLDS
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

NORTH PROVIDENCE — For once, Ronnie Cicillini's hometown had a real skate park, with ramps and quarter pipes and a myriad of other skateboarding amusements.



But Cicillini, 9, was out of luck: His mother wasn't around to sign the liability waiver required by Skatewave, the

manufacturer who had brought a 6,800-square-foot skate park to Steven Olney Park early last week.

The good news was that the promotional event had given all of the other local skaters something they've craved.

The bad news was that it would only last two hours — enough time for Skatewave to show its wares to town officials, hand out some stickers and pack up for the next destination on its 33-site tour.

So the clock was ticking.

Cicillini, an avid boarder with a buzz haircut and baggie jeans shorts, fidgeted with his board and approached anyone who looked like they might give him permission to join in the fun.

"Just for 15 minutes," said the boy, using his most polite tone of voice.

He marveled at the Skatewave equipment

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MEGHAN O'BRIEN
sales representative
for Skatewave

set up in the parking lot off Smithfield Road.

"I love it," he said. "All the ramps. I really want to go in but ..."

Skaters, including two older experts commissioned by Skatewave, launched into the air from the various ramps.

They traversed long table-like objects, sliding across on the bottoms of their boards, their wheels spinning in the air. Skaters call it a rail ride.

Damian Perrotta, another 9-year-old, was tickled.

"I think it's really cool that we get to have a fun day after school and skateboard and everything," he said.

Several helmeted riders and a few trick

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bikers were perched atop two quarter pipes at either end of the skating area.

A quarter pipe is a ramp with a curved surface, akin to a pipe. The pitch at the top is nearly vertical.

This ensures plenty of speed on a descent. It also launches riders into orbit following a speedy ascent.

Billy O'Neill, 11, had wanted to roll down a quarter pipe ever since he became a fan of Tony Hawk, professional skateboarding's top star, about three years ago.

Last fall, some friends led him to a much taller — and probably more dangerous ramp — erected in a private parking lot. It was behind a factory, O'Neill said.

The ramp was too tough. He wiped out.

He was more successful this time.

"It makes your adrenaline

rush," O'Neill said. "It makes you happy."

It's what Hawk calls a natural high — not induced by any illegal substances.

A DVD *Natural High* — starring Hawk — was one of the grab-bag items distributed to each of the young skaters who showed up to try the park after school on Monday afternoon. The video encourages young people to stay away from drugs.

Promoting that message is part of the Skatewave tour, which kicked off in Minneapolis on May 2.

North Providence and Portland, Maine, were the only two stops in New England.

Of course, Skatewave is interested in selling skateboarding to communities without skate parks.

"Our reason for being here is to get city officials and skaters all on the same page," said Meghan O'Brien, a seller of Skatewave products.

O'Brien argues that skateboarding isn't any more dangerous than soccer or baseball.

Skateboarders have no excuse to skate on sidewalks or on other walking surfaces if their town has a skate park, O'Brien said.

"If you don't have a skateboarding park, your town is a skateboarding park," she warned.

Skatewave's recent stop in North Providence came as Mayor A. Ralph Mollis and his staff prepared to seek bids for the construction of a skate park in Olney Park.

The project chief, Frank Bur-sie, likes the Skatewave equipment.

"I'm sure [the North Providence park] will be very similar," he said. "If not this exactly."

That would be just fine for 16-year-old Billy Waddington.

The teen has waited years for a local skate park.

For an afternoon, at least, he was quite happy to finally have one in his town.

"It may not be permanent," Waddington said. "But at least it's something."