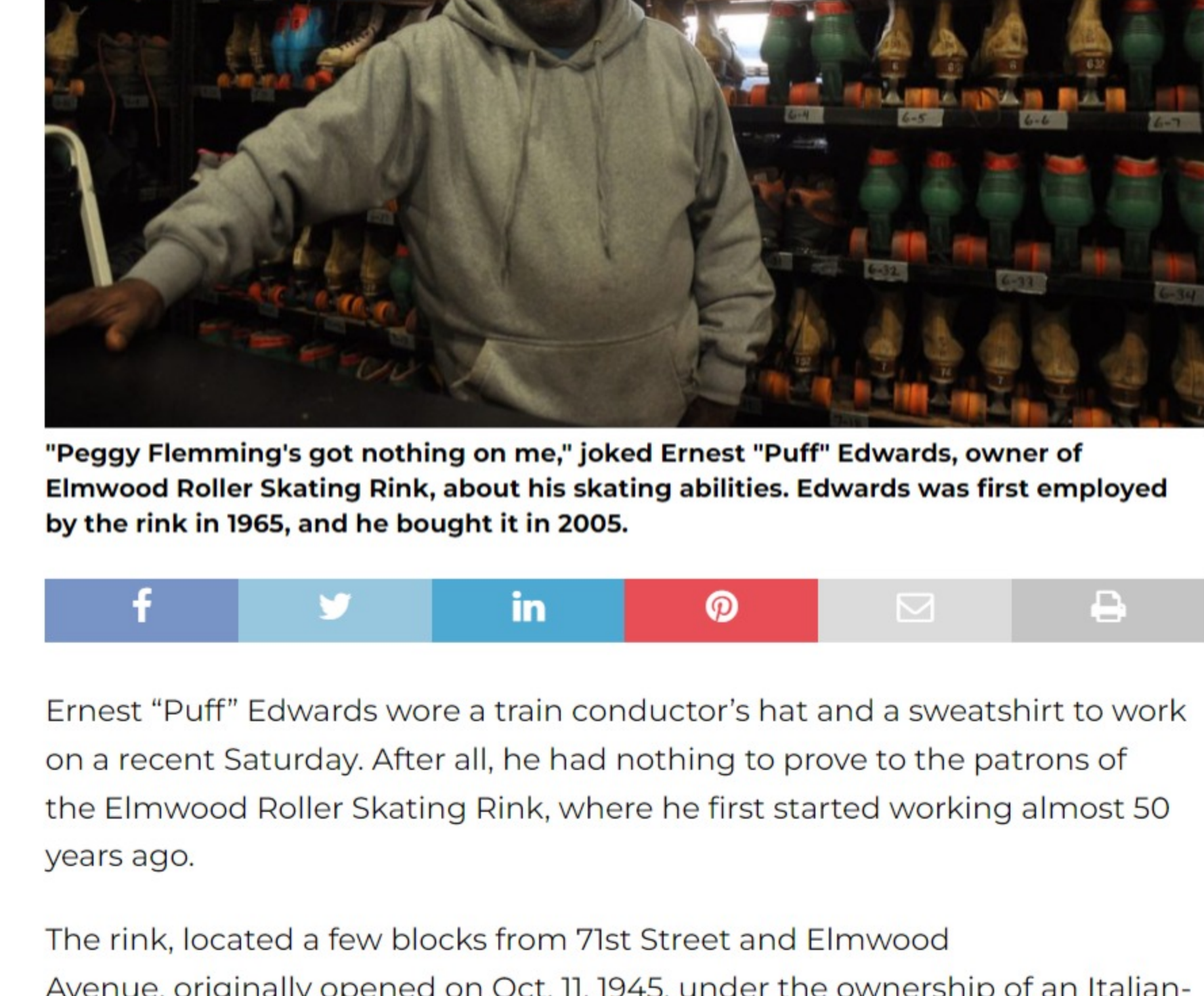


## Southwest Philadelphia: Elmwood Roller Rink Alive and ... Skating

🕒 March 8, 2014 📁 Amateur Sports, Arts and Entertainment, Featured Videos, Southwest Philadelphia 🗨️ 12



"Peggy Flemming's got nothing on me," joked Ernest "Puff" Edwards, owner of Elmwood Roller Skating Rink, about his skating abilities. Edwards was first employed by the rink in 1965, and he bought it in 2005.

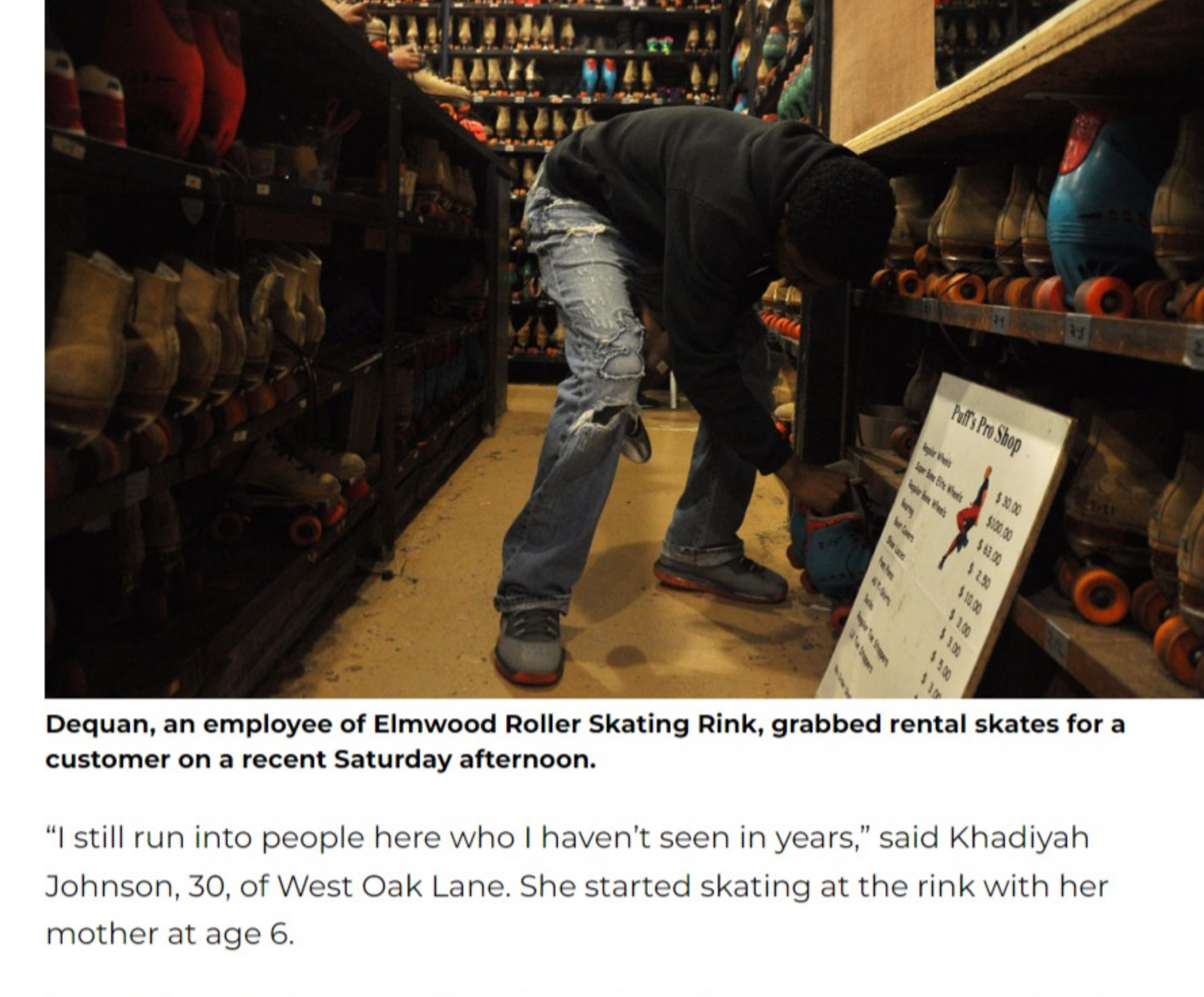
Ernest "Puff" Edwards wore a train conductor's hat and a sweatshirt to work on a recent Saturday. After all, he had nothing to prove to the patrons of the Elmwood Roller Skating Rink, where he first started working almost 50 years ago.

The rink, located a few blocks from 71st Street and Elmwood Avenue, originally opened on Oct. 11, 1945, under the ownership of an Italian-American family. In 1965, when Edwards was 11 years old, he stepped into the facility for the first time and met the owner. In 1967, Edwards started his two-year stint as the rink's security guard, followed by three years as a ticket taker and more than two decades as manager, until in 2005, he finally bought the business.



As white residents of Southwest Philadelphia **moved to the suburbs** of Yeadon and Upper Darby after World War II, more African Americans moved into Southwest Philadelphia. By the 1960s, the Elmwood Roller Skating Rink became a haven for young African Americans.

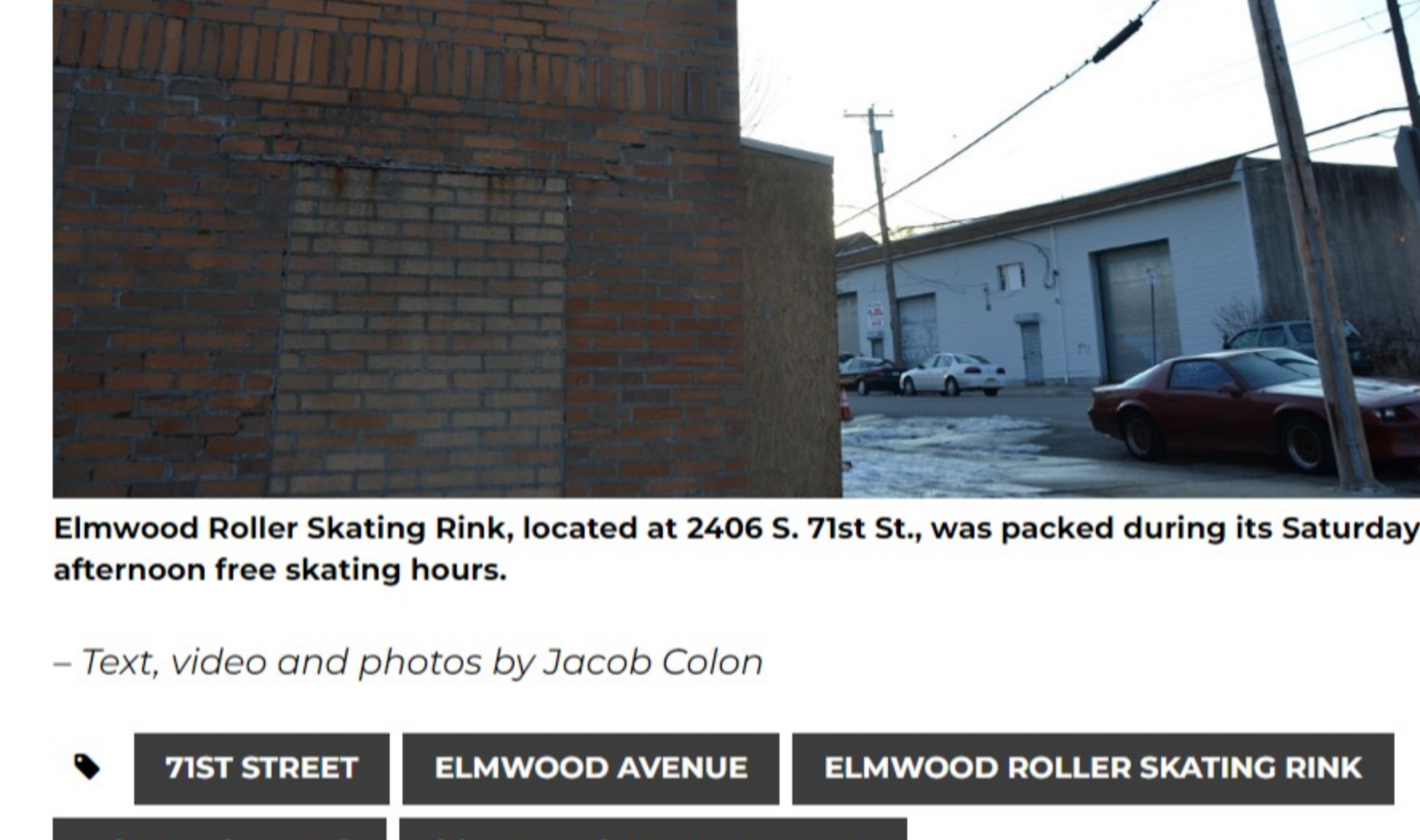
Fast forward to a weekend afternoon almost a half-century later, and the skating rink was still burgeoning with life. Dozens of children struggled to conquer the sensation of skating while adults and teenagers whizzed by and skillfully glided backwards.



Dequan, an employee of Elmwood Roller Skating Rink, grabbed rental skates for a customer on a recent Saturday afternoon.

"I still run into people here who I haven't seen in years," said Khadiyah Johnson, 30, of West Oak Lane. She started skating at the rink with her mother at age 6.

"It's all about helping people," Edwards said about the rink. From holding funerals when community members couldn't afford more formal ceremonies to setting up church pews for the temporarily homeless New Fellowship Baptist Church on the rink's authentic maple wood floors, the Elmwood Roller Skating Rink superseded the role of a conventional rink.



Elmwood roller skating rink, located at 2406 S. 71st St., was packed during its Saturday afternoon free skating hours.

– Text, video and photos by Jacob Colon

📍 71ST STREET ELMWOOD AVENUE ELMWOOD ROLLER SKATING RINK

ROLLER SKATING SOUTHWEST PHILADELPHIA

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### 12 COMMENTS

**CealRenee** says: JANUARY 17, 2017 AT 4:34 AM  
Loved this place growing up!

**Krystal** says: MARCH 25, 2021 AT 12:25 PM  
Let's find another build in southwest and bring elmwood back it's needed back in the community

**Crystal Jones** says: MARCH 25, 2021 AT 1:30 PM  
We need a new skating rink ASAP and I think it should be up 69th street where the old Sears used to be with a bowling alley in a fun place for the kids they have the garage space for parking in the back let's make that happen it would bring so much revenue back up 69th Street and jobs

**Marie merrutt** says: MARCH 25, 2021 AT 10:05 PM  
Why take it out the neighborhood of Southwest Philadelphia the kids need it I understand that some kids or trouble and it's high crime rate lately in West Philly in Southwest Philly because I believe it's nothing for the young people to do and we as adults need to step up and let these kids know that there are a place you can go and have fun without violence and disrespect we have to pursue it inside the skate range any type of community setting for the young kids that actually can appreciate having fun with no drama

**nanette rowsey** says: MARCH 26, 2021 AT 9:08 AM  
Trust me I would love to see a rink...I spent most of my younger years skating...St Charles, Carmen, Elmwood and many others...However, what would we do to keep it safe???? Would this become another place for gun violence (not from the good people) for thugs???? God knows I love the idea...I still have my skates I skated in the 60's thru 2017....it became to rough and fast...we skated slow and enjoyed ourselves....2 step bounce, Waltz...backwards skaters only...YES...YES...YES...

**nikki** says: MARCH 26, 2021 AT 1:14 PM  
The General Electric building on Elmwood Avenue is still vacant isn't it, that has plenty of space for something for the kids as well as parking and a new rink. This way it stays in the hood and its blocks away from where it originated from.

**Crystal Scott** says: MARCH 27, 2021 AT 8:12 AM  
I totally agree! SOUTHWEST Philly definitely needs the ongoing another Elmwood Skating Rink SOMEWHERE. My only concern is the reboing gun violence which has been reoccurring daily lately. Will this place be a safe haven for our youth OR a other hang out for thugs and/or folks who are just up to no good?? IT TRULY saddens me that we cannot create a better environment for our youth without others ruining it and making it a deathtrap instead of a place of enjoyment. I now skate in Jersey ONLY. However, it would be NIIIIIIIIIIICE to have an "Elmwood Skating Rink – Part II" rebuilt.

**Bahiya** says: MARCH 29, 2021 AT 12:37 AM  
We skated there when we were in high school at Bartram. My Aunt skated with us too.

**Yolanda Grantham** says: APRIL 2, 2021 AT 11:53 PM  
Puff brought me my sisters to skate all the time

**Tracy** says: APRIL 3, 2021 AT 2:12 PM  
Elmwood Skating Rink was like home as a young teen growing up in southwest Philly my son also enjoy the rink in is younger years.

**Dee Burrell** says: MAY 30, 2021 AT 4:05 PM  
Bring ELMWOOD SKATING RINK BACK AN KEEP IT'S IN THE HOOD SOUTHWEST LIKE IT WAS BEFORE ITS SOMEWHERE FOR IT

**Dolores Poole** says: OCTOBER 7, 2021 AT 1:51 PM  
Yes we definitely need a nice Skating Rink indoors for all who love to skate old and young. I think the old Electric place is good.Its handy to transportation. Skating is getting big now, except every nice place is so far away. Northeast Phila.,Jersey, Delaware. oh so far especially if you don't drive. When we were kids you could skate in the street Skates were made of different material and the streets were made of different material. Now you can't skate in the streets on the kind of skates they make now. I tried, almost broke my neck trying to skate over all the debris.

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