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## Heck on wheels - 'There's something special about a derby girl'

By Alexia Severson / My Las Cruces

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By day, Jessica O'Leary, 38, teaches a biology class of about 200 students at New Mexico State University. But that's not all she does. By night, she is bumping hips and elbows with other women on roller skates and getting bruises in places she never expected. She also doesn't go by Jessica. She goes by Evil Lucian, #1859.

O'Leary was one of the first members of the Crossroads City Derby, a flat-track roller derby league that started in November 2009. The league now consists of three home teams: the Reguladies, Spitfire Sallies and the Rink Rash Revolutionaries, and members of those teams make up the travel team, the Sucias.

"I think it changes (my students') impression of me when they find out," O'Leary said, "and my coolness factor goes up just a little."

You might think roller derby is just about wearing cute outfits and striped stocking or fishnets, but it is much more than playing dress-up. Roller derby is an athletic sport. In fact, it is one of the fastest growing sports in the world, O'Leary said.

"There's now 700 leagues in 25 countries," she said. "The first Roller Derby World Cup is going to be held in Canada in December of this year."

O'Leary said roller derby, a sport that has been around since about 1922, made its comeback as a women's sport in Austin in 2001 and has been growing worldwide ever since.

Though primarily a women's sport, O'Leary said men have also jumped in on the world of roller derby.

"The men's level of participation in

derby is kind of where the women were seven years ago, so there's men's leagues in all the big cities around the country," she said.

All three CCD home teams compete against each other locally, while the travel team competes against teams from Farmington, Hobbs, Silver City, El Paso and the surrounding areas.

O'Leary said professionally, just being a part of roller derby has given her a lot more confidence, a sentiment that many CCD members share.

"I'm not sure what happens when somebody becomes a derby girl, but they have an elevated sense of urgency," said Laura Grant, 32, known as General Grant Slam, #5. "There's something special about a derby girl."

Grant said she didn't see herself as lacking confidence before, but that roller derby has given her a different approach to how she deals with things in ordinary life.

"I approach work differently, I approach my family life differently — and I think it's in a positive way," she said. "When you have four girls standing in front of you and they're tough women, you have to go to a different mindset."

Being a part of roller derby is also a huge commitment, with practice twice a week for home teams and three times a week for the travel team.

"When I was buying my skates, I actually sat there for a while before I clicked 'yes,' because it's a commitment," said Jennifer Charity, 36, known as Charity Bomb, #C4. "I mean, why get out there and buy the skates and the pads if you're going to go out there for a day or two and then decide that you

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don't want to do it?"

Charity said her commitment is driven by the other members on her team, because if she doesn't show up to practice, her team members notice.

"You don't want to let each other down," she said, "and if I don't show up to practice, not only am I letting myself down, but I'm letting every lady in the league down, because I'm not there to make myself better, which in turn, makes the entire league stronger."

Since joining, Charity said she has sustained a few minor injuries, but like any aggressive sport, it is something that comes with the territory.

"I did sprain my ankle a few weeks ago," she said. "Bruises are fairly common, ankles are somewhat common, but I mean, nothing that we can't bounce back from."

Charity said being a derby girl pushed her to be involved in a physical activity again and that it has had a lasting impact on her life.

"It's given me something else in my life that has made me feel good about myself," she said. "I love being a wife and I love being a mom, but this has brought something back to me that I needed for a long time."

CCD had Fresh Meat orientation on May 23, but Carol Placchi, or Bad Latitude, said it is not too late to join and that boot camp for new members will be June 4 and 5.

While the derby girls are welcoming, Grant said the person coming in has a responsibility to make a space for themselves, too.

"We're not all the same. We all have to make a spot," Grant said. "Everybody is willing to scooch a little, but you have to make your spot and make your own place in derby. It's a very individual sport."

Delia Evans, 38, Cruces Crip-her, #575, said joining roller derby was one of the best things she ever did.

"I skated as a kid and it was one of my favorite things to do, so when I put my order in for my skates, it was like the most exciting thing in the world," she said, "probably better (than when I was a

kid) to know that at this time in my life, this is what I was going to do."

"Once you get the derby bug, you can't get rid of it," Charity said.

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## Crossroads City Derby

**Mission:** To provide a positive and supportive environment that instills courage, integrity and mutual respect in roller derby athletes, while helping them to excel in the sport that they love.

### Home Teams:

Reguladies

Spitfire Sallies

Rick Rash Revolutionaries

### Away Team:

Sucias

**To join:** [ccd.join@gmail.com](mailto:ccd.join@gmail.com)

**Community events:** [ccd.community@gmail.com](mailto:ccd.community@gmail.com)

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**Crossroads City Derby:** 21 and up, women only

[crossroadscityderbydolls.com](http://crossroadscityderbydolls.com)

**Junior league:** Ages 7-18, boys and girls

[minorthreatderby.com](http://minorthreatderby.com)

**Women's Flat Track Derby Association:** [wftda.com](http://wftda.com)

**May 22 roller derby bout final score:**

Reguladies 112, Spitfire Sallies 179

## The Rules of Flat Track Roller Derby

A "bout" lasts a total of 60 minutes, divided into two periods of 30 minutes, with each "Jam" lasting about two minutes. There is no limit to the number of jams allowed in each period. A pack is comprised of 10 skaters, five on each team. On each team there are a maximum of four blockers and one Jammer. The Jammer's role is to score points for her team; she earns one point for each opposing skater she passes on the track.

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