

Seattle firm Grindline is a leader in building skateparks

By Mike McQuaide

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Ask 10 riders to rank the best skateparks in Washington and you're likely to get 10 different answers.

But one common thread is likely to be Grindline Skateparks Inc., the West Seattle company that's designed and/or built more than 50 skateparks since 1992.

While most of the the parks are in the Northwest, they've also built parks in Texas, North Carolina and Minnesota, and designed one in Japan.

"Anything by Grindline is definitely the best," says Matt Levens, a 31-year-old Tacoma skateboarder. "And the number-one reason is because everyone who works there is also a skater so they know what they're doing. They know what skaters want."

West Seattle's Mark Hubbard, 33, started Grindline in 1992.

During the 1980s, when there weren't many places for boarders to legally ride, Hubbard estimates he and his buddies built more than 100 backyard ramps and half-pipes up and down the I-5 corridor.

"Then when I was 18, I got into building swimming pools and from that, skateparks," Hubbard says.

These days, Hubbard and business partner Chris Hildebrand head a \$1.7 million business that at any one time has four to six crews working on parks throughout the U.S. Currently, they've got Washington state projects in Leavenworth, Milton and Spokane, and a project in Whiting, Ind.

Along with Oregon's Dreamland Skateparks and Airspeed Skateparks, Grindline has earned the Northwest a reputation as the home of some of the best skateparks in the world. They're capitalizing on skateboarding's acceptance into the mainstream and a time when its popularity has never been greater.

Says Hildebrand: "For kids 12 and under, skateboarding is the sport; you go pretty much anyplace in the country and chances are the kids are in the backyard riding skateboards instead of playing baseball."