



**Got Venom?**  
Centennial's Becky Lahm will take her skates and her alter ego to Fat City for an exhibition match on Saturday.

Peter Jones

# She's *Hell on Wheels*

Computer geek,  
lives double life  
as a Rollergirl

By Peter Jones  
Staff Writer

Green Venom has a few things in common with the comic-book crime fighters that inspired her roller-derby moniker — including speed and a preference for colored tights.

"I'm all about the superheroes," she said, explaining her ominous nickname. "There's the Green Lantern, the Green Hornet — and my green eyes."

When darkness falls, Venom, a blocker for the Rocky Mountain Rollergirls,

## ▼ If you go

■ The Rocky Mountain Rollergirls will play an exhibition match at 8 p.m. Aug. 4 against the Pikes Peak Derby Dames at Fat City, 9670 W. Coal Mine Road.

■ Tickets are \$13 in advance and are available at Fat City and at [rockymountainrollergirls.com](http://rockymountainrollergirls.com). Tickets will be \$15 at the door. Kids 12 and younger are free.

■ For information, call 303-972-4344.

er, prey and devour them in one quick strike."

By day, Venom lives the

casts a distinct presence in her helmet, skates and signature black and green stockings.

"Her snake-like skills give her the ability to slither in and out of the pack ...," the league's Web site says.

"Venom's preferred method of eradication is to slink up on an unsuspecting block-

mild-mannered life of Centennial's Becky Lahm, a 35-year-old mother of two, a database administrator and a self-described "computer geek."

When her secret identity has been revealed, Lahm's colleagues have been variously shocked, amused and fascinated by the nature and image of her alter ego.

Her co-workers at Qwest Communications have been surprised, too.

"A lot of people have a hard time putting together a professional corporate persona with this punk-edge persona," Venom said. "A lot of the women on our team have half-sleeve tattoos. Some are very gothy."

Her roller derby team, that is.

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# Roller: Sport recently has made low-visibility revival

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"But we also run the gamut from professionals to artists," she said. "We have a police-woman and a stay-at-home mom."

While some Rocky Mountain Rollergirls strive for an alluring stereotype, such as that imagined in "Kansas City Bomber," a 1973 Raquel Welch movie, others proudly bare another mantle described bluntly in a 1970s-era Jim Croce song.

*A bleached-blonde mama with a streak of mean,*

*She knew how to knuckle and she knew how to scuffle and fight,*

*And the roller-derby program said that she was built like a fridgerator with a head.*

An attractive medium-build woman with an infectious smile, Venom is decidedly a member of the former category. But one should not mistake her girl-next-door looks for anything less than a skater who plays to win, even if it means throwing a fellow teammate into an opponent.

"It looks really bad, but it's very legal and very effective," she said.

In a nutshell, the object of roller derby is for the offensive team's so-called jammer — usually a petite, quick-moving player — to make her way through a rink of often-larger blockers on the opposing team, which uses any number of defensive, and often aggressive, strategies to jam the jammer. The jammer's teammates strive to protect her, employing tactics that may be offensive in more ways than one.

In compliance with the Women's Flat Track Derby Association, a player cannot trip opponents or hit them in the back, head or below the knees. Too many offenses can bring a game of Truth or Dare or a half-time spanking to the offending skater.

The Rocky Mountain Rollergirls will play an exhibition game Aug. 4 against the Pikes Peak Derby Dames of Colorado Springs at Fat City, 9670 W. Coal Mine Ave.

The Rollergirls are made up of two local teams: the Red Ridin' Hoods and the Sugar Kill Gang, for which Venom is the co-captain. The 5280 Fight Club includes members of both teams and tours nationally for rough-and-tumble bouts everywhere from Fort Wayne, Ind., to Edmonton, Canada.

"It's all about the audience," Venom said. "You feed off their energy. In fact, people in the front row sometimes get a roller girl in their lap. You don't stop and say, 'Sorry, are you OK?' but a lot of people choose to sit there for that reason."

Venom's teammates include the likes of Assaultin' Pepa, Winona Fighter, Edie I. Mean and few others whose names are best left out of a family newspaper.

Still, roller derby is something of a family affair. Kids 12 and younger get in free. Venom's sons, 3 and 5 years old, frequently attend the matches and have been dubbed the Little Venoms by her teammates.

"I work hard at training them ahead of time that if you see me fall, I'm going to get back up and that's just part of the game," Venom said.

In 10 months as a Rocky Mountain Rollergirl, Venom has suffered only a fractured thumb and a few bruises, but some of her teammates have not been so lucky.

As the result of leg injuries, one is expected to be out of commission for a year. According to Venom, "falling small" is the key to minimizing injury.

The skater says she has experienced more health benefits than injuries from the game. Venom says her chole-

sterol has gone down 45 points because of the exercise, and she has lost 15 pounds in less than a year of playing.

The founding of the Rocky Mountain Rollergirls in 2004 is part of the latest chapter in roller derby's long and illustrious history. Although the sport's origins date to the 1930s, it reached its peak as a professional spectator sport during the '70s when its rough-and-tumble image was permanently cemented in the popular culture.

In recent years, roller derby has seen a low-profile revival as more than 100 new amateur leagues play regional and national match-ups across the country.

In keeping with the times, a younger-skewed, punk-rock-like edge has permeated the provocative goings-on.

Most teams skate on conventional flat rinks, though some still play on the banked tracks associated with the sport's 1970s heyday.

There are four active leagues in Colorado, including the Denver Roller Dolls.

Unlike perceptions from an earlier era, today's derby is promoted as legitimate competition — not the roller rink's answer to World Wrestling Entertainment. Bravado and some hype may accompany roller-derby sportsmanship, but the actual playing and the outcome of the games are all real, Venom said. Each player pays \$35 a month in membership dues.

Venom joined the Rollergirls last year almost by accident. She had planned to attend the tryouts to offer moral support to a friend but wound up making the team when her friend canceled at the last minute.

"When you're starting, you're just scared to death. It had probably been 12 years since I had been on skates, but it was like riding a bike," she said.

Despite the occasional injury, Venom is unlikely to let her skates gather dust again.

"It's not couples' skating," she said. "It took a lot of training to get where I am now. I would never have seen myself in this sport, but it's addictive. I didn't think it would have such a positive impact on my health. But even more important than that, it's an incredible confidence builder. You go out there and you work really hard and you can't help but feel more positive about yourself. It's such good exercise, and it's an adrenalin rush every time you hit somebody. It's like, 'Yeah!'"