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play *"The Operators' Choice"* METER

TreePaad staff showing the gifts purchased for its annual Chamber Angel.



TreePaad Fun Center gives back

A shining example of how an entertainment center contributes to the character and values of a whole community.

By: Frank Seninsky and Tracy Sarris

We often talk about the benefits that family entertainment centers (FECs) bring to their communities. Whether through hosting charitable events, donating to various causes, providing jobs, supporting local businesses and schools, or just bringing families and communities together

in a fun location, entertainment centers enrich our lives and give back in so many ways.

The owners of TreePaad Fun Center are a shining example of how an entertainment center can "pay it forward" and lead by example for future generations.

Patti Garrand and Candy Cross,

Owners of TreePaad Fun Center, a 25,000-square-foot FEC in Malta, N.Y., are in this business for all the right reasons.

Garrand said, "A lot of people open entertainment centers and it is just a business for them, but for Candy and me...this is who we are."

The indoor center opened in 2007 in Glen Falls, N.Y., and was later moved to a larger location in Malta, N.Y., in order to accommodate the center's expansion. Depending on the season, there are 40-46 employees on staff.

Attractions include Fort Ballocity (PrimePlay), a three-story, interactive, soft foam ball play arena and indoor Ownplayground that is most likely the largest Ballocity attraction in the U.S.; Spider Zone (Extreme Engineering), a challenging climb through webbed straps that culminates in a ride down a large, 20-foot inflatable slide; Jump Shot, a vertical action sport that allows you to shoot hoops with an opponent on a unique trampoline platform; LaZer Runner laser tag; Extreme Rock Climbing; a 40-game video and redemption Game Zone that was laid out, set up, and programmed by Alpha-Omega Amusements & Sales/AEM, Fluff-n-Stuff (from Bears2Go); a softplay toddler area; and Coliseum Bounce, the newest attraction.

PARTIES AND STAFF

Of course, one of the most memorable activities at TreePaad is its fullservice birthday party where the party group is in the hands of an experienced, fun, and enthusiastic party coach who leads the children into a magical birthday adventure.

Frank Price of Birthday University asked Garrand what she thought was the best part of the birthday parties her facility offers. Her answer was "the staff."

"They are terrific kids," Garrand said. "This age group is tough for a lot of people, but if you hire the right kids, they will find you more kids because they want to work with the best kids in the area. If you treat them right, they will go out of the way for you and do

everything they can."

TreePaad's party coaches are given the freedom to design their own parties so they all bring a unique flair to the event. "Some like magic, some like jokes, some sing and dance. One of our guys comes out doing the Kazachok, a traditional Russian folk dance, which makes the parents laugh hysterically," said Garrand.

Many of the kids working at TreePaad have been there since its opening five years ago. Upon leaving for college, Kate Silber, an employee, wrote, "There are very few jobs available to teenagers that incorporate so much fun into each workday. I enjoyed

every day I worked there, and have many friendships that I hope will last. I know I will be beyond lucky if I ever find another job as great as this one."

What's truly amazing is how much the young staff at TreePaad supported and was personally involved in the various community programs that the center sponsors. The staff raises money to purchase gifts for an annual Chamber Angel, they bring in food items and do collections for local pantries, and have



Deputy Traylor and Koda mingling with the children during the TAKE 25 event.



Mike Traylor, a Saratoga County Sheriff's Deputy, and K-9 officer Koda were on hand at the TAKE 25 event.



TreePaad staff with the food donations they collected for the Malta Food Pantry.



(l): TreePaad's Owners Patti Garrard and Candy Cross.

done fundraisers for lots of great causes that include: Junior Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF), Youth Coalition, Water for Africa, To Love a Child, Team Teagan, Support one Family, Brave Will Foundation, Play for the Pantry, Osaka Benefit, March of Dimes, the Homeless Youth Coalition, and many more.

They have run as a team in the Relay for Life and several participated in the Susan G. Komen Foundation 5K run. In 2009, TreePaad and its staff hosted a benefit for a local family that lost all of their possessions in a fire. The benefit, and coinciding food drive, went so well that TreePaad and the very generous donors were not only able to help the family with money, food, and supplies, but also helped another family who also lost everything in a fire.

These young men and women are learning about assisting those in need and building character during their time at TreePaad. They are finding out first-hand what their generosity can bring to the lives of others.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

TreePaad also participates in TAKE 25, a program of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) that aims to heighten awareness of children's personal safety issues.

There is no admission cost for this educational presentation on drug safety, which offers fingerprinting and a visit from a

deputy canine.

A truly inspirational program that they started in 2010, involves opening their doors for the Northeast Parent & Child Society (NPCS), which provides foster and respite care for abused and neglected children through a Therapeutic Foster Family Program. Around 150 foster children and their host families were invited to the center for a night of holiday festivities and unlimited fun in December 2011.

TreePaad staff volunteer to come in on their night off to help (alongside NPCS staff) and arrange for Santa Clause to be there for the kids. A local restaurant donates the pizza.

"Holidays are often the hardest time of the year for these kids," said Patti Efner, Program Coordinator of Respite Services for NPCS. "It is very stressful for them to be away from their families at the holidays. This night at TreePaad gives them time to just be kids in a stress-free,

no-holds-barred environment. Patti, Candy and their staff are amazing! They give so much to these kids in that one night, yet ask for nothing in return."

The center has provided the venue for a fun-filled Chamber Mixer in which over 175 local business members attended. Attendees enjoyed beer tasting provided by a local restaurant and were entertained with arcade games, laser tag and even Fort Ballocity!

Events like this are a small investment considering the great opportunity to show off your center to a full-house of local business owners/staff.

"We have the smallest advertising budget you've probably ever seen," said Garrand. "However, we probably give away more than most people ever thought of. Facebook is really the only advertising we do, which provides us with a lot of feedback from our guests. We don't expect to get anything back from the programs we support, but ultimately you are recognized for your contributions and it comes back to you in many ways."

AWARD WORTHY

Their outstanding programs and service to the community does not go unnoticed. In 2007, TreePaad was presented the Entrepreneurial Spirit Award from the Adirondack Chamber of Commerce and again in 2009 from the Southern Saratoga Chamber of Commerce, which is awarded to a business that is in business less than five years and exhibits a talent and passion for their company that results in outstanding potential for success.

TreePaad received the International Association for the Leisure and Entertainment Industry (IALEI) Golden Token Award of Excellence for Most Creative Birthday Party Package in 2007, the IALEI Golden Token Award of Excellence for FEC Operator of the Year in 2009, Top 20 Place to take Kids in Albany, NY from Kidsoutandabout.com

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in 2010, and Post Star- 1st Place for Best Birthday Party Facility (two awards) for children under and over 8 in 2008.

Most recently, TreePaad was nominated for the 'Excellence in Family Entertainment Center Award' for Best Birthday Parties, as well as Best Facility Maintenance Program, which will both be presented to the category winners during Amusement Expo, March 14-16, 2012.

It isn't hard to understand why they have the support of their staff and become a favorite place for families to visit in their community.

Garrand said "Both Candy and I are

very family oriented and wanted to open a business that our whole family would participate in. In keeping the family in mind, it was easy for us to know exactly what we expected from our business: family fun. This is what we do and we love every minute of it!"

For more information, call
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Frank Seninsky is president of the Alpha-Omega Group of companies, which includes a consulting agency, Amusement Entertainment Management (AEM), two nationwide revenue sharing equipment suppliers, Alpha-Omega Amusements, Inc. and Alpha-BET Entertainment, and Alpha-Omega Sales, a full line game & related equipment distributor. All are headquartered in East Brunswick, New Jersey. During his 44 years in the leisure entertainment industry, Seninsky has presented nearly 400 seminars and penned more than 1500 articles. His columns regularly appear in Tourist Attractions & Parks, RePlay, Vending Times, and Bowling Center Management. Frank is co-regent for Foundations Entertainment University, which presents multiple-day sessions in the US and in growing markets including Russia, Ukraine, Dubai, UK, and potentially Asia, India, and Africa as well. His world famous 'The Redemption & FEC Report' e-newsletter goes out to more than 42,000 readers worldwide. Alpha-Omega Sales is the exclusive US Distributor for all Comfyland Edutainment Center products and the new exclusive distributor for GameALERT. To contact Frank directly, email him at

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