

Game-Loving Family Opens Second Location in Village

October, 2019, Big Bear Lake - Customer experience is the catchphrase these days for attracting and retaining customers. For Marilyn and Matt Vecchio, owners of Mountain Room Escapes, (MRE) it is the product and they want it to be excellent.

Opening first in Big Bear City, with a "trapped in a ski lodge during a blizzard" experience, MRE opened its second location in the Village with a "spooky lodge escape" theme, just a few months ago. Their Village location Grand Opening is Tuesday, October 23 at 4:00 p.m. with the Chamber networking mixer following immediately.

Long time Big Bear residents, Marilyn and her husband and six kids are avid game-players, frequently playing their current favorite, Settlers of Catan. Years ago, the family decided to gift "experiences" instead of Christmas gifts, including a room escape game.

"Matt looked around during one game and said, 'Mom I could do this,' " Marilyn remembered. After that, the two dug in and began exploring it as a viable business for Big Bear.

Their goal is to provide a resource for Big Bear families and a memorable customer experience. Game Night is every Friday, where kids may choose from board games and stay to play for \$5. Community groups hold small meetings there. In turn, Marilyn and Matt support worthy causes in the community.

"We recognized a need to provide something worthwhile, safe and fun for our community kids. They don't have much to choose from," said Matt.

Both nurses and instructors, Marilyn, who retired in June now works full time with Matt, who credits Bob Poole as his business mentor. They constantly analyze their games and their guests experiences.

"If someone is unable to figure out the clues and escape the room in the one hour and 13 seconds period, they get really bummed," said Marilyn. In that case, the game host spends extra time with the guest, going over the clues and offering reassurance to the guest.

Mountain Room Escapes now employs seven shift employees. Group reservations book fast, beginning with the first booking at 9:00 a.m. until they close at 10:00 p.m.