

Games All Out is the life of the party

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Karaoke, mobile laser tag and video games built into their van help Jeremiah Botts, left, and Duain West, right, bring the entertainment to the party with their company Games All Out. Jorgen Gulliksen/Register

Duain West was youth pastor at Lake Berryessa Community Church when he first met Napa resident Jeremiah Botts. Over the years, the two became close friends. Botts is now a plumber with a Napa firm; West, a construction manager, lost his job due to the economic downturn.

“All along we had it in our hearts to begin several businesses that would make a difference in people’s lives,” West said. “This became especially important to us during these challenging economic times.”

In May of this year, the two launched their first endeavor: Games All Out, a company providing games and video entertainment at children’s events and birthday parties.

They bought a 1999 Ford van and transformed it into a climate-controlled mobile video game theater with big-screen HD TV sets and the latest in game systems. The customized van accommodates eight to ten game players inside and four players outside.

“Most parties take place out-of-doors,” West said, “so we have our own electric generator to provide power. In addition to video games, we also offer karaoke, a golf simulator, outdoor laser tag and other games.”

One unusual and popular party item is the Human Hamster Ball. Adults or children climb inside 10-foot, transparent plastic balls and roll around the lawn like hamsters. Another popular party item is the smaller Human Bumper Balls. These 5-foot inflatable spheres are strapped over the head and torso and enable partygoers to run, bump and bounce about in safety.

“Bumper Ball soccer is a very popular party game. Party guests rush to get at the soccer ball while strapped inside the protective bubbles,” Botts said.

“Games All Out is getting a great response,” he added. “Once set up or in the truck, people come up and ask for information all the time.”

But it’s not all fun and games. In keeping with their philosophy of making a difference, for every paid event, a party is given to a child in need, free of charge.

To help identify children in need, Games All Out currently works with the Father’s House, a nondenominational church in Vacaville and Napa. They hope to network shortly with the cities of Napa and Vacaville and other organizations, and are especially interested in providing birthday parties to children who have lost a parent to war.

“Every kid needs a birthday party,” West said.

The two men have long had plans to pursue multiple businesses together, and recently Botts came up with an idea called JobFluke.com. According to Botts, the word “fluke” can mean “a blessing” as well as “accidental.”

Launched in August, the JobFluke.com goal is to help find work and provide cash for those in need. Another goal is to save money for those needing help with a project or job.

The JobFluke.com concept is to connect a consumer’s need with a worker’s skill. Jobs listed on the website can range from auto repair to plumbing, from fixing a sprinkler system to English tutoring to building or repairing a patio deck.

There is no charge for posting, listing or bidding for jobs on JobFluke.com.

“We purposely created a website that is simple to use so that someone with very little computer skill can use it,” Botts said. JobFluke.com currently lists more than 20 job categories.

“The website is brand-new and we hope to expand and enlarge our listings as people discover us. To date we have used Facebook, printed fliers and word of mouth to notify people that our site exists,” Botts said. The two men are watching the new site to see what kind of jobs are posted.

Job-seekers may either look for work or list the services they offer together with their references and work profile.

“We would like to help anyone who might need a job or perhaps earn a little extra to make ends meet during this slowdown,” Botts said. “Anyone having a project or job — whether large or small — may post a description. Once posted, workers will bid on the job. Those posting the job decide who gets the project.”

It’s similar to the bidding process used in the construction industry, Botts said.

“We just opened the site and already have workers listed with references,” he added. “After a job is completed, our customers will be asked for a review, which will be posted.”

“We are not sure what will happen in the long term,” West said, “but certainly we want to be of help until the economy turns around. We don’t think there is anything out there quite like this.”

The partners will decide how to sustain the new endeavor in the future. “We are very optimistic, but do not plan on banner ads, sales pitches or the selling of information,” Botts said.

Botts and West hope the website will eventually cover the Bay Area and extend to Sacramento.

“We are currently working out the bugs,” West said.

“Eventually, we hope to go nationwide and connect with people who have the same attitude, the same heart as we have,” he added. “People who feel the need to make a difference and to give back. Together, we hope to go on to do even bigger and better things.”

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Duain West, left, and Jeremiah Botts, right, started the mobile event entertainment company called Games All Out last spring. One of the most popular games is the human hamster ball; a giant transparent ball with a core large enough for kids and adults to climb in and roll it. Jorgen Gulliksen/Register