



Oogles-N-Googles makes birthday parties fun for kids *and* parents

Let's Party!

By Chris Penttila

Going on a dinosaur hunt, trekking to wizard school and meeting superheroes—for Costco members Kevin and Danya Mendell, it's all in a day's work.

The couple's two-year-old company, Oogles-N-Googles, creates upscale, themed birthday parties for kids ages 3 to 11. But don't expect them to have children play traditional games like Pin the Tail on the Donkey or Musical Chairs: Oogles-N-Googles, based in Indianapolis, creates its own themes and story lines.

One popular theme is the "Once Upon a Time" princess party, where young partygoers dress up in princess costumes and learn ballroom dancing, then find the prince at the end of the fairy tale (who is played by an Oogles-N-Googles employee). "We immerse them in the theme they've chosen," says Kevin Mendell.

The Mendells realized there was a hole in the market three years ago when one of their sons had a birthday coming up and they couldn't find anything new.

"We were tired of the same type of birthday, where kids would be running around crazy and the parents would just leave feeling exhausted and pulling their hair out," says Kevin. "When both parents work, there's a lot to juggle."

Danya Mendell came up with the idea of offering full-service, themed birthday-party packages for today's overcommitted parents who could just write a check and have a birth-



When Oogles-N-Googles does a party, it's no ordinary fare. Themes range from princess parties to race-car events, complete with face painting, games—and Costco cake.

been very attractive for them," Kevin says. "And every child we give a birthday party to is really treated as king or queen for the day."

Growing the concept might just be a piece of cake. At the very least, it'll be loads of fun.

Says Kevin, "How many people can say they do birthday parties for kids as their profession? I think the best part for me is that it's the happiest job in the whole country." ■

day party coordinated for them from start to finish. The Mendells' 9-year-old son came up with the name Oogles-N-Googles.

They decided to run a small ad in an Indianapolis parenting publication in 2002, and their first call came from a mother who wanted a race-car-theme birthday party for her 3-year-old son.

"It was May, and it was [time for] the Indianapolis 500," Kevin says. "We did the party at their house. It was huge—there were about 35 children. The mom said it was the best money she ever spent."

Of course, any children's birthday party needs a themed cake that draws oohs and aahs. The Mendells tried Costco cakes and now use them exclusively for the 50 to 60 parties they average each month.

The company expects to host 600 birthday parties this year, ranging in cost from \$300 to \$750, and it's actively seeking franchisees to build the Oogles-N-Googles brand nationwide. The Mendells think the secret of the company's success so far is simple: offering a creative concept along with great customer service.

"We do everything for the parents. That's

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MEMBER profile

Company name: Oogles-N-Googles

Owner and president: Kevin Mendell

Employees: 12

Products/services:

Professional children's party provider

Member at: NW Indianapolis, Indiana

Member since: 2002

Comments about Costco: "Costco is able to handle the volume we bring in weekly cake orders," Mendell says. "They're just phenomenal. And the cakes get rave reviews!"

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