

Playland offers fun for families of all incomes

By Tim Whitnell
SPECIAL TO THE CHAMPION

Brenda Loranger knows the pain of seeing birthday after birthday go by without a traditional kids' party or even a present. She wants to make sure it doesn't happen to another youngster.

Growing up poor in a large family in a small Newfoundland town, the 37-year-old Milton resident is doing what she can to help bring some birthday cheer to children who come from meagre financial means.

The owner of the recently-opened Amazing Adventures Playland is making an effort to regularly help out needy families by allowing some children to use the fun apparatus at no charge at the 4325 Harvester Rd. (Unit 5) facility.

Once a month, Loranger selects a family that normally couldn't afford to use her services and gives a child with an upcoming birthday free use of the business for a couple of hours. A monthly pass, at \$30 per child, is also given away to one or more children in a low-income family once a month.

Besides those giveaways, Loranger said she also occasionally subsidizes families that can't afford the entire cost of using the playland for a party.

"I came from the small town of St. George's, Nfld. I grew up the middle of 10 kids. We were very low income... We were lucky if we got Jell-O on our birthday. I was treated the same as everybody else in the family. In the earlier years we didn't get a present per se but got to go to the corner store with a dollar.

"I never had a birthday party or a cake until I was 18. I came to Ontario when I was 17."

Loranger said she only got to go to other kids' birthday parties a couple of times.

"Whenever we were invited to a party we didn't go because we couldn't afford to give a gift. When people realized that, we weren't invited anymore."

She doesn't want other kids to have similar sad memories.

"Even though we often fill the (free) spot quite quickly with a low-income family, if someone says it's too expensive sometimes I'll intervene and we'll subsidize a party," she



PLAY TIME: Brenda Loranger offers plenty of fun for youngsters at her Amazing Adventures Playland.

BARRIE ERSKINE / SPECIAL TO THE CHAMPION

said, noting most enquiries come from single parents, low-income earners, single-income families or those on social assistance.

"When you're on a fixed income you have grocery and rent money. A parent shouldn't have to make a decision between food and a party."

Loranger said she recently accepted a \$50 deposit as full payment for a party that would normally cost \$236 with tax.

The parties are generally for kids aged four to nine years who play on various apparatus. Youths up to age 12 are catered to as there's a video games area with a PlayStation, GameCube and Xbox.

The birthday parties are for up to 15 chil-

dren and include use of the apparatus and a party room plus drinks for the kids and adults. The packages vary in price from \$199 to \$299 depending on the day selected and whether all or some of hot food, cake, 'loot' bags or balloons are desired.

Apparatus include a 17-foot play structure, two 16-foot swirl slides, a triple gang slide, a nine-foot trolley ride and a themed jet. There's a bouncy castle and a 50-foot inflatable obstacle course.

Also available is an arcade area with air hockey and foosball, an enclosed area with mini battery-operated Harley Davidson motorcycles and an enclosed toddler section with a variety of play equipment.

Parents are responsible for monitoring

their children, she said. Loranger previously owned a similar business for a couple of years called Bounce and Play in west Mississauga. She sold it in 2005 to refocus on her family and decide what she wanted to tackle next but decided to get back into the business of play.

Since she opened last October she said business is booming with "thousands" of kids coming through her doors.

One out-of-town visitor wrote The Champion to say how impressed she was by Loranger's magnanimous attitude.

"... it is people like Brenda who make the world a much better place to live," said Etobicoke resident Patricia Hayes, referring to a recent winter trip to the playland to pick up her grandson.

"With so much crime, headlines always being so negative, that this person or that person has been killed; children abducted, companies embezzled and a shortage of doctors, as well as our health system declining, I think once in a while it is nice to hear that people actually do help one another rather than to turn their backs on each other."

For more information about the business or low-income consideration, call (905) 639-6544.

Corporate leaders invited to hear from speaker

Business leaders are invited to hear from one of Canada's leading authorities on research and innovation at the Halton Region-McMaster University Learning Series event Thursday.

The session — first in a three-part series designed for corporate leaders in Halton — will take place at the Oakville Club starting


at 11:30 a.m. and will feature guest speaker Mamdouh Shoukri, vice-president of research and international affairs at McMaster University. Shoukri will speak about competing and winning through university-industry partnerships.

The cost is \$55 per person and includes lunch. For more information or to register,

call (905) 825-6000, ext. 7514.

The second part of the series will be held May 18 and will include Marcel Mongeon's discussion of intellectual property. Then, Mo Elbestawi will talk about McMaster's Manufacturing Research Institute June 7.

The Oakville Club is located at 56 Water St., Oakville.



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~ Coffee & Tea ~

\$30⁰⁰
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