

ARTS

Nightclub events for teens becoming big hit

By Stephanie Hounsell
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Clubbing in a safe, supervised environment with no alcohol. To some, it might sound like an oxymoron. To 17-year-old Priscilla Tang, it sounded like a business opportunity.

This summer, Priscilla decided to put into action a long-held desire to be an entrepreneur and formed 360 Degree Productions, which runs all-ages nightclub events at the Hardball Café on Regional Road 25.

The first event was held last month, and they've been taking place weekly since then, with as many as 150 teens in attendance.

"They're mostly high school students looking for something to do on a Friday night," Priscilla said, adding, "We play what they want to hear."

With summer drawing to a close and school starting up, events will no longer be weekly, but will continue, hopefully until the end of the year. The next event will take place Friday, Sept. 14 and will have a 'back-to-school' theme.

As usual, doors will open at 8:30 p.m., with the night running until 1:30 a.m.

Conference sparked confidence

It all started in February when Priscilla attended a conference called the Young Women Entrepreneurs Conference, which is put on by the Ontario government.

"The conference opened my mind and made me realize I am capable," she said.

In an effort to find a niche that wasn't being filled in town, Priscilla said she asked herself "What's lacking?"

The answer wasn't long in coming. "The very first thing that came to mind is there's nothing for young adults and teens to do," she said.

She decided to model the nightclub events after similar ones in downtown Toronto, but gear them toward teens aged 15 to 18. That way, she said, teens are happy there's something "cool" to do and their parents are happy they're in a safe environment.

Each event features a full light and sound show, with music including R and B, hip-hop, house, trance, Euro and reggae, Priscilla said.

Some teens hit the dance floor, while others prefer to just hang out and socialize with



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PARTY TIME: Priscilla Tang has been keeping busy organizing all-ages events through her 360 Degree Productions company at Hardball Café.

friends. "Everyone who comes are people who like to party," she said.

Safety features include uniformed security guards along with a thorough check of everyone who comes through the doors with a metal detector.

Bags are searched, and there's a 'no in and out' policy.

The simple fact everyone's around the same age is an added safety feature, Priscilla said; parents of teenaged girls — or guys — don't have to worry about them getting mixed up with older crowds.

"Sometimes parents come in to make sure it's safe, and they always leave satisfied," Priscilla said.

Some events have themes, such as the recent 'Around the World' event, in which teens were invited to come dressed in clothing representing their cultural background.

One of the reasons Priscilla thinks 360 Degree Productions has been so successful is that, being young herself, she knows what teens want in an event.

"I am my own market," she explained.

To promote the events, she's used the outlets that most appeal to teens, including Facebook, word of mouth and flyers at the movie theatre.

From the beginning, Priscilla said she was confident her business would be a success. "It fills such a large empty niche," she said.

She also did her research beforehand, talking to her target audience about her idea and collecting more than 300 signatures on a petition she titled 'I want to go clubbing in Milton.'

Her supporters have proven invaluable.

"I'm blessed to be working with some

great people," she said, naming Carlo Giangrande, owner of the Hardball, local band promoter Donna Danielli, who provided advice and support, and her promotion team.

Entering Grade 12 and being the student council president at her school, Milton District High School, Priscilla knows she'll soon have her hands full. Nevertheless, she hopes to continue to have some Friday night events at the Hardball.

Although financially she's barely broken even on the endeavour, Priscilla considers it a huge success.

"What mattered most is that I accomplished something so important to Milton — providing teens with something safe to do," she said.

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