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Former Illinois attorney makes play the focus of his new business venture

Rob Lindner was a managing partner at a thriving Chicago area law practice, but sensed something was missing in his life.

JUMPING COUNTRY OWNER Rob Lindner (back row) only had drawing of the inflatables his business will offer when students from Kennedy Elementary School in Grafton stopped for a visit last week. The grand opening of the recreational facility is planned for Saturday, Nov. 5.
Photo by Mark Jaeger

“I enjoyed being an attorney, but found I was only dealing with people in conflict … people who had been wronged and wanted satisfaction. I decided I needed to work with people having a good time,” Lindner said.

His quest for fun led to Grafton’s newest business venture, Jumping Country.

The sprawling complex of inflatable play areas was supposed to hold its grand opening on Sunday, Oct. 23.

“We were all good to go, but the inflatables didn’t show up on schedule. It was very disappointing,” Lindner said.

The launch date has been reset for Saturday, Nov. 5.

“It is going to be awesome. It was a considerable investment to create a facility like this, but I know the kids — and their parents — are just going to love it,” Lindner said while detailing the variety of play areas that will be created in the 11,000-square-foot facility at 1235 Dakota Dr.

He speaks with authority about children’s preferences, having a son and a daughter, Zachary

and Sari.

The inflatables — which are called "jumps" in the recreation business — include increasingly challenging obstacles and features. The top attraction is the Adrenaline Zone — which towers at 17 feet in the renovated warehouse space.

The venue uses an Australian theme, with the expansive play area designated The Outback. For toddlers deemed too young or too timid to tackle the inflatables, a corner has been set aside with children's toys and a video screen.

There are three glass-enclosed party rooms, reflecting the goal of making the business a destination for children's birthday parties and other family gatherings.

Lindner said the flat-screen TVs that line the walls allow for considerable flexibility.

For the party rooms, families will be invited to show videos of the birthday boy or girl or to have a live camera capturing the celebration.

During the times a party is not scheduled, the screens could be used by parents to watch sporting events or other programming.

To accommodate parties, the Jumping Country staff will be able to pre-order pizza and baked chicken fingers from Downtown Pizza. Personalized birthday cakes can also be arranged.

"We are going to be very conscious about offering only healthy food. We will also insist that the children use the jumps and then eat. We don't want them running around on full stomachs," Lindner said.

He said prices will be kept reasonable, keeping in mind Jumping Country is likely to become a popular family destination. The cost is $10 for the first child and $7 for each additional child in a family.

Adults and children too young to walk will be admitted at no charge.

"Frequent Jumper" cards will be sold for $70, allowing 10 admissions.

Special discounts are also being arranged for day-care centers that bring groups of youngsters, and programs that focus on special-needs children.

Because of liability concerns, Lindner said, there are no plans to provide drop-off service for parents who want to leave their children unsupervised while they head off to shop.

"We suggest parents bring their kids here first, get them good and tired, and then take them shopping," he said.

Security will be a focus at the facility, with each child required to wear a wristband that includes a matching tear-off tab that each guardian will keep.

Security cameras will be posted throughout the building. The entire facility is also cleaned daily.

Lindner said Jumping Country has proven to be a big hit with high-school students who have been hired to staff the facility.

“I told the kids we hired there are three duties: make sure the rules like ‘no pushing’ are enforced, keep the youngsters safe and just play with them,” he said.

“A lot of the teens said they can’t believe they are getting paid to play.”

Lindner said he can’t wait to see the delighted faces of children playing at the center, but he already has a smile on his face.

“I spent more than a year searching in Illinois and Wisconsin for just the right location, and I am convinced I found it here,” he said.

“I wanted a location that needs a facility like this, in a community that is welcoming to business — which Grafton has been. I also wanted a building with warehouse-scale space and adequate parking, which you almost never find together.”

Lindner said he is also happy with the career choice he has made.

“I am not going to be surrendering my law license, but I plan on devoting all of my time to operating Jumping Country,” he said.

The facility is open daily except for Tuesdays.

More information is available by calling 377-6700.