

Tuesday, August 21, 2018

Beaverton ValleyTimes

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KingPins Family Entertainment Center opens in Beaverton

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Tom Burke and Jon Tang bring family fun center to town, keep the history of Sunset Lanes alive.



TIMES PHOTO: JESSIE DARLAND - Bowling lanes at the new KingPins Family Entertainment Center are ready for use.

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For Tom Burke and Jon Tang, owners of KingPins Family Entertainment Center, bowling alleys have always felt like home.

The two began at Beaverton's Sunset Lanes as guest services employees when they were teenagers in the '70s.

"We mopped floors, wiped tables and cleaned bathrooms," Burke said.

"We're still doing that," Tang said with a laugh.

After some time spent managing, renovating and owning other bowling alleys, Burke and Tang now own two entertainment centers in Portland and Beaverton.

It has been a busy 20 years for the business partners. They acquired Sunset Lanes in 1998 and began searching for ways to reach a broader audience.

"It used to be that (in bowling alleys) you would find a few lanes and a snack bar," Burke said.

But, he said that doesn't quite cut it anymore.


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Keeping their competition in mind, Burke said they had two options: do nothing and halt growth or change to what the modern family wants for fun. In 2015, the business partners also learned Sunset Lanes would be torn down in 2019 to make way for new construction.



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Then, the Beaverton KingPins was born.



TIMES PHOTO: JESSIE DARLAND - Kids race through city streets in an arcade game at the new KingPins Family Entertainment Center.

Because Sunset Lanes said "traditional" to customers and KingPins said "family," the switch was an easy one to make, Tang said.

"We do what we do for the guest," Tang said.

In preparation of their first KingPins establishment in Portland, which opened two years ago this week, Burke and Tang did their homework — three to four years worth of homework.

"We really traveled all around the nation looking at similar centers," Tang said. "We saw what might work for us and what wouldn't."

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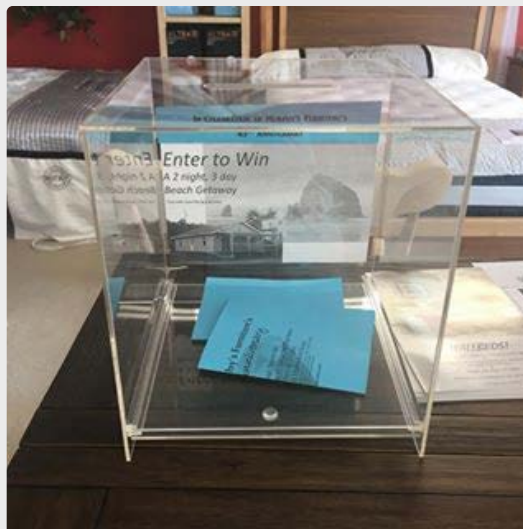
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After finding what works best for them and their community, Burke and Tang officially opened a second KingPins establishment in Beaverton with a ribbon-cutting ceremony and a ceremonial first bowl in front of a crowd of over 100 people Wednesday evening.

Along with the Beaverton Chamber of Commerce and a group from the Children's Cancer Association, city council member Lacey Beaty spoke at the event. She said establishments like KingPins — multi-use buildings with something for everyone — are the future of the city.

"I've lived here for years and I always hear that there's nothing to do in Beaverton. Well, that is so not true," Beaty said.

The 45,000 square foot facility on SW Cedar Hills Boulevard houses 34 bowling lanes, an arcade, a laser tag arena and a bar and grill.



TIMES PHOTO: JESSIE DARLAND - Guests at the opening try out the air hockey table at KingPins.

In addition to the 75 employees at the Portland location, about 110 employees — 70 from Sunset Lanes — will staff the Beaverton KingPins.

KingPins General Manager Phil Jackson said he knows the switch from Sunset Lanes to KingPins is difficult for



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"It doesn't matter what name is on the side of the building — what matters most is you guys," Jackson told the crowd at the event.

Among the longtime community members in the crowd was Norman Berger, who bowled at Sunset Lanes for over 50 years. Berger said he was sad to see Sunset Lanes go but interested to see how KingPins lived up the history of the old bowling alley.

"When I throw the ball, it's just like I'm back at Sunset Lanes," Berger said. "This is nice and clean — it feels crisp."

Although he doesn't plan on playing much laser tag, Berger said he will be back to bowl just like he often did at Sunset Lanes.

Because the old bowling alley was loved by many locals like Berger, Jackson said he hopes guests still feel a sense of home in the new location, just 100 yards away from Sunset Lanes.

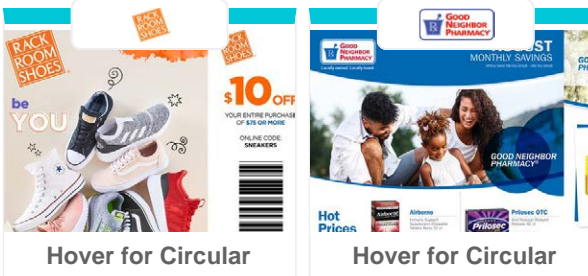
"For many of our guests, this is like coming home every day," Jackson said.

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Burke said it has been a hectic three years opening the Portland and Beaverton KingPins, but worth the wait.

As for the duo's future with KingPins, Burke said they plan to refine their businesses in Portland and Beaverton.

"We aren't about acquiring everything. That's not who we are," Burke said. "Right now, we are about customer service — like always."

Hailey Stewart can be reached at hstewart@portlandtribune.com; follow her on Twitter at @Hailey_ann97

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