

Raising money is a mystery to be solved

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Forget spaghetti feeds and auctions ... why not use mysteries to raise some money?

That's what Amira Long, executive director of the social service organization Family Resource Center of the Redwoods in Crescent City, has decided to do.

Her organization will host Crescent City's first-ever escape room, "Escape the Laboratory," as a fundraiser every Friday, Saturday and Sunday from Oct. 11 through Nov. 1.

This particular escape room follows the storyline of a mad scientist and a laboratory gone wrong. Game participants can save the laboratory staff by following clues and solving a mystery.

Attendees, in groups of at least two and no more than eight, will pay \$20 each to experience the 60-minute mystery adventure.

The concept has been rising in popularity, according to a 2018 article in USA Today, which estimated that escape rooms in the U.S. grew from 20 or so in 2014 to more than 2,000 four years later.

Groups of people are locked in themed rooms and given an hour to solve a mystery before they can “escape.”

Although school classrooms have sponsored similar events in Crescent City, this may be the first escape room opened to the public. It will be held in the resource center’s conference room at 494 Pacific Ave.

Long said her organization must be innovative in generating revenue to offset business and administrative costs, since most of the center’s grants go directly to its programs.

“Most of our funding is grant funding and pays for a certain program here. None of it, aside from our First Five funding, pays for the building to be open,” Long said.

She said her husband, Matt, is an escape room enthusiast, which gave her the idea for the fundraiser. “This year, we were trying to think of something that hasn’t been done before, that isn’t already happening in Del Norte County,” she said.

So nine months ago, Matt Long went to work. With his wife’s help, Long began collecting beakers and graduated cylinders. He crafted the escape room back story, wrote out puzzles, and used his woodworking talents to create intricate clues.

After much work and brainstorming, the couple designed an intricate storyline with a range of clues.

To ensure the mystery’s success, they’ve scheduled test runs before the escape room’s formal opening. “It just takes a different mindset,” said Amira Long. “You have to really un-train your brain and look for clues, and the clues can be anything.”

The Longs already have another escape planned for next spring ... an archeologically themed story that fits Matt Long’s archeology studies in college.

Long said she hopes the upcoming event will raise at least \$2,300 of the \$20,000 she needs to fund this year’s operating costs for the resource center.