

book. So unbelievably nice! I have another couple who come to literally almost every single movie, sometimes more than once. We have gotten to know each other very well to the point where we know their grandchildren, have been their support through surgery, they give “parenting” advice to me when I need it. They have become great friends. I have met people from all over the country and world, for that matter. Very rarely do we get a not-so-friendly type here at the theater, which is what I love best!

What’s been the biggest lesson you’ve learned as a business owner?

“Oh jeez, I’ve done this so long I don’t know how to answer. I guess just that you can’t please everyone. There is always going to be someone that is going to complain or not be happy with something. It gets very old but luckily they are few and far between!”

What advice would you offer a new business owner?

“Do not associate any opinion with politics and religion. Unfortunately, people will judge or boycott your business if you do not have the same beliefs, which is silly really. Don’t be afraid to ask for help. Research anything you can before making a decision. Do not be afraid to stand up for yourself, even when others are telling you otherwise. Don’t ‘half-ass’ anything. If you’re going to do something, do it right the first time. If you are in a customer-based business, make sure you can handle it. I have met some business owners in the



LUKE WHITTAKER

Kaarina Stotts and her son Aarin, 12, pose for a picture inside the Neptune Theatre in Long Beach in early November. Stotts is planning to expand the lobby to include more food and games in the coming months.

past that have not done so well because they didn’t like people. You can’t run a successful people-based business if you don’t like people. Listen to the needs of your customers. You cannot base your decisions only around what you like.”

What are some of your immediate and future goals for your business?

“An addition on the Neptune will be starting first thing in Jan-

uary! We are bumping the building out 14 feet in the front, moving the entrance closer to and facing the parking lot. We will move our concession counter accordingly. The lobby will grow with room for a few tables and chairs and hopefully a few pinball machines. We will be offering a small bit of food like hot dogs, hamburgers, nachos and hopefully slices of pizza.”

What is your proudest

accomplishment as a business owner?

“The Neptune, hands down. This year has been quite challenging in every way possible and to be here right now, and still be in business is a blessing. This time last year, I wasn’t so sure. But, I think it is doing better than ever as we have all worked hard to make it a fun, inviting, affordable place to go.”

What do you feel is the

biggest challenge for your businesses?

“The biggest challenge was definitely earning everyone’s trust in a business that had let people down so much in the past. To let people know that, ‘Hey, we are here and we are not going anywhere’. You will get great service and hopefully be comfortable and not feel like you have to get a second mortgage just to go out for an evening. You won’t have to worry about coming to watch a movie and finding it unexpectedly closed. It has taken some time but I think we are there. People know what to expect and look forward to it.

What do you feel is the biggest regulatory burden currently facing your business?

“Like any business you have payroll. It’s always the biggest expense and an expense that you cannot earn back (like concessions). But other than the obvious, definitely the cost of the movies themselves. The whole string of bills that come with each movie is crazy. They aren’t kidding that the only way to make money at a movie theatre is from the concessions.”

Are there any changes you would like to see regarding business regulations or laws?

“Luckily, this new business that I am in does not put me face to face with much of this. There is the stuff that affects every business no matter what business it is and there is never going to be a way around that but, that’s pretty much it for me. I have no corporations that I have to answer to anymore, no one really bothers me. It’s great!”



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