



CASEY RIFFE | THE TIMES

Katelyn Lipps, 12, left, and Delaine Gorncien, 6, spar Wednesday in Union Township in an inflatable ring with inflatable gloves, both rented from POPO's. Mark and Danielle Popovich have started POPO's, a business that rents out equipment for parties.

THE PARTY PEOPLE

POPO's rents out everything from karaoke to inflatables

BY SHARON PORTA
Times Correspondent

Although they've always loved a party, Mark and Danielle Popovich's business, POPO's Original Party Organizers, started in a rather untraditional way. Instead of running out and starting a party company, their business got its start when they tried to think of other users for the 20-by-20-foot tent they only used twice a year.

"We thought we would just try and see if we could rent out the tent, so we ran an ad offering to furnish the tent and set it up for \$50," Mark said. "We got so many bookings, we bought a second tent. After that, we were at a kids party that had a moonwalk. We talked to the guy and he offered to sell it to us."

That was only the beginning. After acquiring a loan from Centier Bank, they began adding to their collection. POPO's now has an assortment of tents, tables, chairs, moonwalks, other inflatables, entertainment, dunk tanks, karaoke, casino equip-

POPO's Original Party Organizers, Inc.

- **Phone:** (219) 759-0033 or (866) YES4FUN
- **Owners:** Mark and Danielle Popovich
- **Open since:** 1996
- **Number of employees:** 12 part-time
- **Type of business:** Full service party resource which rents tents, tables, chairs, inflatables, balloon sculptures and entertainment equipment
- **Web site:** www.poposparties.com

ment and more.

"There are times we made mistakes with our purchases, but we have made many good ones," Mark said. "We put out a survey to see what people want, and we don't buy licensed characters. We buy things that are plain and bright. We want everything to be adaptable."

POPO's services 800 events a year, with their customers ranging from the Illinois line to South Bend, to Michigan and to Lafayette.

"We have everything from obstacle courses to concessions,

and I think that's why we've been successful," Mark said. "People like one-stop shopping."

However, there is competition in the business.

"With this economy, people are always looking for ways to make extra money," he said. "But not all businesses of this type are reputable. Sometimes the equipment is not clean or there is no insurance. We have good quality equipment and pay quite a bit for insurance."

The business is somewhat seasonal, with graduations and proms comprising most of the business. However, POPO's is trying to break into the corporate end.

"With corporate budgets down, people want more bang for their buck," Mark said.

"People are also having more parties at home and they are looking for new things. We add to our inventory each year. We pride ourselves on being able to bring people quality fun and entertainment at very competitive prices with a focus on customer satisfaction."