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## Starting a new company can be murder

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Mar 26 2009, 11:17 AM · **UPDATED**

With the wide array of passive entertainment options now available, a new Port Orchard business provides an interactive breath of fresh air.

“Many people have become dull and aloof,” Rae Walaska said about Murder n’Mayhem, which she founded this year.



Rae Walaska, pictured here in detective getup, stages murder mystery parties from her base in Port Orchard.  
Charlie Bermant

“This stimulates creativity,” she said, “and gives people

Walaska, 28, stages parties with a twist. First, the people gather in a restaurant or private home.

Then there is a murder, which usually happens offstage, but it is established that the guilty person is one of those present.

The rest of the evening is spent solving the crime, through clues that have been sprinkled about.

Walaska, a Navy wife, came up with the idea last fall when she was looking to start a business that wouldn’t interfere with her family life (she has a 1-year-old son).

She leveraged her background in hospitality and event planning to develop a template for a murder mystery party.

She writes a “script” for each party, which can consist of detailed dialogue or allow for a degree of improvisation.

The murderer is selected, and each of the characters is given certain clues that others must discover in order to solve the mystery.

The plot links between the characters, and there is always a secondary crime that can confuse or enhance the situation depending on your point of view.

Walaska casts the roles depending on the size and nature of the group, taking personal preferences into consideration. For instance, someone who is a bit introverted might not want to take center stage, but that can backfire.

“Recently there was a person who sat in the corner and said nothing all night,” Walaska said. “Because she was so quiet everyone thought she was the murderer.”

Depending on the number of participants, an event can last from two to four hours.

Walaska writes each party to fit, but cuts and pastes certain plot and character elements to work for each situation.

Her expenses are her time, and she can keep her prices low as a result.

For example, she charges about \$9 per person for a standard party. The cost of food and renting a room are in addition to this, but the idea fits several possible models. The host can supply food and entertainment, guests can pay for food while entertainment is free, or the whole evening can be a fundraiser for specific cause.

The customer defines the event, and can request certain plot points or get involved in character selection and development. For example, the home where Hidden Treasures Bed & Breakfast is has an interesting history, and will be incorporated into a series of planned Murder Mystery events beginning in May.

And since she writes all of the mysteries herself, there are no limitations as to number of guests, theme, who did the deed and the murder itself.

“If they want it, I can do it,” she said. “People want to be bad, and I can allow them to live out this desire without any penalties.”

The company is already branching out with Hints n’ Hunts, a children-themed party service that omits the murder but hangs on to the thrills.

After that, she will write the script for the annual Port Orchard Murder Mystery Weekend, scheduled for September.

“I love the freedom to create that this job gives me,” she said. “I can do this anywhere, so if my husband is transferred I can take this business with me. And I could expand and become the Mary Kay of Murder Mystery Weekends.”

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