



PartyTime Machines



Founded in 1985, PartyTime Machines has been bringing people together through food and fun, and helping raise money for good causes, for more than two decades. Originally started as a small operation providing yogurt machines to cafeterias, Party Time Machines now rents a wide variety of food and beverage machines, as well as generators, for schools, fundraisers, corporate events, carnivals, and private parties, to ensure that your event is a smashing success.

Owner Ren Calderhead is a former Marine with a big heart and unique perspective on life. "I went from multimillionaire to homeless at age 60," he says. "But I'm also a grandpa and my daughters are teachers. I feel that helping is my job." In that regard, he is committed to helping schools raise funds to supplement their budgets, because he knows what it's like to struggle.

Ren's machines had been in the cafeterias of some of Silicon Valley's most profitable high tech corporations, "invisibly" linked to their success. As long as those companies were doing well, so was Ren. And then everything went crazy. Powerful high tech companies began folding like lawn chairs. Quirky "only in Silicon Valley" employee perks like soft serve ice cream machines in the cafeterias became the subject of woeful "remember when" conversations as budgets were slashed to the bare bones. Someone shot out the wheels on the Fun Bus and it all came to a grinding halt like the traffic on Highway 101 at 4 p.m. on a Friday.

But Ren dusted himself off, took a look at what he still had, and rebounded from the Dot Com Bust by reinventing it all

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again. With an extensive inventory of equipment, he began renting it out. Now anyone could have machines that served margaritas, slushies, smoothies, coffee and mocha crèmes at their next party. Or how about soft serve, popcorn, snokones, cotton candy, soft pretzels, nachos and hot dogs for their school carnival? Ren could even rent chocolate fountains for decadent, elegant entertaining. That was all well and good, but after seeing so many schools fall on hard times the same way he had, he wanted to give back to his community.

So he developed a program that allows schools to rent equipment at a discounted rate so they can keep even more of the money they raise through special events. He doesn't want to be making a huge profit while schools are struggling to buy books and other necessities for their students, so Ren keeps prices low. In fact, he says, "I've been in business since 1985 and I've only had a \$10 price increase." He believes that if you treat people well and with respect, they will reciprocate.

Ren knows the days of frivolous Dot Com spending are over and he's not going to get rich renting snokone machines, but that's not his motivation. He prefers to see schools succeed in providing high quality education to students who may end up in his shoes one day. He laughs that his old fashioned values like using humor and common courtesy, and wanting to give back to the community sometimes seem out of place in the electronic age. But he is quick to add, "So we're not good business people. We're human beings."

(by Donna Bush)