

'Where the biggies leave off...'

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## Holiday gift for that special millennial? Try a Puzzle Room pass.

By Michael Wilson

Many of us face the same quandary every December: what to give our millennial-age kids and grandkids for a holiday gift?

They've made it clear they don't want STUFF. Perhaps they live in a 450-sq.-ft. micro-apartment, or they're flying back after the holidays to wherever they live and everything'll have to fit into a backpack. Or perhaps they just prefer to live clean and lean.

The little white envelopes with a few crisp bills inside are always nice, but rather unimaginative; we did that last year, and the year before. Besides, many of our millennials are earning way more than we ever did at their age.

Here's an idea for this year: surprise your millennials with a gift voucher to a Puzzle Room.

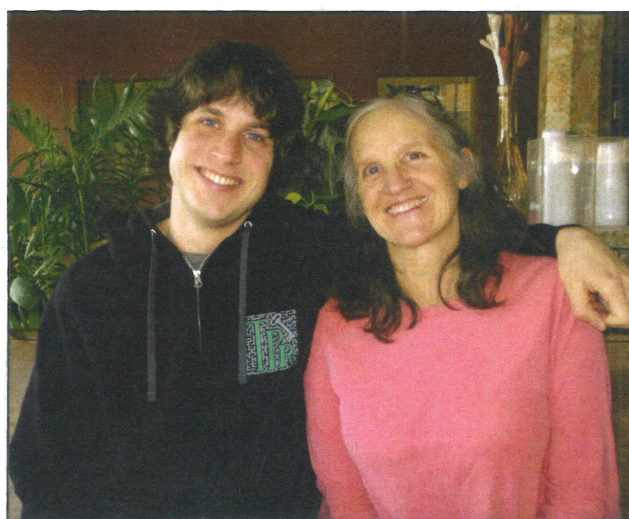
### Puzzle Rooms? Escape Rooms? What?

Our idea of a good time may be watching a rerun of "Holiday Inn," but for our millennials it's all about embracing highly interactive activities that let people have fun working together to solve fanciful challenges, according to Lowry Hill resident Jamie Fassett-Carman, proprietor of Trapped Puzzle Rooms at 2717 Lyndale Avenue S., 708 N. 1st Street (in the Itasca building), and 651 Snelling Avenue S. in St. Paul.

[Disclosure: my family and the Fassett-Carman family have been friends for years. Our sons were classmates at Barton.]

Fassett-Carman opened the Uptown Trapped Puzzle Rooms in June 2015 with his mother, Karen Fassett-Carman, as business partner. Family members and friends have helped with ideas and support along the way. Fassett-Carman's cousin Tyler Mahoney has been a valued member of the creative team.

The Uptown location was the Twin Cities' second Escape Room. There are now scores of Escape Rooms all across the metro and around the state. All major cities in the U.S., Canada, and Europe have dozens of Escape Rooms, Fassett-Carman says --



Lowry Hill resident Jamie Fassett-Carman is the creative force behind Trapped Puzzle Rooms, along with his mother and business partner Karen Fassett-Carman. Puzzle rooms (also called escape rooms) are hugely popular with millennials. (Photo and caption: Michael Wilson.)

hundreds in Toronto alone.

A puzzle room, Fassett-Carman explains, is a room (or a series of rooms -- three at the Lyndale Avenue location) in which a series of puzzles and clues are hidden, along with secret compartments, locked doors, and other thematic props. Teams come and work together to "solve" the room in under the time limit -- typically one hour.

"Our puzzle rooms require ingenuity, wit, a sharp eye, and teamwork," Fassett-Carman says. "You and your team work together to search for clues, solve puzzles, crack codes, and unravel the mystery before time runs out."

### Put your thinking caps on!

"Escape room" is by far the more common term, but Fassett-Carman much prefers "puzzle room."

"'Escape Room' makes people think of dungeons, or the movie 'Saw', and that can turn people off of the experience before they even start," he says. "Also,

our rooms are not really focused on an actual 'escape.' We keep the doors unlocked, let people leave, go to the bathroom, come back in, etc.. Instead, we focus on completing some kind of objective while in the room. In 'The Heist,' for example, people need to steal a painting. In 'A Very Potter Escape Room,' their goal is to find the Elder Wand. In 'Spies vs Spies' they need to find the mole in the spy organization. So, 'escaping' is largely irrelevant. It's the path of puzzles and clues that leads you to completing your objective that matters."

Starting to get the idea? Go to [www.trappedpuzzlerooms.com](http://www.trappedpuzzlerooms.com) to learn more. Go to [www.facebook.com/playtrapped/](https://www.facebook.com/playtrapped/) for lots of pictures and reviews. But be warned: it looks like so much fun that we'll want to sign our baby-boomer selves up too.

Groups of at least four are recommended, at a cost of \$24 to \$39 per person. The FAQ page on the Trapped Puzzle Rooms website explains things very well. Click on "Book Now" to either sign up for a specific date, time, and place, or to purchase a "generic gift voucher" which you can print out and put in, yes, a little white envelope for present time.

Puzzled? Call 612-225-9500 (Uptown), 612-208-0218 (North Loop), or 651-760-3495 (St. Paul) for help and advice. You may have to leave a message, but they'll get right back to you.

And if you want to impress your millennial kids and grandkids even more with how "with it" you are, ask them about other crazy-popular millennial pursuits like WhirlyBall, which combines basketball, hockey, lacrosse, and bumper-cars. Or bubble football/bubble soccer -- playing football while encased in an inflated torus, similar to a zorb, which covers the player's upper body and head. Or footgolf/soccer golf, a precision sport in which players kick a soccer ball into a cup in as few shots as possible.

And may all your holidays be bright.