

Tinley resident and mother raise money to open romance novel bookstore

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The thought has crossed all of people's minds at one point or another: What would one do if they won the lottery?

Roseann and Marissa Backlin haven't struck it rich — yet — but they aren't waiting around to make their dreams come true either. The Tinley Park mother and daughter team are working to open Love's Sweet Arrow, a bookstore dedicated to romance novels.

"It all started last summer when the lottery was really big and everyone had lottery fever and [were asking] 'What would you do if you won?' We kept on saying, 'If we won, we would open a romance bookstore.' And then it became, why

are we waiting?," Roseann said. "The odds of us winning the lottery [are slim], so we've just been working on it for the past eight or nine months and now we're where we're at now."

The team is seeking the help of family, friends, neighbors and romance novel lovers far and wide to help make their dream a reality. They launched a Kickstarter campaign with the goal of raising \$76,000 — to cover inventory, overhead, supplies and everything else needed to open — by March 10.

As of presstime, the Backlins have already raised \$9,005 but must raise all of the money in order to receive any of it.

Their goal, Marissa said, is larger than just opening a romance bookstore, which would be only the

third of its kind in the entire world, joining The Ripped Bodice in Los Angeles and Rendezvous The Romance Bookstore in Melbourne, Australia. They want to create an environment where book lovers from all walks of life can find something they like.

"I've been working on a list [of books]. We are going to order books that we like, but our main goal is to be a bookstore that any person — regardless of race, ethnicity, religion or anything, really — can walk in and find a book for them," Marissa said. "We want to be as inclusive as possible just because romance already has a stigma. It's hard to find romance in a regular independent bookstore or even Barnes and Noble."

Roseann has been reading

romance novels all of her life, inheriting her love of the genre from her mother and seemingly passing it along to her daughter, Marissa, too. In fact, Marissa used to steal her mom's books and read them in the bathroom when she was just 12 — until she got caught, that is.

The mother-daughter duo laugh about it now and it wasn't that Roseann disapproved of what she was reading, but rather wondered if she was mature enough to handle it. Marissa resumed reading romance novels in high school and her love for the genre blossomed from there.

"We like the fact that it has everything tied in a knot at the end. The couple

works through the plotline and then it's the happily ever after — it's kind of nice," she said. "You go in reading a romance novel and you know what to expect, you know everything is going to be OK, so you can get through everything knowing it's going to be OK. When you read other genres, you don't really know if it's going to be OK or not."

Both Marissa and Roseann currently work in education as a special education teacher and operations manager for a school cafeteria, respectively, so being small business owners will be a big change of pace for them both, but they are excited for their next chapter.

They plan on having dif-

ferent authors in for book signings and said several have even reached out to them asking when they will open and if they can send them books to vet for their store.

"We'd like to think that we'd like to get to sit around and read all day, but we know it'll be more than that," Roseann laughed. "I think [the best part] is that we just get to share our love of having people come in who are looking for a specific book and helping them find it."

To donate to the Backlin's Kickstarter, visit <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/lovesweetarrow/loves-sweet-arrow-a-romance-only-bookstore/>.

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Marissa Backlin (left), of Tinley Park, and her mother, Roseann, of Moree, are currently raising money to open a romance novel bookstore called Love's Sweet Arrow in Tinley Park. PHOTO SUBMITTED