

AGENT ISSUES AGENT LIFE

Modern Family Travels duo growing their family and their focus

By Jamie Biesiada   | Feb 04, 2021

Sarah Lee, left, and Elizabeth Belcher of Modern Family Travels.

Las Vegas-based Modern Family Travels specializes in travel for LGBTQ individuals. At least, it does if a client needs that specialty, but its owners -- partners Sarah Lee and Elizabeth Belcher -- hope to see a world where that kind of specialization becomes unnecessary.

"I do believe that equality is on the rise," Belcher said. "I think it will be an uphill battle for a long time, but I just think that, in a lot of ways, things are improving, and we're excited to be a part of that. I think eventually this will be a nonissue. There won't need to be a niche for so many things that we experience right now."

Lee started working in the travel industry about seven years ago. Her background is in finance, and she decided to try dabbling in selling travel. It turned out she had a knack for it, and she made the switch to become a full-time advisor.

She went through the Brownell Mentoring Program with Birmingham, Ala.-based Brownell Travel in 2014 and, after two years in business, hit \$1 million in sales.

In 2018, Lee met Belcher in New York. Belcher's background is in healthcare planning; she went to school for interior design, then got involved in architecture and hospital design. She had been doing that for around 10 years and, like Lee, was starting to get bored with her career choice.

The couple began to travel together and, in the fall of 2019, Belcher also made the switch to selling travel full time.

Belcher said the services Modern Family Travels offers are enhanced by sharing with clients the travel experiences she and Lee had before the pandemic. Lee spent at least half the year on the road even before she met Belcher, and the two maintained that pace after they met.

They also have the experience of being LGBTQ travelers themselves and offering their perspectives to LGBTQ clients.

Belcher said they and their clients are "just looking for the same thing everyone else wants: To be treated like everyone else. It's nothing special. Some clients do want more of a catered itinerary, to check out LGBTQ spaces, but a lot of people just want to be like everyone else."

Lesbians tend to be underrepresented in travel -- especially in the luxury space -- compared with gay white men, Belcher said, but that is a divide she sees lessening going forward.

"We believe that as society improves and as wage gaps are closing that this market is just going to continue to grow," she said.



The agency is also focused on another niche valuable to some clients: pet-friendly destinations. Lee and Belcher bring their goldendoodle, Pintxo, wherever they can (his current favorite is St. Barts, Belcher said).

Early on, Modern Family Travels' clients were largely people Lee knew from the finance world. That base has grown to people all

Lee and Belcher with their dog, Pintxo, on St. Barts.

over the world in all age ranges and backgrounds. Some are LGBTQ travelers,

some aren't.

Before the pandemic, Modern Family Travels sent clients to destinations all over the world. However, since the pandemic began, Belcher said, Modern Family hasn't actively encouraged travel among its client base. While the chance of clients getting Covid-19 might be low, they don't want to risk their clients' health or overburden healthcare systems in other areas.

But Belcher and Lee are hopeful for the future, when they will add another dimension of personal experiences to offer clients: family travel.

The couple welcomed their first child, Eliza Yuet Wing Lee, on Oct. 27. They plan on traveling with her as much as possible. Apart from the inherent joy in sharing their passion, they are also excited about the prospect of sharing their experiences of planning family trips with their clients.

Belcher and Lee have already applied for Eliza's first passport.

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