

Fascinating Folks *of* Delaware



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One-year anniversary marks huge growth for Sara's Dream Resale

By Jennifer Eisenbart
STAFF WRITER

Sara's Dream Resale opened at 1333 Racine St. in Delavan on April Fool's Day in 2022, but the results have been no joke.

The store's first anniversary was April 1 and owner Sara Smith can't seem to quite believe the growth she's experienced.

"It's going good," she said while celebrating. "It's surprising how fast it's going to take off. We're starting to look for a second place, because this one's so packed."

The one-year anniversary celebration featured Delavan Mayor Ryan Schroeder, free hot dogs, chips and a soda for the first 100 visitors, sales, children's activities, if the weather cooperates, and prizes.

"It's been a good dream," Smith said. The store bears her name and her dream was opening a resale shop.

She and her father went into business last spring. A Beloit native, she moved back to Delavan to be with her father. The store was the result of finding a place where he could help her out.

Smith said her mother would go thrift shopping when she was a child, and there were times that stores would make the two feel guilty about looking for bargains.

Her stated goal last year was to create a resale shop people wanted to return to.

"I want them to feel happy," she said at the time. "I just want to be able to help others."

To say the store has something for everyone might be an understatement.

While Smith said her best business is in knick-knacks – she said she has numerous knowledgeable buyers who



purchase and then resell them – her inventory is constantly changing.

"It changes all the time," Smith said. "Every Tuesday, we're putting new things out."

"The knock-knacks," she added, "people just buy them like crazy, and we have a good turnover rate."

The store also features a wide variety of clothing, furniture (including a number of stylish lamps), baby clothes, blankets, toys, puzzles, stuffed animals and wall decorations.

Right now, while Smith will accept donations, she is not accepting additional consigners unless they offer something new because the store is so full.

The consigners take up about 30% of the store, Smith estimated, while donations fill the rest. Consigners receive 60% of the money earned from a sale, with the store keeping the other 40%.

The way the store is filled is why Smith and her father are working on expansion.

"My dad says Sara's 2 is coming soon," Smith said. "We just need to find the right building."

She is also willing to help out those in need of a hand up. Smith said she watches the Pay It Forward Walworth County Facebook page for opportunities to help, and has done donations to Valley of the Kings Sanctuary and Retreat of used blankets and animal food.

She has also donated leashes and collars to Lakeland Animal Shelter.



top: Sara's Dream Resale at 1333 Racine St. in Delavan, celebrated its one-year anniversary in April. Shown here is owner Sara Smith with the inventory of her store. **at right:** Smith says that knick knacks like these are her best sellers. **on the cover:** The color guard from Delavan American Legion Post 95 leads the 2022 Memorial Day Parade.

Rosewood

By **Sandra Landen Machaj**
CORRESPONDENT

For Mark and Gretch Hladish, musicians and owners of Rosewood in Delavan, music has always been an important part of their lives. So opening the venue in 2015 where they had total control over the music program was a dream come true.

Rosewood, 2484 Highway O, Delavan, is a unique place where guests can enjoy a fine meal, excellent musical programs, and meander the beautiful property. Rosewood is managed by the Hladish's where the former Millie's Restaurant was located.

Millie's Restaurant and Shopping Village, which had been in the area for about 48 years, was a favorite place for visitors to come for breakfast, to enjoy the property and to take in some shopping at numerous small shops located on the property. For many, it was a destination for a day's activity.

Owned by Bill and Marie Slater, the restaurant was also a favorite place for groups to visit on day trips for lunch and a music program. In 2012, Millie's closed temporarily but then never reopened as a deal with the expected new owner fell through.

Revived by music

For Mark and Gretch, the closing of Millie's was a disappointment, as they had performed there from 2006 until its closing in 2012 presenting a variety of musical programs.

"Music has been our lives," Gretch said. "Mark began playing the piano at the age of 4 and took on the violin at 6. He was the youngest to play with the Milwaukee Symphony at the age of 7. He has continued to perform, write and arrange music throughout the years and today is able to play 21 different instruments."

Gretch also has spent her life performing music. She was the youngest of six children and said she knew at a young age that music was her passion. She enjoyed performing and would sing and play the guitar. By the time she was 14, she was writing her own music and was involved in the youth choir at church. She has performed professionally at many local area venues and events throughout the years.

But as has often been said, the closing of one door can lead to the opening of another and sometimes, an even better opportunity. It certainly seems to have played out that way for the couple.

"When the Millie's property was going up for auction, we were approached and told to get our business plan together to reopen an event space here. And so we did," Gretch said.

There was a lot of work to be done to turn the building into a high-end event space but they were up to the task.

"The building was remodeled using



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above: The grounds around Rosewood are beautiful any time of the year: in spring – when trees are sprouting to life; summer – when everything is in full bloom; fall – when the leaves turn to autumn colors, and in winter – when a soft covering of snow creates a scenic winter wonderland. **top:** Rosewood Dinner Theater in Delavan serves as wedding venue throughout the year, offering its "signature atmosphere" and one-stop wedding shop of services.

many of the authentic pieces that were on the property. Gorgeous vaulted wooden ceilings with curved beams were placed in the dining room. Beautiful chandeliers were hung throughout the space,” Gretch explained. “This was a community, grass roots project using local craftsman. When it was time to purchase new furniture, everything was shipped local.”

The goal was to create a music venue, where visitors would come to enjoy fine quality music in a beautiful surrounding. They also have successfully planned a variety of events to attract different groups of visitors.

Something for everyone

While the building was being revamped, Mark and Gretch were hard at work creating new and exciting music shows to appeal to a wide array of audiences and offer their guests the best in musical theater in the area. In addition, they continued to record CDs and currently have 20 available for purchase at the shows or through the website.

One of the offerings popular with groups seeking a day activity is a luncheon show at Rosewood. Groups visit from a variety of locations and one group recently came from South Dakota. They generally arrive by bus and are taken into the bar area where cocktails or soft drinks may be purchased. At 12:30 p.m. the guests move into the dining room and enjoy lunch prepared by the Rosewood’s Executive Chef John Schnupp.

Farm-to-table

The food served at Rosewood is all farm-to-table using the freshest local ingredients available under the direction of Schnupp, a graduate of the Culinary Institute of America. The meal may be plated and served at the table or for some events, served buffet style. Menus vary depending on the current availability of fresh ingredients.

“For the buffet station, there is a pasta station where chef creates a fresh pasta dish to order, a carving station for a meat choice, two vegetable choices and two starch choices for the meal,” Gretch explained.

Following the meal, guests move to the listening room where they enjoy a musical presentation created by Mark and Gretch or an invited musician. The room can hold 90 to 100 guests and is a state of the art music venue equipped with the latest in lighting and sound technology to offer the best performance sound.

“We have the latest in sound and light technology in the room,” Gretch said. “Since we are wireless, we can move around the room making the show more personal to the guests.”

While the couple does provide some of the musical performances, other performers can also be enjoyed with solo as well as group acts from Milwaukee, Madison and Chicago often found on the Rosewood stage. The schedule of performers changes frequently so those interested in attending an event are advised to check the website www.rosewoodwi.com/tickets for a list current shows available.

Wide variety of events

A variety of programs are available including ones suitable for corporate events, group dinners, birthdays, anniversaries, weddings, cabaret shows, class reunions, and fundraisers and celebrations of life. Proms for local high



above: The main banquet room is an elegant space featuring high vaulted ceilings finished in wood as well as beautiful wooden beams. The venue provides adequate space for more than 100 guests. **below:** Mark and Gretch Hladish entertain an audience in the beautiful performance theater at Rosewood.

SUBMITTED PHOTOS Fascinating Folks

schools – such as Big Foot High School and Williams Bay High School – have also been held at Rosewood.

“Whatever event you would like to hold, we will work with you to be sure it is perfect,” Gretch said, adding that game show events are also “very popular because of the state-of-the-art technology that we use.”

Likewise, Christmas shows have become a popular seasonal event with about 20 shows presented this past holiday season.

“When we started, we thought we might do a few weddings. To our surprise the wedding business grew quickly, perhaps due to the beauty of the area and the fact that we have the largest dance floor in the county at 1,000 square feet. Weddings can be held outdoors in the gazebo or indoors,” Gretch explained.

“We also make it easy to plan a wedding here as everything is available – from music and food to flowers and the small details such as chair covers, colored uplighting and music on site. Our Event Planner, Dori Beck – who has had extensive experience planning weddings and other events – will lead the way through the many challenges of creating a successful event whether it is a wedding, corporate event, or family event such as an anniversary or family reunion.”

Take time to meander

While at Rosewood visitors are encouraged to stop by the gift shop, which features an eclectic collection of unique Wisconsin items, accessories and treats. On some occasions, one can even find freshly baked bread by Chef Schnupp available in the shop.

Guests are also encouraged to take a few minutes and walk the beautiful grounds. Gretch recommends that any quilters in a group make sure to stop in the Stitchery and view the extensive quilting supplies available. The Stitchery is the oldest quilt shop in the State of Wisconsin, according to Gretch, and a favorite of many quilters.



Located in the same building as Rosewood is the Fire 2 Fork restaurant, though they are two separate businesses. Fire 2 Fork is open Thursday to Saturday from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. It’s quite popular so those interested in dining there are advised to make their reservation in advance.

The food at Fire 2 Fork is also all locally sourced and includes a variety of choices based on what is available at the time. They offer pizza cooked in a wood fired oven along with a variety of large and small plates, salads and burgers – all freshly prepared. On Fridays, there is a fish fry and bake.

Schnupp and his two sons – also chefs at Rosewood – own Fire 2 Fork restaurant and they work together to prepare the food for both.

Summer fun

“In the summer, from Memorial Day to the end of September visit us at Rosewood on Monday nights and enjoy Sunset on the Patio, a relaxing outdoor musical show. This has been a very successful show with it being sold out most Mondays especially if the weather is nice. In addition to music

there is simple grilled fare that can be purchased and the mixologist is available for those who would like to enjoy a drink while they enjoy the music,” Mark said.

“Admission is only \$10. If you haven’t yet attended one of our Sunsets on the Patio shows, be sure to visit us this summer. You will enjoy the evening outdoors listening to beautiful music,” he added.

Mark said he and Gretch share the joy of creating a variety of social and musical events at a quiet, exclusive place – and it has been well received.

“We are living out a creative life, one song at a time and loving every moment of it,” Mark said. “We are an event-driven business and are open when we have a creative event on the schedule. However, there usually is someone around for those who prefer to purchase tickets to our programs in person rather than through the website.”

Rosewood is at 2484 Highway O South, Delavan. For more information, including current shows available and to purchase tickets, call 262-725-7286 or visit the website at www.rosewoodwi.com.

In tune with herself

Local singer takes a run on NBC's *The Voice* after musical upbringing

By Jennifer Eisenbart • STAFF WRITER



It can be a little hard to believe that Rachel Christine Gebel was once a shy little girl. The 22-year-old who has been belting out popular classics like Alanis Morissette's "Uninvited" and Maggie Rogers' "Light On" once got so nervous, she didn't even think she could sing in front of a crowd.

In fact, there is one moment that stands out to her mother, Micki, and to Rachel a testament of what kind of challenges Rachel would one day power through.

When Orange Crush kicked off its unique story in 2009 – the rock and roll band was THE pep band at Burlington High School basketball games – Rachel was singing backup vocals for her older sister, Micah.

After Micah graduated, Rachel was the natural choice to follow her sister as lead vocalist.

And yet, on the first night Rachel

was supposed to be lead, she grabbed her mother as she walked into the gym, and pulled her out into the hall.

"She said, 'I can't do this,'" Micki recalled. "The band is tuning up. I said, 'Rachel, just get that first note out, and you'll be fine."

"She's just been sailing ever since that opportunity."

What the future brings for Rachel is still up in the air. She survived *The Voice*'s blind auditions, hooking up with "Team Kelly" – pop vocal star Kelly Clarkson.

In the following two weeks, Gebel survived the Battle Rounds of the show, going against a singer virtually everyone wanted on their team, JB Somers.

Regardless, though, of what happened on the show (more on that later) it's been a lifetime of music for Rachel Christine, as well as her mother and her sister.

"You know it's a chance of a lifetime," Micki said. "There's not too many people who get that opportunity. It still blows me away."

Family history

The two sisters come from a musical family. Micki has performed in a number of different bands, with her brothers throughout her adult life.

When asked about the family genes, Micki admitted there had to be something to it.

"Most people say it's in the genes," she explained. "And I think there's something to that. When you hear families sing, there's just something about the way voices blend. It's like butter."

And for the two sisters, music began at a very young age. While Mom was practicing in the basement with the family band, Micah and Rachel started singing with each other.

"I must've been 5 and we would do karaoke at home in the house together," Rachel said. "It clicked. She taught me harmonies and we blended well."

"They just had these voices. So pure, so mature," said their mother. "And as shy as Rachel was, she liked to sing."

The two grew up with vocal music, both learning how to play the keyboard as Micki bartered lessons for work for Jane and Scott Carson's book store.

The two ended up following each other in two very important gigs. Micah won the Riverport Chorus' DivaQuest competition when she was a freshman in high school in 2011, singing "Blue Skies" by Ella Fitzgerald.

"I wanted to finish second so I could perform the next year," commented Micah about her somewhat surprising win. "

Rachel was 11 when Micah won and was intrigued.

"I looked up to her like she was a celebrity," Rachel said. On her first try at the event, Rachel finished third, singing "Ain't No Other Man," by Christina Aguilera.

The following year, Rachel showed up with "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road," a take on the Sara Bareilles' vision.

That time, Rachel won. Her biggest cheerleader was her sister.

"Winning a few years later was the best feeling in the world and I felt like I made her proud by following her footsteps," said Rachel, something Micah confirmed. "In the video of me singing my song that night, you can hear her in the background going, 'do yo thang, honey!'"

The two then were the back-to-back lead singers for Orange Crush – Micah was the lead when the group started in 2010 school year, while Rachel was the lead when the group ended seven years later.

Rather than providing a traditional pep band for BHS home basketball games, the school – led by teachers Ron Pedersen and Rob Stoughton – put together a house rock band.

The two said that the experience was invaluable.

"We owe Rod and Ron a lot. They taught us a lot about working with a band and that was their goal for the band," Micah said. "I think we learned a lot about ourselves in Orange Crush."

Added Rachel, "It was such a blessing to get to be a part of something like that at such a young age. You learn stage presence, stage banter, sooo many songs, and more."

Gebel Girls

Watching Micah and Rachel interact now, it's clear there's support between the two.

That has led the two to their next endeavor, an act called the Gebel Girls. What started as a solo act for Micah turned into a chance for the two sisters together.

The harmonies that the two worked on together as children still synced as adults. Now the two have every weekend between now and the end of the year booked as "The Gebel Girls," performing at various restaurants, taverns and events around the area.

"We've both been kind of doing the same thing, and then we both kind of went our separate ways for a while," Micah said. Micah was singing at an event, and Rachel came in and harmonized a little. "And we were like, why didn't we do this before?"

Ironically, the two work at one of the mainstays of performance venues – The



above: Rachel Gebel, who went as Rachel Christine on the show, belts out "Uninvited" by Alanis Morissette during the blind auditions of NBC's *The Voice*. Gebel made it through two rounds of the show, after a musical career that has seen her follow in the footsteps of her mother and sister. **at right:** Rachel has a smile on her face while being interviewed by the judges after the blind audition on *The Voice*, knowing she would advance in the show.

PHOTO COURTESY CASEY DURKIN/NBC
Fascinating Folks

LOCAL SINGER • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

Delavan Lake Store. Rachel is the daytime bartender while Micah is the evening bartender.

It was a slow evening last year that led to Rachel watching *The Voice* while at work. Intrigued, Rachel sent in a pair of audition videos – one of her singing “Goodbye, Yellow Brick Road” and another of “Anyone” by Demi Lovato.

“I said, it’s a one-in-a-million chance, let’s see what happens,” Micah remembered. “Then she showed me the two auditions videos.”

Micah wasn’t the only one impressed. Rachel was immediately invited to California for the blind auditions, getting a chance to skip part of the audition process.

The rest, as they say, is history.

The Voice

It’s been an interesting spring for Rachel Christine, the stage name she is using. While the show was filmed in the fall of last year, episodes of Season 23 of *The Voice* just began airing this spring.

That meant Rachel had to keep a very hard secret – that not only had she turned two chairs during the blind auditions, but she also ended up getting to work with her childhood idol, Clarkson.

Rachel said that she was fully aware of when Chance hit his button first, but she kept hoping Clarkson would push her button as well.

“I just had to have her,” Rachel said. “I was so excited that she turned around on the last note.”

From there, another week passed before the Battle Round between her and JB aired. Clarkson made a difficult decision, choosing Rachel over Somers.

Her reasoning had to do with the depth of

quality she heard in Rachel’s voice.

“I feel like she’s a consistent singer,” Clarkson said. “She has this incredible tone.”

For eight glittering, gratifying, glorious weeks, Rachel Christine Gebel got to experience life as a star.

The Burlington native and Delavan resident saw her time on NBC’s *The Voice* come to an end May 1, as the singer came up short of advancing out of the playoff rounds to the live show rounds.

Gebel offered up a summary of her time on the show on Facebook:

“That’s a wrap for Rae on *The Voice*,” Gebel wrote last week. She later added: “Now that my *Voice* era is officially over, I’d like to say THANK YOU. To everyone who watched and supported this entire journey. You have made this experience so incredible. Blinds, Battles, Knockouts, and Playoffs the support was unbelievable.

“To be given a platform like this as a singer, to represent Wisconsin, and encourage other small town singers to put themselves out there! If you’re thinking about trying out for a singing show, I can personally say *The Voice* was WORTH IT. Again and alwayssss, thank you, with all my heart, THANK YOU.”

Gebel recorded the show out in California last fall, and had a chance to perform four different songs on national TV.

In the knockout rounds, Gebel performed Fleetwood Mac classic “Rhiannon,” but lost to Holly Brand on her coach Kelly Clarkson’s decision.

Gebel was then picked up as a steal by Blake Shelton – his last ever on the show – and performed the song “The Only Exception” by Paramore. While Gebel earned praise for the song, her Team Blake teammates Noivas and Grace West advanced.



Rachel and Micah Gebel perform together as the “Gebel Girls” at River Jack’s in Elkhorn recently.

JENNIFER EISENBART *Fascinating Folks*

Gebel’s mother, Micki Gebel, offered some insight on her daughter’s time on the show. She said that while the contestants were technically in competition with one another, the support for each other was certainly apparent.

“I think that’s one of the biggest takeaways I have from that particular show is the competition was only there for each of them with their self,” she explained. “It didn’t seem to be with each other.”

Micki said that with Rachel’s act with her sister, Micah, taking off (*The Gebel Girls*), she is thrilled to see both her daughters thriving.

“I never get tired of hearing those two sing together,” Micki said. “Micah has an amazing voice. I hope the world gets to hear her as well. And Rachel hopes the same thing for her.”

She added that Rachel really wants to work in music production.

“She’s one of the most creative people I’ve ever known,” Micki said. “And I always tell her she’s one of the funniest people I’ve ever known.”

“She loves to sing. That’s her happy place, but for her career, I think she wants to be behind the scenes doing the writing, doing the producing.”



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Satisfying *the* Sweet Tooth

Pastries by Chad offers numerous different sweet treats for a variety of events

By **Jennifer Eisenbart**
STAFF WRITER

A chance playdate at the park gave Chad Visger a unique opportunity in 2020.

As Jeff Hufford began the work to start up Turtle Lake Tap and Grill, Visger met him when their children were playing together at Phoenix Park in Delavan.

A chef at a resort in Lake Geneva, the two talked – and then didn't talk again until 2021.

By then, Hufford was looking for a general manager for Turtle Lake Tap and Grill and Visger was looking for a commercial kitchen for his pastry business.

It was a match made in heaven. While Visger consults with Turtle Lake Tap and Grill, he runs Pastries by Chad with his wife Sam – an upscale pastry business that specializes in French pastries that supplies sweets to a variety of resorts, coffee shops and restaurants in the area.

Visger also takes special orders for everything from birthdays to holidays. The two live in Delavan and are raising their family there.

"Anniversaries, weddings are a big thing," said Sam, now co-owner along with Chad of TLTG since the two purchased equity in the business and are now partners.

Chad said business is "very busy." So is the family, as the couple has a 5-year-old son – already interested in his own cookie company – and another child on the way.

"We've grown a lot from year one to year two," he said. "Picked up a lot of wholesale accounts. I love being a part of other businesses, in terms of providing them a premium product they can't find elsewhere."

"I'm able to meet with the chefs and owners of a restaurant, to come up with something that really speaks to their brand," Sam added, "But also meshes with

and compliments their brand."

"It lets him be creative," Sam said, which Chad agreed with.

Sam and Chad have been together for 13 years, "and it was always our dream to start our own business," Sam said. She has a degree in hospitality from Roosevelt University, while Chad graduated from Johnson and Wales University in Denver.

The two are self-described dreamers, and came up with their first catering company in 2013 after college in Colorado. While not originally involved with one another, they met on a mutual job and first became friends – then romantically involved.

"We would kind of sit out on our balcony," said Chad, then finished by Sam, "daydreaming about what our future could bring."

The two work well as a pair. Sam handles the logistics and the business side, while Chad does the cooking. Everything from fancy French pastries to cool cakes to cupcake to cookies are available.

"We do change it seasonally," Chad said, adding that the cake and cupcake stay throughout the year but the French-style pastries change with the season.

Some examples of the deluxe pastries:

- Gluten-free Tiramisu – made with a mascarpone mousse, coffee cremeux and a chocolate flourless cake. Topped with espresso macaron and edible 24-karat gold.
- Key lime tart – pate sucre filled with key lime filling. Topped with toasted meringue
- Blue prosecco tiramisu – blueberry genoise with a layer of prosecco blueberry, pate de fruit, topped with white chocolate mousse and then topped with blueberry pepin and gold dust.

While those are full-size pastries, the item both Sam and Chad feel are the most



above: Delavan residents Sam and Chad Visger, long-time friends and now married, recently started Pastries by Chad, which operates out of Turtle Lake Bar and Grill. The two focus on pastries that offer not just a beautiful look, but a layered taste. **left:** Shown here are, from left Chad Visger's versions of tiramisu, a Key Lime tart and a blueberry prosecco tiramisu.

JENNIFER EISENBART *Fascinating Folks*



popular are their Petit Fours – small, one-two bite versions of those items (and more).

"It's this little, tiny one-to-two-bite piece that can have five to seven different layers in one bit that has this crazy depth to it," Chad said. "So get so many different flavors in one to two bites. Not only are they very pretty, but they taste better than they look."

That, Chad said, is the thought process – a unique taste that looks as good as it tastes (but not better).

"Really, I feel like anyone can make anything look pretty," Chad said. "If it tastes better than it looks pretty, that's really difficult."

Sam said the Petit Fours give the business a chance to share unique

"You get to do a crème brulee bite, you get to do a chocolate tart," Sam said. "You get the variety."

Chad said the variety allows people to try something different and not commit to a whole dessert.

The two said they are grateful for the

support of the community. They both come from big cities – Chad grew up in the Bay Area in California while Sam grew up in McHenry County in Illinois but spent a large amount of time in Chicago and Denver.

"We have met people along the way, which 90% of them have been small business owners," Chad said, with Sam adding, "giving us advice ... opened doors."

Chad added, "Just very good people in the Delavan community."

Some of the businesses they work with include The Treasury in downtown Delavan, Boxed and Burlap, TLTG, area wedding coordinators and chefs at resorts.

"Without all of those people, we wouldn't have figured it out. Maybe we would have but we wouldn't have figured it out so quickly," Sam said. "The people of Walworth County are just incredible

Added Chad, "We're one big community. We're peers."

To reach the Visgers and Pastries by Chad, call 815-919-2307.



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