



Summer
2023



Wonders

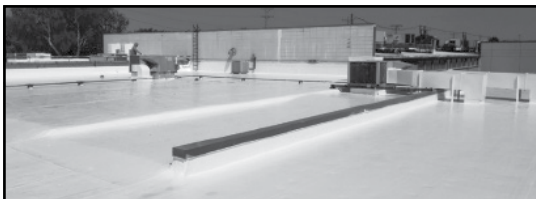
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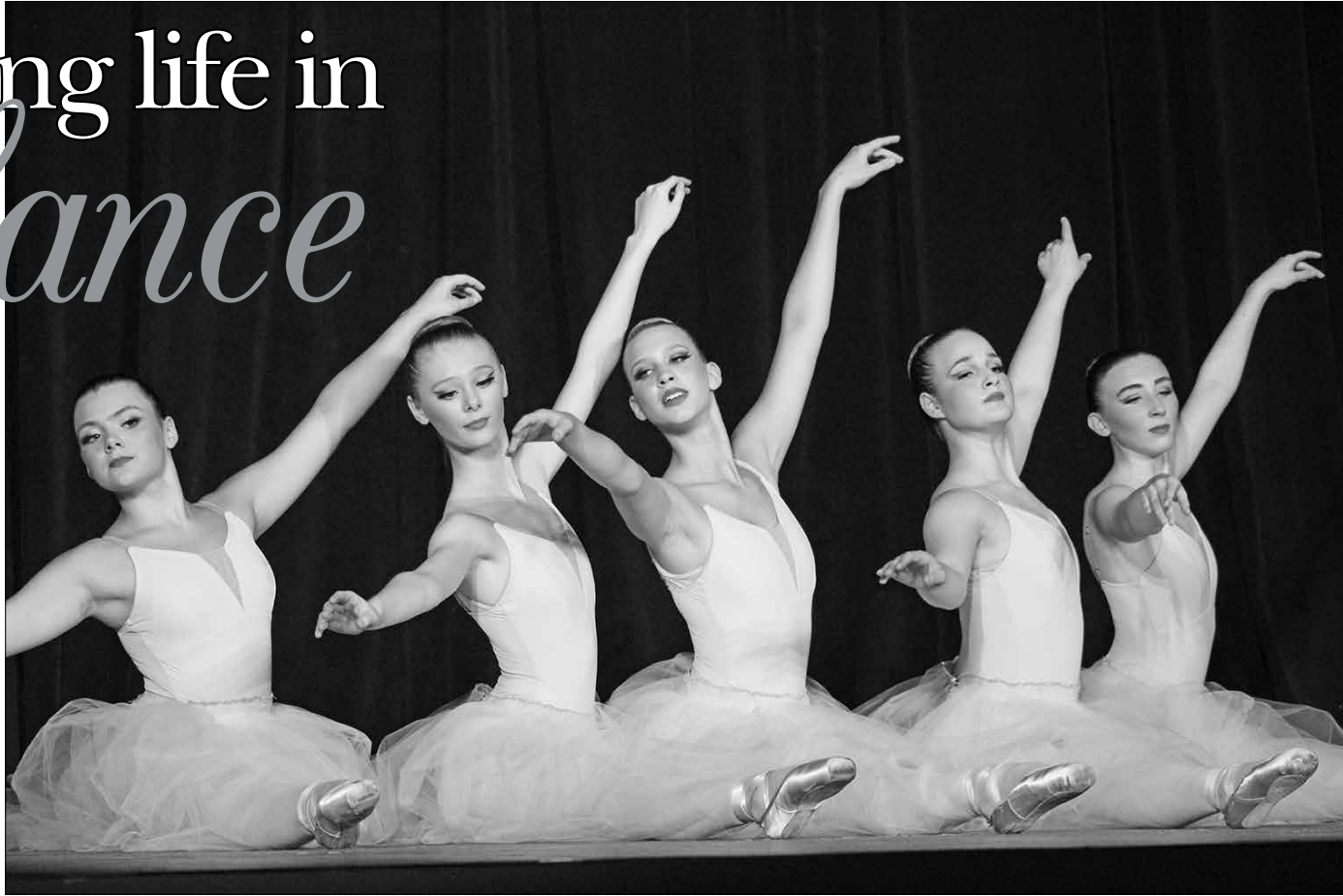
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Living life in Balance

Burlington dancer now third generation of family to do so professionally



By **Jennifer Eisenbart**
STAFF WRITER

Following the performance of “An Evening with Balanchine” May 13, Emily Mullens, Emily Moorefield and Jaden LaMeer-Moorefield gathered in the upper level of the Geneva Tap House in Lake Geneva. After a successful performance, Jaden soaked in the admiration, while mother, Moorefield, and grandmother, Mullens, got a chance to relax and soak up some praise as well.

Later in the evening, someone asked for a picture of the two Emilys and Jaden together. The three generations agreed and stood side-by-side, with Moorefield’s younger daughter, Lorelei, and Mullens’ daughter, Rose, stepping in as well.

With Mullens, Moorefield and LaMeer-Moorefield all together, it represented not just three generations, but three generations of professional dancers. Jaden is the third in line, granddaughter of professional ballerina Mullens and following her mother to dance at Disney in Florida.

“I knew I wanted to be a dancer at 11,” Jaden explained.

Those three generations form the heart of Midwest Dance Center and specifically Ballet Midwest, a non-profit, pre-professional dance company that includes Jaden and six other talented young dancers.

From the beginning

The generations of dance talent in the family started with Emily Mullens. The mother of Moorefield, she danced professionally for two years with the Hartford Ballet in Hartford, Connecticut.

While there, she went through a specialized curriculum to become certified in teaching the Vaganova Syllabus – a dance training style that emphasizes a full-body, step-by-step approach to dancing.

Developed by Agrippina Vaganova, the Vaganova Method is the standard used in Russia by the world’s most famous ballets and also with the American Ballet Theatre in New York City.

In addition to the training, Mullens learned everything from lighting and costuming to music and dance history.

“I loved it because my dream had always been training dancers,” Mullens explained. “Dancers who would be well-rounded, knowledgeable and honoring of their health

and well-being as a dancer.”

At just four days old, Emily Moorefield joined her mother in the dance studio as Mullens went back to teach.

“She went to the studio with me every day. She danced there until I sold it to be a stay-at-home mom. So, her foundation was from my studio,” Mullens explained. “She traveled with our company, dancers babysat her, took class as soon as she could walk,” Mullens added. “She grew up immersed in that life.”

Moorefield graduated from Burlington High School in January of 2008, and went immediately into professional dancing – just not ballet. She was offered a contract with Disney and danced for the company, as well as Six Flags, for three years.

Ironically, it was a visit home that took her away from professional dance.

“I came home for a visit and I didn’t want to go back,” Moorefield explained. “I felt like I had a heart for this city and I wanted to be back.”

After teaching in the Kenosha area, she started the Moved by Grace dance group at Riverwood Church in 2012. That program has blossomed over the years and is now Midwest Dance Center, 202 S. Pine St., Burlington.

“I feel like I was doing what I was meant to do,” Moorefield said.

The third generation

Jaden, meanwhile, found herself learning from both dancers.

“I have been blessed to be Jaden’s ballet teacher for most of her life,” Mullens said. “I work with her five to six days a week.”

Moorefield had been working with Jaden since she was 7 years old. She still remembers when Jaden came off the stage after dancing a piece when Moved by Grace did a shortened presentation of “The Nutcracker.”

Jaden danced the Snow Queen.

“She came off and said, ‘That was awesome, I felt powerful,’” Moorefield explained.

What started as two days a week at Moved by Grace transitioned to five days a week as Midwest Dance Center evolved.

In the summer of 2022, Ballet Midwest started. Since then, Jaden has danced a

number of lead roles – including Maria in December’s full-scale production of “The Nutcracker” – and continued to train.

In January, she finished her high school coursework at Wilmot High School so she could dance full-time leading up to auditioning for professional roles.

Jaden actually ended up dancing her first professional role last fall, performing at Six Flags Great America during the Halloween season, performing in the Monster Bash Dance Party as part of Fright Fest.

All of it was preparation for what was coming – a chance at a professional career. Once done with her WHS classes, Jaden added aerial silks classes and gymnastics class in addition to the work she put in at Midwest Dance Center.

“I could really focus on dancing,” Jaden said. “I’ve really been able to do a lot of things.”

The first steps

Jaden and her mother began putting together audition videos this spring, with about nine total going out for various jobs.

The problem, Moorefield explained, is that no one ever really knows what a casting director is looking for.

“They could be looking for five girls the exact same height,” Moorefield said. “Or they could not have a spot for a girl who is 5-8.”

Jaden is just shy of 5 feet 9 inches, and her mother said one of the many attributes Disney looks for is taller dancers.

As it happened, Disney was looking for dancers in Jaden’s height range. She sent in a video, and five days later, was asked to Disney for a callback.

In early April, Emily and Jaden traveled to Disney World in Orlando for the audition. They arrived on a Tuesday night, and Jaden danced the following morning.

“They told me after the audition that I was hired, so it was kind of a celebration (to enjoy the parks after),” Jaden said.

She has been offered an open-ended contract, meaning she can dance as long as she wants to for Disney.

• CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

Wonders of Racine County

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Above: Jaden LaMeer-Moorefield (center) performs the George Balanchine classic “Serenade” with Ballet Midwest at a recent performance in Lake Geneva. LaMeer-Moorefield is the first professional dance to come out of the Ballet Midwest program – and the third generation of her family to become a professional dancer.

JENNIFER EISENBART *Wonders of Racine County*

On the cover: Elena Mondragon, 4, feeds a calf in the Burlington FFA tent on May 28 during the Burlington Jamboree Memorial Day weekend.

JASON ARNDT *Wonders of Racine County*

Spreading kindness through

Artistic expression

High schoolers create mural with youngsters

By Jason Arndt
STAFF WRITER

Artistic expression takes many forms, ranging from painting, musical presentation, literature and dance, among other mediums.

But for one particular project at Yorkville Elementary School, which has an annual artist-in-residence program, two Union Grove Union High School students tasked with leading a mural project presented a simple message: "You matter."

Kylie DeBerg and Ryannah Glassen, both AP Studio Art seniors at Union Grove, became involved in the project earlier this spring after Yorkville school officials approached high school art teacher Hal Kravig about the prospect of a partnership. While DeBerg created the design, she and Glassen worked with Yorkville third-grade students on the project, which places a focus on kindness and friendship.

"It's really what we want to instill in our children, so that was the theme we gave them," said Kindergarten teacher Becky Borchardt, who serves on the PTO Board of Directors.

Unlike previous years, when the school looked for older artists in the community, this year the group looked to partner with high school students for the artist-in-residence program.

"I wasn't sure how it would go, but it has been great for the kids," Borchardt said. "The kids have been so excited and it's great to see them look up to them as role models."

DeBerg's vision

DeBerg and Glassen have each won several awards from various art competitions in the last few years, Kravig said.

DeBerg said she wanted the mural to include a ram – which is the Yorkville mascot, the sun as well as landscaping and natural elements such as fish, water and a shoreline.

"This mural was supposed to be about kindness, so the design is about friendship," DeBerg said.

DeBerg first drew the design on a piece of paper, then took a portrait before transferring it a drawing app.

After deciding on other elements, primarily colors and supplies, the two high school seniors spent about an hour a day at Yorkville working on the project with students.

Upbeat collaboration

Yorkville students initially had hesitation, since some never had experience in art, but Glassen and DeBerg



DeBerg (left) and Glassen – senior AP Studio Art students at Union Grove High School – showcase the mural they helped create representing kindness at the elementary school.

SUBMITTED PHOTO Wonders of Racine County

offered unconditional encouragement and support as the younger students explored their creative side.

"(DeBerg and Glassen) have done such a great job explaining things to them and encouraging them," Borchardt said. "The students were really nervous at first."

Glassen, who recently won a Congressional award from U.S. Rep Bryan Steil, said she found the project a nice change of pace from other pieces of art she has completed.

"I would describe it as fun and laid back," Glassen said. "I feel like we have a good message."

As for working with children, both DeBerg and Glassen said they found the partnership rewarding, largely because Yorkville students have shown an eagerness and willingness to learn more about art.

"It feels really good, especially because they are so young and not all of them are super into art," she said. "But it's fun to see them learn more about it and have that ability to create even if they are not used to it."

Glassen said while the mural focuses on kindness and friendship, it goes beyond that.

She said the younger students also learned about working together on a project with a clear vision.

"It is fun and lighthearted and I would say it also represents teamwork and community," Glassen said.

DeBerg said the project has been uplifting, since many school officials and students have watched them work during the school day.

"I love seeing how excited the teachers and students are. It's a really rewarding thing to do and the kids just love it so much," DeBerg said. "People walk past it every day and say how good it looks."

Passionate artists

DeBerg and Glassen have been involved in art for several years, even before they enrolled at Union Grove, with DeBerg beginning her foray as a student attending Racine Unified School District.

"I have been making art for a very long time," DeBerg said.

As for Glassen, she found inspiration at an early age, thanks to her family, which has always had an interest in artistic expression.

"My whole family has been artistic, so I think part of it has just been in my blood," Glassen said. "It's also a really fun way to express emotions and experiences through art."

Since both began the project, Borchardt said she has seen their enthusiasm for art shine through, as well as their willingness

to work with younger students.

"You can just see their passion for art," Borchardt said.

"It is great to see them interacting with the kids. It has been absolutely wonderful."

Lasting impression

While the project is a first for high school students, it will also create a long-term mark on the school.

Glassen, who attended Raymond School, said she looks forward to hearing about how the project plays a role in creating a positive environment in the future.

"It feels cool, especially because I plan to stay somewhere in the area," she said. "If I were to have kids, it would be awesome to be able to come back and show them. It would be awesome to see it later in life and be able to have all the kids see it."

DeBerg, who has taken classes at Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design, said she is unsure what she has planned beyond Union Grove High School.

Glassen doesn't have the details ironed out yet but knows that she wants to find a field designed to nurture her creativity.

"I am going to college undecided, but I want to be able to go into the creative field," Glassen said. "I definitely want to use my creative side."

Can you find your WAY OUT?

Waterford business creates escape room to help fund the library

By **Callie Koehne**
CORRESPONDENT

The importance of public libraries in local communities is immeasurable. In an ever-evolving world, libraries still do what they have always done by providing a space where all are welcome, where literacy and education is fostered through special programming, and free services are extended to anyone who needs them.

A library is arguably the most important part of a community, and it would be nothing but a storehouse for books without the dedicated library staff who run it and the programs they create.

Recently in Waterford, the Village Board and its leaders voted against the Waterford Public Library's value and cut \$100,000 from its 2023 funding. This caused layoffs of its librarians, and the elimination of a variety of programs, subscriptions, classes and experience passes that provided free entry for community members to places like the Green Meadows petting farm, the East Troy Railroad and the Milwaukee Zoo.

One local family business, The Waterford Stillhouse, has stepped up to be a beacon of hope by creating an ongoing Escape Room fundraiser that helps benefit the Waterford Public Library.

The Waterford Stillhouse is Racine County's first and only distillery, and offers locally produced, small batch, premium vodka, bourbon, and light whiskey.

With an offering of DIY night events, stillhouse tours and the only Bourbon Club in Waterford, after its opening in 2021 it quickly became a unique staple in southeastern Wisconsin.

Tammie and Brandon Begotka, owners and operators of The Waterford Stillhouse, are 13-year residents of Waterford and



are always on the lookout for ways to help the community they love. Both are healthcare professionals: Tammie works as an occupational therapist; Brandon is a full-time optometrist with a background in chemistry that led them to the business of distilling.

Before the stillhouse opened for cocktails in July 2021, the Begotkas saw a need during the pandemic so they decided to make and sell hand sanitizer.

"The whole story of the stillhouse is community based and us wanting to provide for our neighbors," Tammie said. "We saw a need for something more, and never really envisioned that it would be us running it but somehow God put that into our hands and tasked us to do it and here we are."

Creating the escape room

The Begotkas have three young boys, and one of their favorite family activities was held at the Waterford Public Library where they have spent countless hours over the years. The library's former staff put together escape rooms with various themes that allowed each family member to be involved; it was one of the events the Begotka family treasured. After it was announced that funding would be cut from the library – and some of the most beloved activities would no longer be available – Tammie had an idea.

"I knew we had to do something to help and I thought it would be really cool to bring the escape room to the stillhouse and open it up to our community and surrounding communities," she said.

Tammie sprang into action and enlisted one of the local library employees who was let go because of budget cuts. Together, they created the Waterford Stillhouse Escape Room.

Patrons have an hour to figure out who has the missing Waterford Stillhouse bourbon barrel.

"It took about eight months to plan, and is honestly a blast. We've had such good feedback from families who have come



top: The Waterford Stillhouse has created an escape room to help raise funds for the Waterford Public Library. The activity takes about an hour and is family-friendly including the welcoming of kids. **above:** The escape room at The Waterford Stillhouse is a timed event.

SUBMITTED PHOTOS Wonders of Racine County

once or twice and want to come back," Tammie said.

With puzzles and tricks the family-friendly escape room brings in elements from the distilling industry, and ties in the history of the Waterford Stillhouse as well as the process of distilling into the plot all while making every twist and turn fun for the youngest participants.

The escape room is open Wednesday and Thursday evenings, and Saturday during the day. Groups of up to six people are welcomed into a private space in one of the upstairs rooms at the Stillhouse where a host walks them through their task.

Each ticket is \$15 and \$5 from every admission goes directly to the library. Begotka has had such a positive response that she said she plans on continuing to run the benefit for at least a couple of months.

Pleased that the response to the escape room has been so positive, she said that she owes its success not only to her husband, Brandon, and the community but also to Sarah Barth and Alicia Human, coordinators who helped put the finishing touches on it and work as hostesses for the event.

"I'm also so proud of our distillers and everything they've been able to accomplish," Tammie said.

Without the success of the distillery they wouldn't be able to give back to the Waterford Public Library in such a generous way. She credits her hardworking distillers for the Waterford Stillhouse's double award winning vodka, and their light whiskey that took Best American

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Escape room players get their photo taken after finding their way out of the room.
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ESCAPE ROOM • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

Craft Whiskey and a Triple Gold Medal in a craft distillers spirits competition.

"All of this just goes to show you what happens when people come together," Tammie said. "Our family has been really so impressed with the facilities of the library, things that they offered, how incredible their staff is, and we were gutted when that was threatened, but the community has come out in full support, and we feel hopeful."

Begotka has set several goals for fundraising for specific programs that she, her husband, and their three boys enjoyed most often, the first of which is to try to raise at least \$1,200 to pay for all of the experience passes that were among the first items to be cut in the library's budget cuts.

"As a family, we've spent so much time together checking those passes out and going to the zoo and having adventures together. It breaks my heart and makes me so sad to think that those things won't be available for other families," Tammie said.

She also hopes to be able to fund the craft bag program that costs the library

about \$5,400 to provide annually, saying that hands-on activities are so important to growing minds, and having a place where parents can gather ideas for ways to help their children use their imagination and keep them off of their tablets and away from the TV is one of the most important things she can think of.

"My husband and our three young boys have created countless wonderful memories at the Waterford Library over the years, its value to our family and our community can't be overstated, and we're dedicated to doing whatever it takes to help preserve it for others," Tammie said.

With community dedication like the Begotkas have displayed, their love for literacy and all the benefits of a well-funded public library, there is hope that even amidst budget cuts the most vulnerable and valuable institutions will thrive, even if they have to stand taller than village leaders and do it themselves.

For more information on The Waterford Stillhouse Escape Room or to register a group, visit Waterford Stillhouse on Facebook, or call 262-514-2123.

DANCER • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

"It's stability in an industry that doesn't provide stable jobs," Moorefield said.

Now it's a waiting game.

Jaden was also offered two contracts at Valleyfair in Shakopee, Minnesota, the first of which starts June 12.

Jaden will dance for a month there, and then weigh whether to take the second contract based on when Disney has a spot with a show open for her.

King's Dominion Amusement Park in Virginia also offered her a contract, one she turned down.

Once Disney calls, Jaden will head to Florida.

Right now, Ballet Midwest and Midwest Dance Center are gearing up for the annual spring recital and a summer production of "Peter Pan."

Jaden will leave for Shakopee the day after the June 10 recital, then return and prepare to play Captain Hook in "Pan."

But if the Disney call comes between the end of her Valleyfair contract and the Aug. 12 production of "Peter Pan," Jaden will leave for Florida and the understudy will play Hook.

The idea of her time with Midwest Dance Center and Ballet Midwest left Jaden with a

few mixed feelings.

"I feel like it's going to be exciting to start a professional career," she explained. "But Peter Pan (or the recital) could be the last performance with the girls. It's kind of hard knowing that the recital could be the last performance."

One thing is for certain, though: while Jaden may be the third generation of her family to become a professional dancer, she's the first from Ballet Midwest.

"The girls at Ballet Midwest, those are like my little sisters," Jaden said. "I care for them so much. I think I kind of have an impact."

Moorefield said her daughter has definitely made an important mark.

"They see her going into this career, and they think, 'If she can do it, so can I,'" Moorefield said. "Until you see someone do it, it's like a pipe dream. You can see that chance in these kids."

One of those younger dancers, Burlington eighth-grader Jenna Fay, is already keeping Jaden in mind, in fact.

"I talk to Jenna's mom, because Jenna has a bright future," Moorefield said. "I said, 'What does she want to do?' She said, 'She wants to do what Jaden does.'"

Adrian's a family tradition

FROZEN CUSTARD STAND TOUTS LONG-TIME SERVICE TO COMMUNITY

By **Jason Arndt**
STAFF WRITER

The meteorological start of summer is June 1 and the season runs through Aug. 31.

With the coming of the warmer months, many people seek multiple ways to stay cool, such as turning on the air conditioner, heading to the lake or pool and even savoring icy food.

The cold food could be frozen yogurt, ice cream or frozen custard.

At Adrian's Frozen Custard, 572 Bridge St., Burlington, the long-time staple along the Milwaukee Avenue corridor has served the community for nearly five decades.

Vincent Skrundz and his wife, Brigitte, have owned the establishment for close to 16 years.

Since the couple purchased the business, Vincent said they wanted to maintain the same tradition, which started about 49 years ago.

"When we bought it, tradition was important to us," he said. "We didn't want to change the name. We wanted to maintain Adrian's."

Adrian's Frozen Custard typically offers hundreds of different flavors during the season, including flavors of the days, such as 100 Grand and Chocolate Pecan Fudge, Butterfinger, Cotton Candy, among a series of other customer favorites.

Additionally, for the first time in its history, Adrian's plans to offer strawberry as well as strawberry-vanilla twist custard



Adrian's Frozen Custard, 572 Bridge St., Burlington has served the community for nearly five decades.

SUBMITTED PHOTO Wonders of Racine County

every day during the month of June.

Vincent explained custard carries a distinct difference compared to ice cream and frozen yogurt.

"One of the big differences in frozen custard is egg content, frozen custard usually has a heavier butterfat content," Vincent said.

Family traditions

Adrian's, which is within walking distance of Beaumont Field and Congress

Street softball diamond, often sees baseball and softball players head to the frozen custard stand after games and practices during the summer.

Vincent said Adrian's offers a welcome respite to children seeking a traditional after-game snack.

"All of your worries are gone, whether you have a good game, or a bad game at Beaumont or Congress, you can come up and you are just happy," Vincent said.

"It is something that we take pride in."

While Adrian's sees ball players, the tradition extends beyond the diamond, according to Vincent.

Vincent said he remembers coming from the Chicago area as a youngster to visit his grandparents who owned a home in Bohner's Lake.

During visits, his grandparents often took him to Adrian's, where Vincent eventually met his future wife Brigitte, who worked there under the previous ownership.

"It was always a Saturday night treat," Vincent remembered. "It was such a special time and I remember how we were."

Since taking over, Vincent has heard stories from customers, who said they recalled heading to Adrian's as children before taking their own children and even grandchildren.

"There is not a lot of businesses out there that people can say they have taken their children and now grandkids to," Vincent said.

Weathering the summer

Adrian's, which sits across from Echo Lake, is a seasonal operation and relies on pleasant weather for business.

"I will be honest, weather is huge when it is pleasant outside," Vincent said.

Vincent, however, said the flavor of the day also plays a role in business since some people often check the Adrian's Facebook to see what is on the schedule.

Rustic Barrel offers antiques, other merchandise

By **Jason Arndt**
STAFF WRITER

Dan Wilburth and his wife, Chantelle Archambeau, oftentimes explored area flea markets for vintage and antiques.

What began as a simple hobby turned into something more for the couple in 2019 when the duo opened up Rustic Barrel LLC on Pine Street in downtown Burlington.

Since then, business has grown, with the couple taking things one step further last year after purchasing the former Winkler Elementary School tucked away along a quiet country road on McHenry Street.

The former Winkler Elementary School served students in kindergarten through the fifth in a one-room building.

Wilburth said the schoolhouse serves an ideal backdrop for the establishment, which specializes in sales of antique, vintage, and handmade items from local artisans.

Wilburth added the new building offers better amenities, including more parking, a countryside setting and more space to sell merchandise.

"We started off small in downtown Burlington and have been building it up," he said.

Additionally, since opening at 7135 McHenry St., Wilburth and Archambeau introduced new features and activities.

"We have a wide assortment of stuff, not just antiques," Wilburth said. "We have flea markets going on now, we have food truck nights. There is a lot more stuff



Dan Wilburth, co-owner of the Rustic Barrel in Burlington, stands next to Nestle's former spokesdog Farfel at his establishment specializing in antique, vintage and handmade items from local artisans. Farfel previously called the former Chocolate Experience Museum home.

JASON ARNDT Wonders of Racine County

here."

Wilburth, who created the name based on his love of creating items made from wood, said he and his wife have formed an ideal team at Rustic Barrel.

He said his wife sells a lot of lotions

and body whips around the country.

As for other items at the Rustic Barrel, the inventory comes courtesy of dozens of vendors, as well as products from auctions, estate sales and other flea markets.

"We meet a lot of nice people and have a lot of interesting collection," he said. "We have a lot of great vendors, we have about close to 40 vendors," Wilburth said. "Every classroom is set up with different booths in it, the lower level has got different booths in from different vendors."

On the lower level, the Rustic Barrel has space available for small community meetings, and a place to serve food items.

Diversifying offerings

At the Rustic Barrel, according to its website, the husband and wife team touts its ability to provide local shoppers with a broad range of items for sale while keeping prices reasonable.

"Our store is full of antique, handmade, and reconditioned items," the website states. "Many of our items are created by family members, ourselves, and our local community."

Meanwhile, Wilburth takes pride in local history, including the City of Burlington's past as Chocolate City, USA. When the Chocolate Experience Museum closed, Wilburth decided to bring in some historical artifacts such as Farfel the dog, who served as the Nestle USA spokesperson in the 1950s.

When customers walk through Rustic

Barrel, they often see other Chocolate City items, like flags and T-shirts available for sale.

"We try to have some indoor stuff, some outdoor stuff, products for men and women," he said of Rustic Barrel's mission to offer something for everybody.

For Wilburth, diversifying product offerings and customer experiences is critical for the establishment, which experienced some bumps in 2022.

Along with rising inflation, the Rustic Barrel and other McHenry Street establishments saw decreased sales last year because of road construction.

"We still had some business, but it was hard to get with the roadway closed," Wilburth said. "We lost sales, but it is doing better now."

As for hot trends, Wilburth said they change based on season, with outdoor decor and yard art the most attractive as the area heads into the summer.

"It all depends on what time of the year it is," he said.

The Rustic Barrel, meanwhile, continues to find other ways to bring in customers and has plans to introduce more food pantry merchandise.

"We are trying to do different things," he said. "There is just not as many antique buyers as there used to be."

The Rustic Barrel is open 10 a.m. until 6 p.m. Tuesdays through Friday, 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. Saturdays and 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. Sundays.

For more information, visit its Facebook page, or call 262-661-1269.

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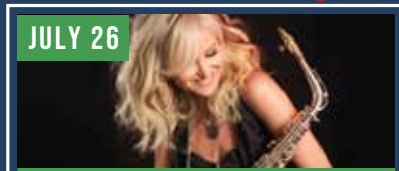
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