

# President's Message

## Chamber is here for you

The West Prince Chamber of Commerce is here for you!

I would like to welcome and thank you for taking the time to read the first issue of our Explore West magazine.

The primary focus of Explore West is to promote and showcase the hard-working entrepreneurs and businesses that contribute to the West Prince economy in a positive way. Explore West magazine will also promote benefits of chamber membership to local business and employees. It will be published twice a year, spring and fall.

The West Prince Chamber of Commerce mandate is to advance the interests of its members and provide leadership to the business community. A Strategic Planning session was held in April for the board of directors and three top priorities were identified; develop strategies to market West Prince as a place to live, work and play; increase our membership base to better serve the area; and educate the business community on resources and current affairs which will help in future business development.

Our chamber lobbies on behalf of local business to multiple levels of government through our direct efforts and in cooperation with other chambers on a local, provincial and national level. Most importantly, our chamber is a forum where members can share their products, services and knowledge, encouraging a close-knit business community working toward the ultimate goal of bettering West Prince



as a whole.

Tammy Rix, our executive director, was hired in June 2017 and has worked extremely hard over the last year building our membership to 160 members with a goal of reaching 200 by the end of the year. Educating and informing the business community on the chamber and how it can assist, will be a crucial exercise in attracting new and retaining current members. She is in the planning stages of coordinating the Western Biz to Biz Tradeshow on September 28 & 29.

The chamber celebrated its first Business Awards Excellence Gala in February at Mill River Resort with over 140 in attendance. This was an exciting night in West Prince celebrating the success of business leaders from communities throughout the county.

On behalf of the West Prince Chamber of Commerce board, executive and staff, we remain partners in business and are committed to the success of our Western Region. We hope to have the opportunity to meet with you at one of our future events and look forward to hearing how we can assist in expanding business growth in Western Prince Edward Island.

*Geoffrey Irving, President  
West Prince Chamber of Commerce*



## Explore

Eastern PEI Entrepreneurship & Opportunity

*Explore is published by Island Press Limited on behalf of the West Prince Chamber of Commerce.*

*It is dedicated to telling the stories of determination, diversity and success found in our local economy.*

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*Jackson Platts, general manager of PEI Juice Works LTD (left), and Denton Ellis, one of the companies shareholders (right) show off examples of the company's finished product. Along with the flagship blend of wild blueberry, other juice blends include blueberry and tart cherry, and a blend with rhubarb. See story on page 4 & 5.*  
*Photo submitted*

# *Juice Works looks to access new markets and develop new products*

*By Melissa Heald*

Juice, simply extracted from wild berries, is winning clients from around the world for West Prince based company, Juice Works.

In 2011, four local entrepreneurs wanted to do something to help stem the flow of people leaving the province in search of work.

One of the partners had discovered an ancient Mennonite process of juicing wild blueberries that allowed more of the nutrients to be maintained in the juice.

“Being the entrepreneurial minds that they are, they wanted to commercialize this process so they started the business plan,” said Jackson Platts, general manager of PEI Juice Works.

“They began product development at the Bio Food Tech Center in Charlottetown. Here they utilized a test kitchen to scale up the process, perform shelf-life testing, and develop the nutritional facts table.”

Both Platts and Kyla Ellis, executive assistant and human resources manager, are from the West Prince area and



*One thing Juice Works prides itself on is how natural their product is. No additives like sugar, water, or preservatives are used, it's pure blueberry juice.*

*Submitted photo*

found employment with Juice Works after graduation from UPEI and Holland College, respectively.

“I started with them, helping with the product development and doing the bookkeeping side of it as well,” said Ellis. “We had to create a HAC-

CP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point) plan and become licensed by CFIA (Canadian Food Inspection Agency), so I helped with that as well.”

In 2012, the product hit the shelves of grocery stores across Atlantic Canada. That same year, the company shipped its first export order to China.

The flagship product for Juice Works is a pure wild blueberry juice in a 375 ml glass bottle. Other blends include a wild blueberry and tart cherry, a blend with rhubarb, and a blend with cranberry. The company also has a license for an Anne of Green Gables branded product. There are six servings in every bottle of juice.

“The main use is to put a bottle in your fridge and have your two-ounce shot every day as your antioxidant boost,” said Platts. “It’s also good in smoothies, and to drink as is. We have a number of recipes on our website and drink mixtures as well.”

In search of other revenue streams for the juice, the company found an



*Located in Bloomfield, Juice Works' processing plant presses juice from wild blueberries, turning them into juice. Juice Works employs up to eight people, depending on the time of year.*

*Submitted photo*



*Wild blueberries like the ones pictured here are made into juice at the Juice works processing plant in Bloomfield.*

*Submitted photo*



*An employee at the Juice Works processing plant in Bloomfield sorts blueberries before they're cleaned and pressed for juice. When the company was created, one of the goals was to help keep Islanders from having to go off-Island in search of work.*

*Submitted photo*

*“One of our greatest advantages is having that Canadian maple leaf on our label.”*

Jackson Platts, general manager of PEI Juice Works

opportunity in the growth of the craft brew industry on PEI. Juice Works now supplies several local craft breweries, wineries, and cider companies with juice in bulk, which is used as an additive in their production process.

Platts estimates about 60 per cent of what the company produces is exported to other countries. The majority goes to China, with some going to Japan and Taiwan. The company is also exploring markets in the United States, United Kingdom, other parts of Europe, and United Arab Emirates.

Juice Works is proud of its quality.

“Our process is as simple as taking the berries in, pressing the juice out of them, filtering it and bottling it,” said Platts. “We don’t use any additives, we don’t add sugar, water or preservatives.”

Juice Works employs as many as eight people, depending on the time of year. The company’s busy time is from March to October, with the busiest being the middle of summer.

“Harvest season is from late August to early September,” said Platts. “We try to buy as much berries as we can from local growers, but due to the short harvest window and our limited capacity and limited ability to clean, sort, and freeze, we rely on buying frozen berries from processors.”

Besides needing to buy some of its berries from processors in Morell, PEI and Nova Scotia, there are other challenges including competition from a global increase in the number of cultivated blueberry juice products, and the need to ship exports in spring, summer or fall to avoid having to use a temperature controlled container, which can double shipping costs.

When asked what was it about the product that draws international clients, Platts explained that in China’s case, for example, there’s a rising middle class with more disposable income who are becoming increasingly health conscious while at the same time recognize the health benefits of wild blueberries.

“One of our greatest advantages is having that Canadian maple leaf on our label,” he said. “They see Canadian products as being superior, and you don’t just see that in China, you see that everywhere we travel and promote our product.”

As for the future of Juice Works, Platts and Ellis said the plan is to continue to grow by not only accessing new markets, but developing new products as well.

# Chamber Plan a win-win for area businesses

*By Melissa Heald*

The executive director of the West Prince Chamber of Commerce (WPCC) believes a critical piece for generating revenue for the organization is through its insurance plan.

“I think it’s a good part of supporting the chamber and its survival,” said Tammy Rix. “It helps the chamber to be self-sustainable.”

The Chamber of Commerce Group Insurance Plan is an employee group benefit plan designed for small businesses that includes health, dental and more.

As a not-for-profit, costs under the Chamber Plan are kept to a minimum and with pooled benefits a firm’s rates will remain stable. Premiums are based on the average claims across all participants. When the claims are bundled together with thousands of similar firms in a pool, premiums stay manageable and predictable.

“The pooled benefits give businesses a lot more protection,” explained Brent Gallant, owner of Summerside’s Brent Gallant Insurance Brokerage and the authorized agent to offer the Chamber Plan to members of the WPCC. “If you have a bad year, you don’t get caught with a huge increase if you have that pooling benefit.”

Additionally, part of the premium that every participant pays goes back to their local chamber. It is what Gallant refers to as a ‘Win-win for the local business community’.

“You’re helping yourself and the premium is going to help support your local chamber which helps promote area businesses,” he said. “And the pooling benefit gives you a lot of



*Executive director of the West Prince Chamber of Commerce Tammy Rix believes a critical piece for generating revenue for the local chamber is through the Chambers of Commerce Group Insurance Plan.*

*Melissa Heald photo*

stability in regards to what you can do with it.”

Rate renewals are usually a lot more stable with the Chamber Plan than other mainline insurance carriers, he

added.

“Typically you’ll find the chambers renewal rates have been around four and five per cent, which is a reasonable good return,” he said. “You’re not

usually going to be hit with these huge increases which can really throw off planning for a small business. The Chamber Plan has been typically much more consistent.”

Small businesses, from one-person firms and up, are eligible for insurance under the Chamber Plan. However, businesses must be members to benefit.

Gallant said the largest percentage of businesses that opt into the insurance plan are between one and 15 employees.

“Once you become a member of a chamber, you can give us a call and we’ll put a package together for you. We’ll sit down and discuss the options and tailor a plan for your company,” said Gallant. The flexibility of the Chamber Plan allows plans to be tailored to meet the demands of any client.

“It’s an excellent program for any company. It works very well,” he said.

Rix said it has been challenging to convince members of the WPCC to think about making that extra investment for their business and sign up for the Chamber Plan.

“It’s a flexible and stable plan,” said Rix. “I hear from businesses that are trying some of the cheaper plans. They might be cheaper at the beginning, but if they have a large claim that causes their premiums to go up. The Chamber Plan pulls from a bigger group and is a lot more stable with prices staying a lot lower.”



*Brent Gallant of Brent Gallant Insurance Brokerage in Summerside is the authorized agent to offer the Chambers of Commerce Group Insurance Plan to members of the West Prince Chamber of Commerce. Gallant refers to the Chamber Plan as a ‘Win-win for the local business community’ because it supports the work of the local chamber.*

*Submitted photo*



W.P Griffin Inc. in Elmsdale is looking towards the future as the next generation of family begins working at the company. In photo: L-R: Ashton Perry, Hayden Smallman, Troy Smallman, Colton Griffin and John Griffin, president and general manager of W.P Griffin Inc. Submitted photo

# W.P Griffin looks to the future with next generation

By Melissa Heald

Ashton Perry admits it's not always easy to work with family.

"It's hard, but it is a blessing," she said. "You're trying to solve problems together every day. There are challenging days, but it's really nice."

Her uncle John Griffin echoes the same sentiment.

"It's nice to know we could have someone else who wants to take over if they're interested, keen and ambitious," said the president and general manager of W.P Griffin Inc in Elmsdale. "It's good because it could be the other way too - you could have no one who wants to take over and then you're stuck here until you are 90."

Ashton has been with W.P Griffin for five years now, working as an agronomist.

"Growing up, I'd never thought in my wildest dreams I was going to work on the farm," she said. "For awhile, I thought I would do business. I went to business school, I didn't really like it. I got a job somewhere else in agriculture doing soil samples and getting into more of the science of it, which I found really cool. So I ended up back here."

From the beginning, W.P Griffin has been about family.

In 1947, at the age of 19, John's father, Wilfred, began working in the potato industry as a business manager for Ronald McKenna. By 1958, Wilfred became the sole proprietor and then in 1969 incorporated the company known today as W.P. Griffin Inc.

From 1967 to 1996, John's mother Marie worked in the office, helping her husband grow the business from

100 acres to over 1,000.

John himself has been with the farming and packaging company for 30 years. After their father died, John ran the company alongside his older brother Peter until Peter retired in 2017. John's brother-in-law Troy Smallman has been the farm manager since 1996. Troy's two children, daughter Ashton and son Hayden Smallman, along with John's son Colton Griffin, are currently in management training positions at the company.

"It kind of gets into your blood over the years," said John, who attended university before joining the company officially in 1988.

W.P Griffin grows, packages and ships a wide variety of potatoes and consumer convenient fresh potato product choices. In addition to their

traditional paper, poly, mesh and poly-mesh products, W.P Griffin provides size-specific count packs for the food service industry.

Farming more than 4,000 acres with a rotation of potatoes, grains, hay, ray grass and soybeans, the company is divided into two divisions: Farming Operation and Packaging Warehouse.

They grow about 16 different varieties and types of potatoes including Russets, Reds, White and Yellow Fleshed. Their product is sold across Canada, primarily to Sobey's and Foodland stores.

President and general manager since 2001, John is currently in charge of administrative responsibilities such as strategic business development, marketing and finance.

"We're always doing a lot of development with Sobey's," he said. "We see different concepts around North America, present them to Sobey's and sometimes they might see something and ask us about it, but a lot of times



W.P Griffin Inc employee Corina Gsell inspects a potato before wrapping it in foil to be used for the company's tray products in the specialty area of the plant.

Melissa Heald photo

ing facility of the present day is not what existed when John's father began the business all those years ago.

With warehouses and farming fields now spread throughout West Prince, the original site on the corner of Dock Road and Route 2 was an ideal spot when the railway once ran right by the location. While the tracks are gone now, in the early days, everything was shipped by train.

"If you go back to 1940s, it was probably a wooden warehouse which was basically a loading dock and at some point they probably did a little bit of grading on very crude graders, sorting out bad potatoes," said John. "With technology, things have gradually improved."

When trains disappeared from PEI in the 1980s, trucks were used to ship product.

"When things began switching over to more trucks, it wasn't as important to be on the tracks," he said. "People could build packaging plants pretty much anywhere, but we always still had a lot of demand because we had more marketing expertise. We could market, grow and grade potatoes."

In 1988, part of the old warehouse was torn down to make way for a new office building. Over the next 27 years, the company continued to expand by carrying out different renovation projects, including a new refrigeration storage area completed in 2015.

As a third generation farmer, Ashton said there's a lot of pride in knowing she is helping to continue the family business.

"Sometimes you get lost in the short picture, but when you look at it, John is employing 50 people and all the people we are feeding. You have to look at the big picture. It's not just your job, it's the impact we are having on the community," she said.

With the next generation currently working at the company, John feels his father would be happy with how the business he founded in 1947 has grown.

"I think he would be pleased to see how it has continued on."

we're looking at what is the new trend and the way things are going."

The latest product W.P Griffin is developing with Sobey's is Affordable Adorables. The 10-pound bags of natural #2 grade potatoes will be sold at a lower retail price. The potatoes inside might have one or two imperfections, but still taste great while being gentler on a customer's bottomline.

Food service customers include Gordon's Food Service, Cohn Produce and branded shipments to The Keg restaurant chain in Eastern Canada. Internationally, W.P Griffin has entered into a grower/packer contract with UK's Albert Bartlett for cultivating of the 'Rooster' variety in PEI for retail stores across the USA.

"Some of these varieties are used to growing in our slightly cooler weather and cool nights and rain. They seem to be growing pretty good here. They (Albert Bartlett) are liking what they're seeing in terms of quality coming from PEI," said John.

Employing on average 50 people every year, the state-of-the-art pack-

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# Taking care of the people

## *Owner of popular West Prince bakery caters to residents for 13 years*

*By Melissa Heald*

One of the busiest places at lunchtime in West Prince is Alberton Bakery & Café.

The lineup at noon often reaches from the front counter to the main door as people wait to place their orders. They usually don't have to wait too long.

Despite the mad rush, staff are calm and well organized as they quickly move behind the counter, doing everything from taking orders, prepping food, pouring coffee, washing dishes or waiting on drive-thru customers.

The orderly manner of the staff is thanks to the efforts of owner Linda Martin. Her first priority when she bought the bakery 13 years ago was training front counter staff to deliver the fastest service possible.

"I always told them, 'don't panic,'" she said, while sitting in the living room of her Brooklyn home. "Don't try to get the end of the line done before we get the first of the line completed ... It's a panic if you look and see 30 people out the door. You're going to panic. Just don't look at those people. Just do your work."

That advice and years of hard work has transformed the bakery into the popular eatery it is today.

"I'm fussy," Linda admitted. "I like things to be a particular way."

The nearly 20-year-old business on the corner of Main and Poplar Streets changed hands twice before Linda purchased it in December of 2005. She bought the bakery from her sister who had purchased it from the original owners three years prior.

"She knew it was always my dream. She said it was always you who said



*Owners of the Alberton Bakery & Café, Linda and Paul Martin. Submitted photo*



*Bakery employee Desare LeClair hands customer Mary Perry a delicious blueberry cake with sauce. Melissa Heald photo*

there should be a place, a bakery, a cafe, somewhere in Alberton and here's your opportunity."

As someone who enjoys both cook-

ing and baking, Linda jumped at the opportunity. While they lacked bakery experience, both Linda and her husband, Paul, had plenty business expe-



rience. For 28 years the Martins owned and operated a service station in Montrose. Four years ago the pair purchased the St Felix Golf & Country Club.

With a business that operates Monday to Saturday from 6 am - 9 pm, Sundays 8 am - 9 pm, and is only closed on Christmas, Linda admits there were plenty 15 to 16 hour days, year after year.

“After so long, I thought, ‘What did I do?’,” she said with a laugh.

But it was Linda’s idea to open the bakery early in the mornings and remain open later in the evenings. She made those changes because customers were asking for the additional hours.

“I did it for the people. People were asking for it. They wanted to have a place to go in the evenings,” she said.

Most of the changes made are the result of Linda listening to her customers. “I more or less was just taking care of the people,” she said. “I enjoy it.”

Linda employs between 19 and 21 people. Three of those are bakers. “I have some really good, loyal staff,” said Linda.

Like front counter staff Renee Avery, who worked at the bakery prior to Linda taking over.

All the baking is done in the downstairs area of the building and begins early in the morning, from Monday to Friday, with no baking on the weekend. Not only selling baked goods like homemade bread, rolls, cookies and squares, the bakery offers a variety of menu choices from soups, chowders, hamburgers, sandwiches, daily specials and more.

The food, the fast service and the low prices for good quality meals is what Linda identifies as the bakery’s source of popularity. And all the positive feedback over the years has given her incentive to keep finding ways of keeping her customers happy. Like opening the drive thru, which was added about 10 years ago.

“Everyone else was doing it and I figured the Town of Alberton needed one.”

The Martins already owned a portion of the land beside the building because it was part of the bakery property, but they had to purchase a house beside the bakery to gain the extra footage needed.



Longtime employee Alberton Bakery & Café Renee Avery serves up a dish of hot soup. Avery was employed at the bakery before current owners Linda and Paul Martin purchased the business 13 years ago. *Melissa Heald photo*

“That was just a deep, deep hole,” Linda recalled of the area that existed beside the bakery before it was filled in to create the parking lot and drive-thru.

Then about four years ago a veranda was built onto the bakery.

“It was something I always wanted - people sitting outside on little bistro sets. I always had that in the back of my head,” said Linda.

The spring after she first bought the bakery she purchased those bistro sets. But her husband suggested maybe they should concentrate on growing the business first before jumping into any special projects. Her bistro sets then sat in storage for a long time until her veranda was finally built and she was able to use them.

Linda has loved owning the bakery. Unfortunately, injuries sustained in a major car accident in September of 2016 has meant she hasn’t been able to be at the bakery to oversee day-to-day operations. Although she has every intention of

returning to work if able, it could be some time until she receives the medical clearance. That doesn’t mean Linda doesn’t keep tabs on the bakery. She’s on the phone with staff at least three or four times a day. And she fully trusts her employees to run the bakery the way it has always been run.

While tourism brings in plenty of business during the summer months, it’s area residents who keep coming back that help to make the bakery successful, said Linda.

“For me, it’s my locals who keep that place going. And my good staff.”

# SPEEDY

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# *Buds and spuds and bright red mud* O'Leary shines a spotlight on Island potatoes

*By Jillian Trainor*

If there's one thing Prince Edward Island is known for, it would most likely be the potato.

But what do you do if you don't know anything about the spud? Why, visit the Canadian Potato Museum in O'Leary of course.

"The Potato Museum opened in 1993," says manager Donna Rowley. "It actually ran as a community museum back in the 60s, and was incorporated in 1967."

The museum allows visitors to see not only how a potato is grown, but also how it's harvested, what food and beverages can be made from potatoes, even the diseases that can cause harm to the root vegetable.

The idea to create a museum dedicated specifically to agriculture came from an unexpected source: a visitor from Ontario who was surveying community museums across the province.

"He noticed a small potato display," said Rowley. "I'm not sure of the year, but he planted the seed, no pun intended. Because the potato industry was such a big industry here on Prince Edward Island, why such a small display?"

As far as Rowley knows, there was no other museum at the time that focused on agriculture, and the museum's board of directors decided to go for it.

In 1997 the museum installed its most famous piece, a giant fiberglass potato that stands outside the museum's entrance, crafted through donations and fundraising efforts from members of the community.

Rowley said it's probably the most photographed item in O'Leary.

"I could pop in here sometimes in



*Visitors get a taste of what they're in for when they pull into the parking lot of the Canadian Potato Museum. Rowley said the potato outside is probably the most photographed item in the town.*

*During Kraft Hockeyville in O'Leary in 2017, the mascot of the Canadian Potato Museum got a little bit of a makeover to add to the festivities.*

*Submitted photo*

mid-winter and people are out there taking a picture of him," she said.

While it looks like a regular run-of-the-mill potato now, during O'Leary's campaign and eventual victory for the title of Kraft Hockeyville in 2017, it was given a small makeover, with eyes and a helmet taped on, and a giant hockey stick hung by its side.

Something unique the museum offers is experiential tours, where visi-



tors actually get to see where a potato comes from and how it's grown.

"Local farmers volunteer their time,

give us probably an hour to an hour and a half of their time, sometimes longer depending on the time they spend with us,” said Rowley. “We take people out to their farms, and they get to see the day-to-day operation and what they’re actually doing.”

The tours usually take between four and five hours. After a group visits they’ll return to the museum where they can take a tour, with lunch provided after as part of the package. Visitors also have the chance to make their own potato fudge to take home.

Between 20 and 25 tours are carried out each season and are offered from June to September.

The museum itself looks deceptively small. Built on a single level, back when it was just a community museum it housed not only a library, but a day-care too.

When you first walk through the doors, samples of the famous potato fudge are offered.

After that, you have the chance to turn left or right. Should you choose to turn left, you’ll head to the community museum, which features artifacts that show what life was like in the town. There’s even a replica of a doctor’s office that once belonged to Dr George Dewar, and was located next to Vinny’s Restaurant in his house.

If you go to the right, you’ll be heading into the potato museum, and all you have to do is follow the potatoes, literally. On the floor of the museum are images of a variety of potatoes that take you along a route showing how the potato was farmed decades, even a century ago.

Make a turn down a corridor and you’ll see a wall lined with little cas-kets, each one with a replica potato inside with a plaque featuring a description of the insect or disease that killed it.

Visitors also get to learn of the potato’s origins in Peru.

“I had a lady and a gentleman come in and they worked down there. We have a really nice picture painted on a canvas of a market scene where the local people would take their potatoes.



*A family checks out one of the local potato farms during an experiential tour, offered by the Canadian Potato Museum in O’Leary. The whole tour takes about half a day to complete, so plan your time wisely.*

*Submitted photo*

They would have piles of them, and they still do that. She said they sit with their finest dress clothes on to try and sell their wares.”

One addition made around the end of the last decade is a room filled with farm equipment. Most of it is Island made, while some pieces are Canadian or internationally made.

Tucked away in the far left corner is a recreation of the blacksmith shop once owned and operated by Robert Gallant, a blacksmith from the nearby community of Howlan. The display is an exact replica, built on a smaller scale than the actual shop, but all of Gallant’s equipment is incorporated.

“It was actually like the gossip central,” said Rowley. “Because he was only one man and he did one horse at a time, there was a waiting line. People would come with their carts and horses and they would sit and talk about everything that was going on.”

She recounted Robert’s son Ed telling the story of how his father ended up flying from one end of his shop to the other.

“Often they had to tie the horse.

They had a ring and would hitch the horse by the nose if he was really, really feisty,” she said. “He said one day this one horse in particular was giving his father a hard time and it actually kicked him clear across, right to the back. The way he tells the story, you can visualize the hoof coming up and ramming him right to the back of the building.”

When she looks at the length of the replica shop, she said it blows her mind that a horse would be able to do that, and yes, Robert did eventually get that horse shod.

When asked what it was about the museum that kept people coming through the doors (with a total of 15,000 visitors in 2017), Rowley couldn’t pin down one exact reason.

“We are an educational museum,” she said. “I guess it’s just the interest people have about the industry and how things work - how the potatoes are planted and the whole process.”

The Canadian Potato Museum is open every day starting May 15 to October 15 and runs from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.



Erica Wagner, owner and operator of Backwoods Burgers in Tyne Valley, shows some of the eclectic decorations that line the walls of the restaurant. When it came to redesigning the space, figuring out the decor was the most fun thing to do.  
Jillian Trainor photo

The burgers are made from local ingredients and also available in vegetarian and vegan options. Draft beer is supplied locally from Moth Lane Brewery.

# Backwoods Burger puts local food on the menu and pays homage to its roots

By Jillian Trainor

One of the first things you notice about Backwoods Burger, aside from the building's towering height, is its cerulean blue shade.

The family restaurant is owned and operated by Erica Wagner, who purchased the business in 2011.

Backwoods Burger was originally called The Landing Oyster House and Pub, but in June 2017, the decision was made to change the name.

Wagner's reason was simple.

"We were famous for our burgers from the get-go," she said. "Even though we were an oyster house, people came for our burgers and fries, so it made sense to be a burger spot from that perspective then it was just coming up with a name."

Another reason was accessibility. Wagner and her husband, Jeremy Ellis, have two children, Kaine and Ariya, and it was important for her to



A bicycle suspended in mid-air is just one of the eclectic pieces of decoration throughout Backwoods Burger. Other pieces include wooden spoons, art, ceramic bowls, and more.  
Jillian Trainor photo

have a place where she could bring her own children.

She said a lot of people didn't feel

comfortable taking their kids to the restaurant when it was known as The Landing because they would hear the



Backwoods Burger, formerly The Landing Oyster House and Pub, is located in Tyne Valley. *Jillian Trainor photo*



Just like the food at Backwoods Burger, the beer is local too. Moth Lane Brewing, based out of Eilerslie is the provider for the liquid libations. *Jillian Trainor photo*

word ‘pub’ and associate it with drinking and nightlife.

Wagner wanted a name that represented not only her family’s roots, but the rural community as well.

“People sometimes say ‘Oh, people from up west, they’re from the backwoods,” she said. “We wanted to reclaim that name for ourselves and make it fun and sort of play to the people in our area, the people that work, that do hard work with their hands.”

Along with the name paying homage to the area, she wanted to make sure the food did too.

Backwoods Burger does its best to source ingredients locally. Beef for the burgers is Island beef, the bun used for

many of those burgers is a potato bun made at the Maple House Café in O’Leary, the draft beer comes from Moth Lane Brewery, and cheese comes from ADL.

“That’s kind of my mission, to try and get it as local as possible.”

One of the most popular burgers on the menu is the Dam Burger. Made with Island beef, cheese, bacon, red onions, tomatoes, and the restaurant’s very own Dam Sauce.

For those who don’t eat meat, vegetarian options are available, one of which is the portobello burger. Also on a potato bun, this grilled portobello comes with Dam Sauce, lettuce tomato, onions and cheese. Vegan options are available with this burger as well.

The building itself is full of character, originally a mercantile store. Over the 130 years it’s been around, it has been many things including a bank, doctor’s office, and library.

The décor is as eclectic as the businesses that have shared the space over the years. A mix of novelties decorate the walls, including wooden spoons, ceramic bowls, art, oil lamps, wicker baskets, wooden spoons that belonged to Wagner’s grandmother, her mother’s old baking pans, and more.

... continued on page 17

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CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

## BURSARY AWARD WINNERS 2018



Each year, the WPCCC offer two (2) Bursary Awards of \$500 to a male and female high school student pursuing a post-secondary education in the field of business.

Bursary Awards for 2018 were presented by Tammy Rix, Executive Director, West Prince Chamber of Commerce, to high school graduates Chandler Wood, left photo, and Kylee Doucette, right photo.

***Congratulations, Chandler and Kylee!***



*First 9 teams to register (by August 31st) get a FREE Golf Towel!*



### 2<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL GOLF OUTING FUNDRAISER

**Friday, October 5**

at the **St. Felix Golf & Country Club**

*A light meal and snacks will be provided.*

*Door Prizes & 50/50*

*Deadline to register is Friday, September 7th.*

Call **902-853-3616** for more information or register on-line at **[www.westprincechamber.com](http://www.westprincechamber.com)**

Cheese graters are strung from the ceiling with light bulbs inside that give off a faint humming sound when turned on, and a bicycle is suspended mid-air by wires.

Wagner grew up in the Tyne Valley area, and worked at The Landing as a teenager. When the building came up for sale she was just finishing her Business Administration degree at UPEI and saw this as a great opportunity.

"I tried doing the office thing," she said. "I'm just too high energy and too all over the place to sit in one spot, so it made sense for me to do this, and it's been a great decision."

Backwoods Burger employs 12 people year-round and an additional three people in summer.

One of the busier times of the year is April, when Burger Love is held across the province. During this time,

Wagner said she'd see her kids for about an hour in the morning and that would be it, not getting home until 11 pm.

"In that case it can be hard, but at the same time it's something I can't not do," she said. "I get so much satisfaction out of it and I'm lucky to have such a great support system with my husband and with my family for helping me with the kids."

Speaking of her children, Kaine and Ariya have a menu item named after them, the K.A. fries. This menu item also gives Wagner a chance to give back to the community, as \$2 from the sale of each purchase of fries goes to Kids West

As a new mother, Wagner suffered from the Baby Blues, otherwise known as Postpartum Depression. She reached out to Kids West and, through the organization, did a course called 'Becoming Me' which was about self care and how to take care of yourself as a mother.

"It sounds silly, but this was the first time that concept was ever introduced to me, it was like 'Why would I do that? Why would I take care of myself?,' she said. "It was an incredible experience and I owe a lot of my sanity and ability to push through and to also take care of myself enough to take care of my family and take care of my business through that course. It was a no-brainer to try and give back to them for that."

When asked why she feels it's important to give back to the West Prince region, Wagner said it gives the crew of Backwoods Burger something to work toward, especially during certain times of the year when business is slower.

"When things get tough, I always remind myself of the bigger picture, of the fact that I'm donating to Kids West, and me doing this provides up to 15 people with a livelihood," she said. "It's important that I keep doing this and it gives me the fuel to go through the hard months. It's insane, but I can't imagine doing anything else."

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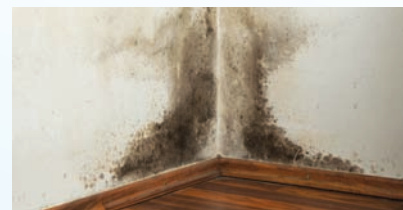
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