

Art school expands with new programs in larger space — page 4



Inside this issue

◆ MEDITERRANEAN CUISINE SLATED FOR TWO NORTH COUNTY SITES.....	2
◆ PROMINENT VICTORIAN-ERA RESIDENCE REPURPOSED AS NEW B&B.....	17
◆ BERKSHIRE COUNTY TRADE NAME REGISTRATIONS	17-19
◆ ALLENDALE HOME DECOR FIXTURE ADDS NEW LENOX LOCATION.....	20



Couple revive town's train station with new cafe — page 8

BERKSHIRE TRADE & COMMERCE *monthly*

Vol. 17 No. 5

“The Business Journal For Berkshire County”

SEPTEMBER 2013

PACKAGE DEAL...



Lou Matney Jr. (left) is joined by in-store sommelier Matthew McConnell (center) and floor supervisor Adam Bushey in front of the former Staples store in the Steeple City Plaza in downtown North Adams, which is being transformed into a new venture known as Vins et Viandes. The 15,000-square-foot space will stock the region's largest selection of beer and wine, and will feature a full-service deli and international gourmet food section, when it opens in mid-to-late August.

Vins et Viandes aspires to ‘destination’ status

BY BRAD JOHNSON

Find the French name “Vins et Viandes” hard to pronounce? Why not try saying “V&V” instead.

That’s what Lou Matney Jr. believes customers at his new combination package store and delicatessen will opt for when it opens its doors in mid-to-late August.

“We call it V&V for short,” the North Adams businessman said. “I think it’ll stick.”

International nomenclature aside, Vins et Viandes represents an ambitious effort to expand the selection and quality of beer and wine available in North Adams and northern Berkshire County. “There are very few places in north county with a really good selection of craft beers and quality wines,” said Matney.

In filling that niche, the new venture also fills one of the city’s largest retail vacancies: the 15,000-square-foot space formerly

occupied by the Staples office supply chain at the Steeple City Plaza in the heart of downtown North Adams.

“It’s a perfect space for what we wanted to do,” said Matney.

“It gives us lots of room for our extensive inventory of beer and wine, as well as for the gourmet European delicatessen that makes

up the other side of the business.”

Vins et Viandes came about through a collaboration between Matney and the owners of Steeple City Plaza, First Hartford Realty. The business is incorporated as Steeple City Liquors Inc., with Matney as president. Officers with First Hartford have board representation in Steeple City Liquors Inc., and, as landlord, First Hartford is providing some financial backing for the new venture.

The corporate name reflects the original – and perhaps future – intent to operate as a full liquor store. That was not possible due to

continued on page 10

“We call it V&V for short. I think it’ll stick.”

Balderdash Cellars puts Pittsfield on wine-making map

Avocation-turned-enterprise adds new dimension to city’s industry

BY JOHN TOWNES

After more than a year of quiet preparation, production and sales, a new Berkshire County winery has been publicly uncorked.

Balderdash Cellars introduced its winery facility at 502 East St. in Pittsfield to the public with a well-attended grand opening event on June 15.

The facility is in an unlikely setting – in the lower level to the rear of a small retail complex that was constructed two years ago at the former site of the Pittsfield Rye Bakery at the corner of Elm and East streets in central Pittsfield. It is accessed from the East Street side by a small driveway, just past the main parking lot (near the Subway shop), where a helpful sign is posted pointing the way.

“We want this to be fun for ourselves and our customers,” said Hanson.

While the urban setting

may seem unusual for a winery, it fits both the needs and business model for this particular operation. Rather than having its own vineyard, Balderdash Cellars is focused on creating locally produced premium wines that are made with grapes from vineyards in the Sonoma, Paso Robles, and San Luis Obispo regions of California.

“What makes the difference in creating quality wine is starting with good grapes and then what you do with them,” said Christian Hanson, who operates Balderdash Cellars with his wife, Donna.

The Hansons live in Pittsfield and both work for Sabic Innovative Plastics. They

continued on page 14



High hopes for Hoppy Valley

Interest brewing in small-scale organic hops farming venture

BY BRAD JOHNSON

Three area entrepreneurs whose various ventures and professional activities have ranged from public relations to home furnishings to donut making have collectively entered an entirely different field – a hop field.

As such, they are engaged in an experiment in the financial viability of small-scale organic hops farming.

“This is not a get-rich program by any means,” said John Armstrong, who is one of three equal partners in Hoppy Valley Organics Inc. in Pownal, Vt. “But we are looking

to prove that small-scale hops farming can work if done right.”

Armstrong, who is co-owner and manager of Hillside House Furniture in Pownal, is joined in the venture by his longtime friend and fellow Pownal resident, Peter Hopkins, a free-lance business writer; and by his father-in-law, John Neville of Clarksburg, who was the owner and operator of the former Neville’s DoNut Shop in North Adams until his retirement in 2005.

This spring and summer, travelers along scenic Route 7 in Pownal (just north of the

continued on page 12



An array of tall poles and baling twine form the eye-catching infrastructure for Hoppy Valley Organics. In this mid-July photo, newly planted hop vines are just beginning their slow climb up the diagonal twine.

COVERstory

Balderdash Cellars
continued from page 1

operate the winery (413-464-4629 or balderdashcellars.com) on a part-time basis.

Balderdash Cellars creates and sells five core brands and varieties of wine: Bao Bao Sauvignon Blanc, Giraffa Chardonnay, Fruit of the Boot Rosé, Joyride Pinot Noir Cuvée, and Invincible Cabernet Sauvignon Cuvée.

An additional label, Truth Serum, is a catchall for other specialty short-run varieties. Hanson added that they plan to create other brands over time.

In addition to grapes, home-spun humor is an extra ingredient at the winery. “We want this to be fun for ourselves and our customers,” said Hanson.

This is reflected in the name Balderdash Cellars and its motto of “Wicked Wines and Tall Tales.”

“We were looking for a name, and we kept coming back to Balderdash,” said Hanson.

One reason, he noted, is that “balderdash” was their response to people who initially told them their idea of starting a winery was impractical.

It also ties in with the tall tales referred to in their motto.

Hanson explained that the name of each of their wines has a story related to their lives behind it. For example, Bao Bao is the name of their dog, and Giraffa is named for a toy giraffe that Christian used to carry around when he was a boy. (More details are available on their website or from chats with the Hansons themselves at their winery.)

“When we’re telling these stories to people, we sometimes tend to exaggerate and embellish them, so there’s a bit of balderdash involved,” he said.

The labels were designed by the Lenox-based advertising and marketing firm of Winstanley Partners.

Sales venues

Their primary public sales outlet is the winery itself, where wine is sold by the bottle (prices range from \$14 to \$26, depending on the variety).

The 2,200-square-foot space is utilitarian by design and function. A row of large wine-making tanks and other apparatus line the far wall, while closer to the entrance is a reception area and tasting counter with stools, where customers can chat with the Hansons and sample their wines before buying.

The winery is open to the public Saturdays and Sundays from noon to 5 p.m. or at other times by appointment.

In addition to on-site sales, wines from Balderdash Cellars are also carried on a limited basis in select local retail outlets including Kelly’s Package Store in Dalton,



Owners Christian and Donna Hanson cozy up to the tasting bar at Balderdash Cellars. The Pittsfield couple have turned their wine-making hobby into a full-fledged winery, which they operate in the basement of a commercial building at the intersection of East and Elm streets in central Pittsfield. The space is equipped with four 500-gallon stainless steel tanks (below) for transforming the high-quality grapes they buy from California growers into a variety of premium wines. That process is completed in several dozen oak barrels that are used for storage and aging. Balderdash Cellars’ products can be purchased at the winery or at select retailers.



Queensborough Spirit in West Stockbridge, Spirited in Lenox and Guido’s Fresh Market in Pittsfield. The wines are also served at Mazzeo’s Ristorante in Pittsfield.

And, in early August, the Hansons received city approval to sell wine by the bottle and offer tastings at the new Pittsfield Downtown Farmers Market.

Hanson said that they have begun to market their wines more actively, although they are doing it gradually and in a way that is in keeping with the personal scale of the business.



“We want to grow on a basis that is manageable,” he said. “Most of our promotion and advertising has been by word-of-mouth and through Facebook and other social




Just up the road...

You’ll find a great place to eat. A great place to stay the night. A great place to hold a meeting or function of any kind. A great place to sit in front of a roaring fire. The ‘best Sunday Brunch in the Berkshires.’ A great place to do absolutely nothing but relax if that’s what you wish.


• 125 Rooms • Indoor Pool, Hot Tub and Saunas • Dining Room & Tavern • Convenient Location, Free Parking • Free Wireless Internet



1090 Main Street - On the Village Green
Junction Routes 2 & US 7
Williamstown,
Mass. 01267
413.458.9371
Fax: 413.458.2767



Just up the road in Williamstown
The Williams Inn
williamsinn.com



CompTIA A+ Certification					
WKS 2610 E1 \$2,495					
Instructor: Quest Connect Staff					
CRN#	Days	Dates	Time	Location/Rm.	
E1	TTH	9/3-9/19	6-9PM	Quest Connect*	
	S	9/7 & 9/14	8:30AM-4:30PM		
	S	9/21	8:30AM-2:30PM		
*160 North Street, 1st Floor, Suite 101, Pittsfield, MA					


CompTIA Network+ Certification					
WKS 2611 E1 \$2,495					
Instructor: Quest Connect Staff					
CRN#	Days	Dates	Time	Location/Rm.	
E1	TTH	10/1-10/17	6-9PM	Quest Connect*	
	S	10/5 & 10/12	8:30AM-4:30PM		
	S	10/19	8:30AM-2:30PM		
*160 North Street, 1st Floor, Suite 101, Pittsfield, MA					

CompTIA Security Certification					
WKS 2612 E1 \$2,495					
Instructor: Quest Connect Staff					
CRN#	Days	Dates	Time	Location	
E1	TTH	10/29-11/14	6-9PM	Quest Connect*	
	S	11/2 & 11/9	8:30AM-4:30PM		
	S	11/16	8:30AM-2:30PM		
*160 North Street, 1st Floor, Suite 101, Pittsfield, MA					

Certified Fiber Optics Training					
WKS 1344 E1 \$695					
Instructor: Ronald Szpila					
CRN#	Days	Dates	Time	Location	
E1	TFS	10/3-10/5	8AM-5PM	ITC	

Workforce Development Training at BCC

For more information or to register, please contact the Office of Community Education and Workforce Development at 413-236-2127 • www.berkshirecc.edu



Berkshire Community College

Intermodal Education Center
Downtown Pittsfield

media, and by opening this location to the public. We're not looking to build a large retail distribution network, but we do plan to add some more sales outlets. We also hope for our wine to be served in more restaurants, to increase our name recognition."

Origins

They started the business as an outgrowth of Christian Hanson's hobby of making wine for their own use and to give to their friends and relatives.

This practice also resonated with Donna Hanson's Italian family heritage, in which, as she described it, basement wine-making operations were common in many households.

Like Donna's relatives, Christian also started his wine-making in the basement. "I started there and then moved it into our garage," he said. "Finally, when there was no more room in the garage for my wife to park her car, we decided it was time to find another spot and do this as a business."

Even when it was an avocation, Hanson had pursued wine-making seriously.

In 2007-08, he took a leave from Sabic and temporarily lived in California, where he completed the wine-making program at the University of California-Davis. He also worked as an intern in a winery there.

The Hansons selected their present location in 2011, when renovation of the commercial complex was being completed. With the move from their garage, they also greatly expanded their equipment beyond the scope of an amateur home winery.

In late 2011, a large tractor trailer delivered an array of wine-making equipment there, followed by 20,000 pounds of grapes from Sonoma for their first production run.

Among other equipment, the space contains four 500-gallon stainless steel tanks for initial storage and processing, and about 40 barrels for longer-term storage and aging. Most of the barrels are wood, although there are a few stainless steel ones also.

When their initial wines were completed, they started selling bottles on a limited basis last year. Last November they began another production run to build up their stock for this year. They currently make about 15,000 bottles of wine annually.

Hanson noted that their plan is to concentrate on producing the wine itself from November to February each year, the period shortly following the harvest season for the grapes they use.

Balderdash Cellars contracts with several vineyards in California to purchase a share of their harvest. Hanson said that it is not

uncommon for wineries to use grapes from off-site sources. "Even wineries with their own vineyards often add grapes from other suppliers," he said.

When the vineyards' grapes are picked, the Hansons have them sent to a facility in California where they are processed into a juice, flash-frozen and stored. "Then, when we need it for our production here, we have it shipped to Pittsfield," he said.

When it arrives, the juice is poured into the on-site tanks. Yeast is added and the wines are prepared and fermented.

The white wines are made with only the juice of the grapes, while the juice for reds come in a somewhat rougher form that also includes the skins. Red wines go through a final squeezing process in Pittsfield.

Hanson said the wine stays in the stainless steel tanks for about three weeks, and it is then transferred into the storage barrels and eventually bottled and sold.

The Hansons have two part-time employees to assist with operations. Also, their family and friends pitch in as volunteers during peak periods of the production process, including at a recent bottling session in late June.

"A lot of people have come in and helped us out when there was a lot of work to be done," said Hanson. "We couldn't have gotten this going if it weren't for them."◆

ALARMS

OF BERKSHIRE COUNTY

24 Hour Monitoring & Emergency Service

• SECURITY & FIRE ALARMS • CUSTOM DESIGNS • INTRUSION DETECTION

• TALKING MEDICAL PENDANTS • HEAT LOSS MONITORING • FREE ESTIMATES

326 Springside Ave., Pittsfield, MA

413-445-4030 • 800-370-2525

MA Lic. #1204C • NY Lic. #12000014682

www.alarmsofberkshirecounty.com

Does your office need a solution for Telephone Answering Services?

Berkshire Communicators offers the following Telephone Answering Services for your business needs:

• Live Telephone Reception Service

• Alternate Answer

• Order Taking

• Inbound Telemarketing

• Appointment Verification

• Reservation Service

• Emergency Elevator Service

• Dispatch Service

• Wake Up Service

Want more info? Call 1-800-367-7243 or visit www.berkshirecommunicators.com

business with a bonus.

Get comfortable even when you're getting down to business. At Hampton, you'll be surrounded by thoughtful amenities that make work a pleasure. Plus, you can earn Hilton HHonors® points and airline miles with every stay. You'll be 100% satisfied. Guaranteed.

100% satisfaction guarantee

clean and fresh Hampton bed®

FREE fresh waffles

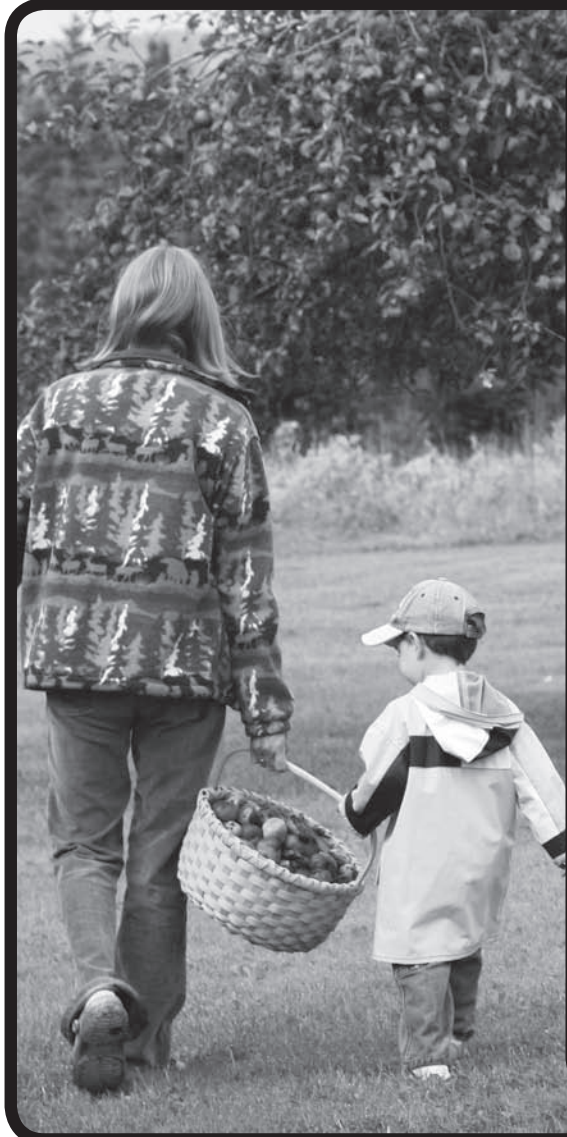
we love having you here.

Hampton Inn & Suites Berkshires/Lenox, MA • 445 Pittsfield Road • Lenox, Massachusetts

www.berkshireslenoxsuites.hamptoninn.com • 413-499-1111

Hilton HHonors membership, earnings of Points & Miles® and redemption of points are subject to HHonors Terms and Conditions. ©2011 Hilton Worldwide

HHONORS HILTON WORLDWIDE



Ask us how you can receive ATM Fee Refunds Nationwide!

Interest Plus Checking

the account that offers big rewards!

For more information call 413.229.5000 or visit your local branch

SALISBURY BANK | enriching.

Sheffield 640 North Main Street • 413.229.5000 | South Egremont 51 Main Street • 413.528.5100

www.salisburybank.com