

## BRICKYARD BREWING COMPANY

When the Brickyard Brewing Company opened in the late spring of 2017, the majestic, two-story building quickly stole the Frontier House's title as "Crown Jewel of Lewiston." With its carved-out ceiling, brewery windows, murals and hand-fired tables – not to mention a spacious second-floor banquet room – the BBC was the place to go for events of all sizes.

Of course, village residents know the BBC caught fire last May and had to be rebuilt. Many watched in horror as Ken Bryan and Eric Matthews' second Brickyard property burned into the night. The original barbecue restaurant also was damaged. As folks observed the work of first-responders in battling the blaze, they pledged to be first in line to support the restaurateurs when the eateries reopened.

As the owners and Chief Operating Officer Steve Matthews welcomed patrons back to the Brickyard a few months later, they began work on the BBC – and (believe it or not) realized they could improve upon the "Crown Jewel."

"We've had, obviously, a couple of years to reflect on things that didn't work as well, as far as workflow," Steve Matthews said. "No. 1 being we raised the floor up in the front of the banquet facility. If you remember the top of the stairs, that was sort of a structural issue that, in the beginning when we added on the back of the building, was just sort of an extra step – no pun intended. It wasn't 100% necessary."

He explained, "We're like, 'OK, let's go back to the drawing board on this one, since we have a blank slate. Let's raise the floor up and

figure out how we can make it a little more efficient, so we can minimize that."

The floor is now level, and "You're going to see the chandelier will come back – that design element," Matthews said. "This time around, aesthetically, we went for more of a classic, upscale sort of approach to our banquet facility rather than the rustic look that we had before. So, you're gonna notice, obviously, the coffers. The conference ceiling has stayed the same in the banquet room, but we basically took a different angle on it.

"The colors, etc., will be very pleasing. It's going to be less eclectic and more of a coherent vibe, I would say.

"As far as businesswise, menu, that's still TBD; that's probably something we will work out much, much closer to opening day."

A second-floor bar, formerly situated in front of an outdoor patio overlooking Center Street, was moved to the far wall so as to serve both the terrace crowd and people inside the banquet room.

"That was another major design change. For business flow purposes, the bar up front we felt was sort of a limiting factor," Matthews said. "As far as the opening, it's still there. What we just elected to do is make that just a giant garage door opening."

That look will mirror the ground-level entrance.

"I feel like approaching this, this time around, one of the things that we noticed that there wasn't a ton of (natural light) because of our proximity and the way the building was built. ... So, we opened up the front," Matthews said. "One of the assets to the building next door was the giant



A look at some of the work taking place inside the Brickyard Brewing Company. (Photo courtesy of Steve Matthews)

garage door that you could come and go from the inside to the outside at will, and it just had a nice open-air vibe to it. So, that's kind of the direction that we took, moving forward with the construction this time. Let's open up the front of the building.

"It wasn't something that we came at out of the gate with the planning stages. After the fire, we were shoring up some of the support beams and we had to take out the front of the building to get in there and do that. And looking in from the street, you could stand on the sidewalk with the big opening in the front, and you could literally see almost all the way back. ... It just opened up the restaurant."

The stained-glass mural above the staircase remains almost completely intact. Interior walls will feature more BBC/Brickyard branding, as well homages to popular brewery labels and the

Niagara River.

"The old brewing facility, that was probably our biggest feature change," Matthews said. "If you remember when you walked in on the left, the brewhouse was readily visible and the guys would work out of there. That brewing system, you know, three-and-a-half years of business and growing the brand, we sort of outgrew that system as it was. The space that the guys had to work in was sort of also a limiting factor moving forward.

"So, like I said, we had a blank slate. All that equipment, everything had to come out anyway. We elected to put an addition on the back of our barrel-aging facility. The new brewing system replaced the current one that was damaged in the fire. Everything got moved out there and production is now fully contained out back.

"And we elected to take that

space and make it into more of a private dining area."

The former brewing room can now potentially seat up to 25 people. Matthews said it would replace a similar setup on the Brickyard side, which was lost when bathrooms were remodeled.

As patrons see progress at the BBC, they eagerly anticipate returning for a meal or a craft beer.

Matthews said, "There's a lot of loose ends. I feel like the major projects are all pretty much accomplished that we have to finish up but, unfortunately, the devils in the details as they were before. You know, it's painting, trim work, caulking – things like that that take forever."

Accordingly, a summer reopening is expected.

Despite the pandemic, Brickyard customers have come from Cheektowaga, Blasdell and all over Western New York. Ultimately, though, Matthews said Lewiston residents – true to their word – have kept the restaurant, kitchen and brewery staffs bustling.

"We couldn't have done it without the support of the community. It continues to still be almost overwhelming," he said.

"It's not like we weren't worried about things failing, of course, because that goes through everybody's mind that owned a business in Lewiston. And especially, you know, Ken and Eric, I know for a fact there were sleepless nights for both those guys. They were anxiety-ridden over keeping the ship afloat, so to speak, and keeping people employed. But I will say that the support has been overwhelming," Matthews said. "It still is fantastic. It's just been nothing short of great."

## Playground nears groundbreaking



Village of Lewiston Mayor Anne Welch and the committee overseeing completion of the inclusive playground at Marilyn Toohey Park met Monday to discuss final preplanning stages. Welch is targeting a mid-May groundbreaking.

The playground equipment is purchased and ready to be assembled under the guidance of Mark Cerrone Inc. and Parkitects. When that process begins, the crew will look to solicit 20 or so community volunteers.

Welch said the municipality is still roughly \$100,000 short of its goal. Without additional donations, items that might not make the final cut include a splash pad and pavilion.

Those looking to make a financial contribution can send payment to the clerk's office at the Red Brick Municipal Building, 145 N. Fourth St. (Photo by Joshua Maloni)

### IN THE NEWS

#### Town of Wheatfield Lions Club selling pickup/takeout dinners

Town of Wheatfield Lions Club is selling pickup/takeout dinners catered by Pellicanos Marketplace.

Dinner options include beef burgundy, chicken parm or shrimp scampi. Each dish is served in a microwavable dish for home warming. The cost is \$12 per dinner. The order cutoff date is Monday, April 19. Preordered dinners can be picked up between

1 and 3 p.m. Saturday April 24.

In keeping with the Lions Club motto, "We Serve," event proceeds will go to support these service areas: vision, diabetes, hunger, environment, disaster relief, humanitarian efforts, and children's cancer.

Orders can be made online at [Wheatfieldlionsclub@roadrunner.com](mailto:Wheatfieldlionsclub@roadrunner.com). Orders can also be made by calling Walt Garrow at 316-7826; Bill Ross at 731-5949; or Nancy Rosie at 545-8568.

The Wheatfield Lions Club meets at Five Senses Park, 6535 Ward Road.

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