Independent Thinking Keeps Roxbury Proprietor in Business

By Sue Berg

The Roxbury Tavern is not your average tavern. Barely beyond the northwest corner of Madison in a burg of 1700 residents, the Roxbury Tavern has no pool table, no jukebox, no TV and none of the standard lite beers. Smoking was banned years ahead of state law, and cursing isn’t tolerated.

Instead, it has Tom Gresser, proprietor. “The changes were meant to bring in a certain clientele, and to discourage others,” he describes. Tom welcomes live music, stimulating conversations and families. Fundraisers are hosted for nonprofits. A small, creative menu features fresh, locally sourced food. The beers on tap are brands that “taste great and fill you up on just one or two, before you get drunk,” Tom says. Since 1989, when Tom bought the bar to give himself a job, the Roxbury Tavern has become a community hub.

It’s a lot of forward, independent thinking in an historic venue. The tavern, built in the late 1860s, is the hamlet’s oldest commercial building, and unique due to its stack and stone construction. An addition to the building in the 1950s created the space that now houses the tavern’s kitchen and storied bar. Tom, who used to live above the tavern, now lives in a modest trio of rooms behind the grill. There’s a reason for that.

Accustomed to working 60 or more hours a week, Tom closed the bar at the end of the night Sept. 27, 2014, feeling unwell. The next day, he was in the hospital with a stroke. His dedicated staff and close friends kept the tavern open as much as possible, even when a second stroke set Tom back. His right side was affected; his intellect and wit were intact. His beloved New York crossword puzzles became therapy, but not for the words. “At first, after the stroke, it was hard to write the answers in those small spaces,” he states flatly.

By the time Tom recovered enough to live at home again, friends had moved his main belongings down to the private suite on the main floor behind the bar. They also remodeled the downstairs private bathroom for accessibility . . . and improved

(continued on page 6)
NOTES FROM JOYCE

Owning a home is considered the American Dream. And in that dream, as you approach retirement age, who do you picture living with you? News articles report on the increase of adult children living with Mom and Dad again; however, it’s not just Millennials moving back home. Some Boomers are finding it necessary – or even helpful – to move in with their elderly 80-something parents.

The Baltimore Sun published such an article earlier this year, about older children either living in the same house or moving to the same senior living community as their parents. For many, two older generations sharing the same house or apartment works fine. For some, the live-in caregiving responsibilities begin to overtake everything else in life. That’s when – as pointed out in the newspaper article – moving to a multi-purpose senior housing campus looks attractive.

At Independent Living, we recognize this trend. At The Gardens, our senior living community on Madison’s near west side, an elderly parent may rely on our assisted living services while a Boomer child enjoys the freedom of our independent apartments. The key benefit is professional caregiving service from trained staff, enabling the adult son or daughter to simply be who they are: the adult children.

Ensuring adequate senior services and housing in the Madison area is going to become critical sooner rather than later. It’s important that we raise your awareness and ask you to join us in addressing the increasing needs and demands among our senior population.

Two opportunities for you to make a difference are coming up. The 10th and final Merrill Lynch Grand Gala is a key fundraising event set for May 6. Hosted at the UW Gordon Event Center, this event benefits nine charitable organizations including Independent Living. Join us! For tickets and information, contact Arlen Moss, our fund development director, at amoss@independentlivinginc.org. The second key event is our 3rd Annual Golf Outing, set this year for September 22 at University Ridge. What a fun way to take a “swing” at the start of autumn! You can register now—and even learn about sponsorships—by contacting Arlen or going to www.independentlivinginc.org/support-our-work.html.

Do plan to participate. Look for me at the Merrill Lynch Grand Gala and on the fairway at University Ridge. It will be great to see you.
Independent Living Welcomes New COO, CFO

Two new executives have joined the Independent Living administrative team. Mandy Ayers is the new Chief Operating Officer, and Amy Gallagher is the new Chief Financial Officer.

Ayers, a certified professional in human resources (PHR), worked many years at Wisconsin Hospital Association, where she was director of administration. She oversaw office management including budgets, human resources, and major projects including relocating the headquarters. She has degrees in health care administration from Concordia University Wisconsin, and in human resource management from Upper Iowa University, plus certificates in human resource administration and management from MRA-Institute of Management.

Gallagher, a CPA, most recently was an accounting manager at World Council of Credit Unions where she oversaw financial reporting, payroll processing, cash flow, and risk management, and coordinated tax reporting and financial audits. Previous experience includes working for Special Olympics Wisconsin, Wisconsin Business Development Finance Corp., Alzheimer’s Association, and City of Lodi. She has an MBA from Edgewood College and a degree in agricultural economics from University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Ayers replaces Linda Lane, who is now program development director for Tennyson Senior Living Community, a senior housing project that Independent Living plans to build on Madison’s northeast side. Gallagher replaces Joyce Behrend, who was promoted from CFO to CEO at Independent Living.

SAVE THE DATE

Save Thursday, Sept. 22, for a special day of golf! It’s our 3rd Annual Golf Outing, hosted again at University Ridge, 9002 County Road PD, Verona.

Play golf knowing you are supporting seniors and adults with disabilities in Dane County.

The cost is $200 per golfer or $800 for a foursome, and includes registration, lunch, golf cart and reception.

It’s great visibility for sponsors, too! Registration and additional information, including sponsorships, can be found at www.IndependentLivingInc.org/support-our-work.html. Just click on the “register” link. See you on the fairway!
Good Nutrition Spells Independence for Seniors

By Linda Lane

There are some assumptions I believe that we can all agree to be true:

First, food is a basic necessity.
Second, there is a direct and scientifically demonstrated relationship between nutrition and health.
Third, good nutrition contributes to the prevention, treatment and/or delay of the most common of the chronic illness of today such as hypertension and diabetes.

Everyone deserves access to good nutrition; however, seniors in our community face one of the greatest challenges of their lives when threatened with hunger. Many are denied access to the nutrition they need to maintain independence, due to a lack of financial resources. This food insecurity plagues almost one in six seniors according to Meals on Wheels America (MOWA). University research published by the National Foundation to End Senior Hunger shows that food insecure seniors are 50 percent more likely to be diabetic, twice as likely to have gum disease or asthma, and almost 60 percent more likely to have congestive heart failure or experience a heart attack. The consequences of poor health are real.

For thousands of Dane County residents, Meals on Wheels is literally the difference between remaining independent in their homes or being relocated to long-term care facility. A home-delivered nutritious meal, accompanied by a friendly visit and safety check from a volunteer, helps our seniors overcome the largest threats of aging: hunger, isolation and loss of independence.

Independent Living, in response to a gap in senior services, offers Evening Meals on Wheels. It’s the only evening program in the county. Fresh, hot meals are made daily by chefs, and special diets can be accommodated, including 2-gram low sodium and gluten-free. The meal is delivered between 4:30 and 6 p.m. by dedicated volunteers whose generosity with time and their vehicles helps keep the costs affordable. As a nonprofit organization Independent Living works tenaciously to secure grants and donations to assist low income seniors with subsidies for the meals program.

Ours is one of 25 Meals on Wheels programs in Wisconsin that are members of MOWA, the national organization leading efforts to end senior hunger. We are participating in MOWA’s 14th annual March for Meals, a national effort to rally communities around vulnerable seniors who rely on this program to remain healthy and independent in their own homes.

We can all work together to “take care of the generation that took care of us.” For menus and other information about the Evening Meals on Wheels program, contact Michelle Christenson, manager, at 608-204-0923 or meals@independentlivinginc.org. To learn about volunteering, contact Megan Meyer, volunteer coordinator, at 608-268-9641 or volunteer@independentlivinginc.org. To make a difference by making a donation, contact Arlen Moss, fund development director, at 608-268-9631 or amoss@independentlivinginc.org.

Many thanks to WPS Charitable Foundation for being a sponsor of Evening Meals on Wheels March for Meals!

Dear Independent Living – Evening Meals on Wheels, Michelle Christenson and all the volunteers and preparers:

My mom has been receiving your delicious meals for about 6 months now. She loves them! When it was still warm outside, sometimes she wouldn’t hear the phone when I called, because she was sitting on her steps, on her porch, waiting for her meal to come!

As my mom gets older and less capable of some of the things she’s done her whole life, she can still receive and enjoy a hot meal in the evening! Now that it’s colder, she likes to take her supper to the bedroom, curl up in her blankets and eat it while she watches the news.

I want you – everyone – to know how you light up the life of my elderly mother! Thank you!

Julie
Thank You to Our Volunteers

With this issue of the newsletter, we recognize 228 volunteers and 14 organizations who assist in the production or delivery of our Evening Meals on Wheels program. Thank you so much! Volunteers are vital members of our EMOW team. Your dedication and many hours of service matter to the seniors and adults with disabilities we serve together. Again, thank you for your support!

EVENING MEALS ON WHEELS VOLUNTEERS

Mary Amundson
Susan Anderson
Helene Androski
Jean-Michel Ane
Sigurd Angenent
Victoria Angenent Mari
Deborah Archer
Benjamin August
Joleen August
Britta Aulwes
Jean Bae
Michael Baer
James Bakken
Helen Baldwin
Jack Barker
Daniel Bassett
William Bender
Kathleen Benson
Sue Berg
Daniel Bergs
Janell Bertera
Nicole Biessman
Lynn Bodi
James Bren
Brooks Brenneis
Virginia Brenneis
Leonardo Brito
Mary Buchner
Cindy Ann Byczek
Rick Chappell
Jon Chilsen
Michelle Christenson
Craig Clements
Ralph Cohen
Ayanna Cone
Richard Conne
Howard Crook
Linda Crubaugh
Jerry Day
Alfonso Del Rio
Rosanne Delfosse
David Dexter
Tami DiPiazza
Danna Dold
Elizabeth Dressel
Suzanne Droste
Kathleen Drury Buyck
Amy Engelberger
Juliana Epstein
Dorothy Ewing
Susan Ezalarab
Kristin Fiore
Dennis Frey
John Galewski
Sherry Gammeter
Cheryl Gandolph
Ahmet Gashi
Venera Gashi
Ashley Gehrke
Elizabeth Geiger
Amy Gothat
Trish Grant
Larry Gray
Lea Groff
Wayne Groff
Veronica Guski
Victoria Hahn
Michelle Harrison
Bruce Harville
Bonnie Havey
Bryan Helt
James Helt
Steve Henningfield
Barbara Hennings
Ronald Hennings
Courtney Henry
Gail Henslin
Richard Henslin
Steve c. Herring
Kyle Herzog
Paul Hexum
William Holman
Nathan Howe
Gary Hughes
Carol Hulland
Alain Hung
Amy Jacobsen
Dartagnon Johnson
James Johnson
Joshua Johnson
Leslie Johnson
Elaine Jourdan
Jacelynn Joyce
Michael Kafka
Mihir Kansara
Robert Kapinos
John Keating
Leroy Kemnitz
Gregg Kisel
Carole Klopp
Jeanette Koenig
Mark Kolan
Therese Kolan
Jennifer Kolb
Nadine Konrath
Michael Kreple
Jeff Kubly
Arthur Kurtz
Robin Kurtz
Jenna Lane
Linda Lane
Richard Lane
Mark Langworthy
Cheryl Levendoski
Judy Levine
Sherab Lhotsang
Susan Little
Darlene Lobenstein
Jack Longert
Janos Loyay
Amy Lord
Amy Lowe
Diane Luebke
Peter Luther
Thomas Marmet
Jennifer Maron
Jennie May
Bette McCaulley
Connie McDonald
Eryn McDonald
Chris McGuire
Jack McGuire
Jim McMillan
Barbara McNabb
Sylvia Medenwaldt
Manuel Molinares
Shannon Montgomery
Len Morrow
Arlen Moss
Darrin Most
Lottie Most
Carmela Mulroe
Dakota Murphy
Angela Neidigh
Denise Nettesheim
Rhonda Nichols
Elizabeth Nitschke
Robyn Noble
Dave Olig
Isabella Owca
Angela Owens
Bruce Peach
Heide Peickert
Nick Pelzer
Marie Pepper
Curtis Pethley
Nathan Phillips
Joseph Pichler
Deb Pienkowski
John Pinger
Ilba Prego
Betty Proisse
Christine Quall
Mike Quall
Jim Raskob
Zach T. Rawson
Marilynn Rebman
Dale L. Redmond
Nancy Reimer
Robin Reisdorf
Kerrin Rhinesmith
Sid Richards
Pat Ring
Cathy Rotter
Ron Rotter
Melissa Rupnow
Joan Russell
Kathleen Ryan
Patrick Ryan
Kathryn Sales
Isaac Schaefer
Brianna Schmidt
Kristine Schmitt
Mandi Schoville
Laura Schultz
Louisa Schwartz
Troy Schuenn
Barbara Seth
Tom Seversin
Mary Shampo
James Siriani
Patrick Slavens
Seth Smekal
Beth Ann Smith
Emily Smith
Tim Sondey
Adam Spatchele
Morgan Spatola
Bonnie Spindler
Marta Stanek
Frank Staniszekowski
Kathy Stanton
Noel Stanton
Brian Statz
Joseph Statz
William Sterud
Greg Stravinski
Jenny Strugnell
Johnna Swenson
Henry Tetzner
Theodore Tibbits
Angela Troia
Nelie Vallarta - Ast
Michael Vraniai
Tara Vraniai
Nancy Winter
Diane Wirkus
Heather Wolowik
Tom Wolowik
Levi Wood
Qianran Zhang
Theresa Zick
Jennifer Zuk

Adopt-A-Routes
ACI Wireless
Beacon Technologies
GE Healthcare
Madison Breakfast
Rotary
Madison Horizons
Rotary
Ryan Brothers
Ambulance Service
St. Mary's Care Center
Sauk Trails Optimist
Club
Spartan Youth Services
TASC, Inc.
Token Creek Lion's Club
Youth with a Mission
Zimbrick Buick
Zimbrick Honda
appearance. “Take a look at that wall,” Tom said, gesturing to exposed original stone. “That is the exterior of the original building! Now this looks like some sort of Roman spa.” Tom clearly relishes the details that bring color to life.

To help himself, Tom has been working on balance and strength, although he ruefully admits it would progress better if he stuck to his exercises more regularly. One of his goals is to walk without a walker or even a cane. With a staff of nine part-time employees, another of Tom’s goals is to take back more responsibility for the tavern and keep the business open, which means he keeps managing it while living on site. “I can’t imagine living anywhere else,” he says.

With Tom now living on the ground floor in the 1950s addition, another significant modification was needed. The space needed heat; the existing furnace just didn’t have the capacity. Through friends, Tom was connected to Independent Living, Inc., which administers a county grant for home safety modifications. A new saga began. Despite truly modest means, Tom just barely missed qualifying for grant assistance. Home modification manager Jonathan Rossall, however, found enough support to approach the Dane County Community Development Block Grant Commission.

“It if ever there was someone who deserved special consideration, Tom Gresser was it,” Jonathan says. “He had given a lot to his community, hosting fundraisers and keeping a business going that provided jobs. The county commission agreed and granted a waiver.”

Implementation had to wait, however. The Wisconsin Historical Society also had to approve the work. The original 1860s building had caught the attention of the state’s history keepers at some point, and, unbeknownst to Tom, the property was flagged as one with potential historic significance.

Jonathan went to work again, providing documentation and drawings to demonstrate that the much-needed furnace and other, smaller, changes would have negligible impact on the original building.

All told, it took Jonathan, Tom, several good friends, the ILLI occupational therapy assistant, and the ILLI carpenter almost a year to evaluate, answer regulations, attend meetings, secure waivers and bids, acquire equipment and coordinate installation of needed changes. The result: Tom can continue as a fixture at the Roxbury Tavern.

So will the great conversations, good food, filling beer and local benefits, one of which is the near-famous hot piano fundraising event for Northwest Dane Senior Services. It started in 2008 not as a benefit, but as a way to efficiently remove an unwanted, malfunctioning piano. Instead of paying $200 to have it hauled away, Tom decided to have a summer solstice bonfire to send off the piano. A local gathering included a retired pastor, who banged out fire-related tunes on the piano keys until they were too hot to touch. It’s now an annual rite. And Tom’s there to ensure it continues.

(continued from page 1)

**Grateful clients**

Independent Living regularly surveys clients and residents about their satisfaction. Recently, several clients had wonderful things to say about our home safety modification department. Kudos to Jonathan Rossall, Ron Budziszewski and Jerrold Woolley, an exceptional team!

- I use everything Ron recommended (in an occupational therapy home assessment).
- Fantastic! Both Ron and Jerrold did an excellent job.
- Great professional staff, good attitude. That’s important.
- I have not had any falls since; I should have done this long ago.
- I couldn’t live without them (toilet rails). It gives me such security.
- I feel so much safer.

(continued from page 1)

One of the helpful changes made in Tom Gresser’s home was the installation of a floor-to-ceiling pole, like the one shown in this photo. The “S” shaped arm swings and locks into place, giving a person a secure hold.
Volunteer’s Cool Thinking Helps Client in Distress

Shawna Kollath is a volunteer, an intuitive person, a mother of two, and a massage therapist going back to school for a new career in human services. She also knows how to take charge in a crisis.

Volunteer work comes naturally to Shawna, so it was not a big deal that her program at Madison College required 45 hours of volunteer service. Shawna chose to volunteer through Independent Living, Inc., and was introduced to a friendly, eloquent client with mobility and chronic health issues. “Dee” needed a little help with light housework. Shawna and Dee hit it off, and Shawna scheduled her first volunteer session with her new client.

It was a dilly.

“I called ahead to confirm, and she didn’t answer which was unusual, given that she’s talkative,” Shawna recalled. “I went anyway, and it took a long time for Dee to buzz me into the building. Then, at the apartment, I could hear that she was struggling to unbolt the door. When I finally entered, she was struggling to talk, almost incoherent. I helped her into her bed, and realized she was hot, too hot for normal. My massage background and my maternal instinct kicked in, and I just knew something was wrong.”

Shawna called 911. Her first session with her client concluded with first responders taking Dee to the emergency room. Shawna locked the apartment, and then “sat in my car for quite awhile, getting my composure back,” she said. Later, the client confided in Shawna that she had had pneumonia, and that it had likely been developing for months.

That dramatic experience wasn’t a deterrent for Shawna. She not only returned to help Dee, she accepted another client, a woman with a serious chronic illness who also needed light housekeeping help. Shawna far exceeded the required number of volunteer hours as a result . . . and is continuing as a volunteer.

“I always say you can’t judge a book by its cover,” Shawna says. “The clients I have don’t look like they need help. But they do, and it’s a good feeling that a few hours of my time make it possible for them to keep their independence.”

Meet the New Volunteer Services Coordinator, Megan Meyer

Hello all! My name is Megan, and I am thrilled to find a home at Independent Living, Inc. as volunteer services coordinator. I look forward to creating lasting relationships in the community and responding to the various physical and social needs of our clients. As a recent graduate with a master’s degree in educational policy studies at UW-Madison, I was drawn to examples of organizations that were committed to helping underserved communities, like our seniors and people with disabilities. My undergraduate degree is from UW-Madison in psychology and legal studies.

My most recent work has been with educational nonprofits, facilitating academic services for low-income students directly as a teacher or as a program coordinator. My four-days-a-week role at Independent Living allows me to continue to work at Goodman Community Center part-time in their elementary and preschool program. Prior to that, I have worked in a healthcare setting, and I’m pleased to return to a similar environment. My welcome at Independent Living has been so warm, and my thanks go to all the staff who have made this such a seamless transition.
Kibble on Wheels for Furry Friends

By Linda Lane

For so many of us, we know how much it matters to see a dog's tail wagging every day when we wake up or feel the warmth and soft purr of a cat in our lap. “Older pet owners have often told us how incredibly barren and lonely their lives were without their pet’s companionship,” says Linda Anderson, who with husband Allen founded the Angel Animals Network in Minneapolis.

Absolutely seniors need their pets, precious companions who rely on owners to provide nutritious, pet-appropriate meals. What happens when an elderly owner in Madison can’t afford food for their pet and is at risk to give them up? Enter Independent Living’s Kibble On Wheels program. Through the generous support of our local Mounds Pet Food Warehouse and Dogs Welcome! we receive much-needed pet food and supplies for low income individuals involved in our programs and services.

Dedicated animal-loving volunteers regularly deliver this pet food, just like Meals on Wheels. If you would like to volunteer or make a donation to Kibble on Wheels, please feel free to contact us at coordinator@independentlivinginc.org or call the volunteer department coordinator at 608-268-9641. When you think about loyalty, pets are never unavailable or off duty. We’re grateful for support in honor of pets’ unwavering companionship to seniors and those with disabilities.