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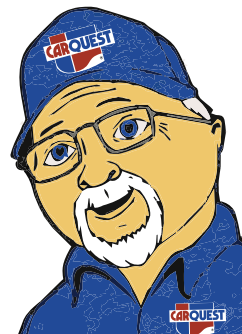
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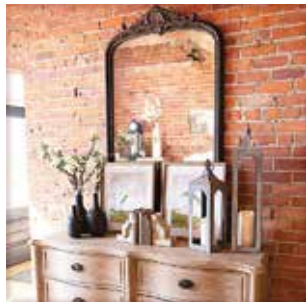
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Gail Roulo is the owner-operator of Acapulco Tanning. The Fowlerville salon opened its doors in 2005.

Acapulco Tanning offers variety of options, price ranges for customers

By Steve Horton

For a long time “getting a tan” was a warm-weather activity, requiring time on the beach or lawn—using a towel or lounge chair. Or else it was the result of either working or playing out-of-doors on a frequent basis and being exposed to plenty of sunlight.

The risk in this method, one usually occurring early in the season, was the painful sunburn.

People still lay out in the sun and, of course, a lot of folks spend time outside, and sunburns do happen. But in recent years the “tanned look” or getting a base tan to avoid a burn has been acquired by going to a salon and laying in a bed with ultraviolet lights.

One of those places is Acapulco Tanning, now observing its 15th year in

Fowlerville.

“We opened in 2005,” noted Gail Roulo, the owner-operator, adding that ‘we’ included Gail and her husband, Doug, and Dino Binford and his wife.

That partnership, with Gail and Dino handling the daily operation of the business, ended in 2014 when the Roulo’s became the sole owner.

“We offer 16 rooms and five levels of tanning,” Gail pointed out. “Fifteen of the rooms have UV (ultra violet) tables, while our Mystic Tanning room is UV free.

She noted that different people have different purposes and schedules, hence the five levels. “The higher the level, the more intense the UV light. This might be the choice of someone who wants a quick tan because they’re heading south for vacation. They come in four or five times and have a base tan so they don’t burn.”

“Someone else, also heading south,

might use a level one or two bed and come in for a month to get ready,” Gail pointed out.

Most of the rooms feature tanning beds where the user lies down for a certain period of time. There are, however, a couple of rooms available with a stand-up option.

While the spring-break crowd is one source of business, Acapulco Tanning has customers who come on a regular basis throughout the year, wanting to maintain a tan or because (she said) they find the session relaxing and enjoyable.

“We have customers who want to look like they spend a lot of time outside, but they actually work indoors,” she noted. “Winter is busy because there are people who suffer from seasonal disorder syndrome, brought on by the lack of sunlight. So they offset this by regular visits to our salon during that time of year.”

One of the advantages of using a tanning bed, Gail pointed out, is that it's a controlled exposure to the UV light. "Seven-to-ten minutes in a bed is comparable to being out in the sun for a half-hour. A customer might start off slow and only do a few minutes and then build up the exposure time," she said. "Chances are that if you went to a pool or to the beach on a lake or ocean, you don't go for just a half hour. Staying too long in the sun, without a base tan, results in a burn."

While the intensity of the bulbs is one option for tanners, Acapulco Tanning also offers several different lotions—Australian Gold, Designer Skin, California Tan, J. Woww, and Swedish Beauty—that provide a certain hue of tan, and also accelerates the tanning by "20 to 40 percent."

The salon also sells moisturizers, vitamins, and antioxidants.

"The antioxidants is how someone gets a tan," Gail said.

Since preferences and motives—not to mention finances—vary, the business features a lot of different packages.

"We have a yearly package with an unlimited number of visits and a monthly option with unlimited visits," she noted. "We have other packages where you can purchase a set number of visits per year or per month. Most of our regular customers come in a couple times a week."

The variety of choice also includes what level of tanning is desired, with Level 1 and Level 2 being the most popular ones.

The costs of these packages range from \$29.99 for one month of visits in a Level 1 room to \$350 for a year of unlimited visits.

The clientele, Gail said, includes men and women, although the largest percentage is women.

"We have all ages," she added. "The youngest are in their early teens. They might be coming in with their parents to get ready for a trip to Disney World. And we have senior citizens. The largest segment, though, are women



Jordan Roulo works at the family business. She shows one of the beds, equipped with ultra-violet lights that produce the 'tanned look.'

between the ages of 30-39."

"The very first customer we had in 2005 is still with us," Gail pointed out. "She comes in two or three times a year to tan for a vacation."

"Right now we have around 500 active visitors who use our facility some time during the year," she said. "Last year we had 20,000 sessions, which includes people who have the yearly or monthly unlimited packages. We average 150 visits a day during the busy season, which is those few weeks preceding spring break, followed by the high school proms."

She noted that most sessions last a half-hour.

Customers include those preparing for a winter-break vacation to others seeking a relaxing session

Acapulco Tanning has two other options for customers—a massage chair and an Infrared Sauna.

"The massage chair relaxes you," Gail said. "The Infrared Sauna is different from the traditional ones with steam. The temperature goes up to 140 degrees, but the heat is not that noticeable and a session lasts 30 minutes. During the visit, the toxins get sweat out, it soothes aching muscles and sore joints, lowers the blood pressure, and helps with weight loss."

While none of those attributes are guaranteed, Gail said it should at least make you feel better.

The cost to use the sauna is \$30 per visit, with a multi-visit package available.

* * *

Gail, who grew up in Detroit near Telegraph and Warren and graduated from Bishop Borgess High School in 1986, thought working in an office, along with marriage and family, would be her future.

While the latter happened, her career path took a different turn early on. "I started off working for Dino, at his tanning salon in Westland in 1987, right out of high school," she said. "My cousin was married to his brother-

continued on page 19



Brian Osborn is in his seventh year as the athletic director at Fowlerville High School. He noted that, on average, around 350 students participate in one or more sports during a school year.

Fowlerville High School sports help bolster community pride

By Steve Horton

For the young participants, their families, and loyal fans, high school sports often play an important part in their lives. But it can also help bolster community pride. That's certainly been the case in Fowlerville—currently and in past years.

For the athletes, it's an important extracurricular activity, requiring time and commitment. Ditto for their parents or guardians who provide various kinds of support. Beyond that, it's also a form of entertainment and, like many competitions (athletic or otherwise), serves as a source of hometown pride.

Brian Osborn, in his seventh year as the Fowlerville High School athletic director, is akin to the conductor of an

orchestra, making sure a lot of different tasks and required decisions result in a coordinated program. Ideally, the end result is ongoing success, but more importantly, Brian said, are the lessons learned for the students taking part and the memorable and meaningful experiences that result from playing the game.

Numbers tell part of the story.

"We generally have 350 kids participating in sports during the school year," Osborn noted. "A number of them go out for more than one sport, given that we have three seasons."

With a high school enrollment of around 830, he pointed out that this equates to roughly 42-to-45 percent of the student body.

By way of comparison, when he was hired in the 2014-15 school year, the percentage was a little over 25 percent.

"A lot of this increased involvement

is due to our coaches," he said. "We believe that every kid has value, and we make sure they (the student-athletes) understand this. Our coaches have done a good job of pushing that philosophy and getting more kids involved."

There are a number of choices for the students.

Sports offered in the fall feature football, volleyball, sideline cheer, boys and girls cross country, boys soccer, boys tennis, and girls golf. Several of those sports have a junior varsity and even a freshmen team, along with the varsity.

In the winter there's basketball for both girls and boys, wrestling, competitive cheer, and (new this year) bowling. In addition, Fowlerville partners with Okemos for hockey and with Byron, Pinckney, and Perry to field a gymnastics team.

The spring season offerings, while

cancelled this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, include baseball, softball, boys and girls track, girls soccer, boys golf, and girls tennis.

"We have around 220 kids who were on one of the fall teams, about 120 in winter sports, and last year we had around 225 who took part in the spring season," noted Brian, adding that this year's spring teams had just begun practice before schools were closed and the numbers were similar to a year ago.

The Gladiators with their 'gold and purple' colors are currently part of the Capital Area Activities Conference's Red Division, one of three in the CAAC that are based on enrollment. Smaller-sized districts are members of the White Division and the larger ones belong to the Blue Division.

Fowlerville has fluctuated between the White and Red divisions since the greater-Lansing area conference was formed.

"Every four years the enrollment numbers are checked and the members are divided accordingly into the three divisions," Brian explained, adding that there are 19 member schools. "We were recently in the White Division and, as a town, that would seem to be a better place for us. But given how geographically large our school district is, our enrollment has put us in the middle division."

While being in the Red Division results in tougher competition, one positive (Brian feels) is that Williamston also moved to the Red Division, keeping that rivalry intact, and the Gladiators historical association with Haslett has been renewed.

"We've got some of those Ingham County League roots back with this current league alignment," he noted.

For the athletes, coaches, and athletic director, success both "on the field" and "in the gym" is a continuous goal. Important, too, said Brian, is the fan support.

"Our student attendance is good," he



Hunter Knaggs is shown here during the 2019 Homecoming football game.

said. "We do allow our kids to get in free at home games, since we'd rather have them here and invested in the school. I'm also very pleased with the parental involvement and commitment. And it's not just the parents of the players on that team who are supportive, but parents who don't have a kid in that particular sport who are attending the games as well."

This fan support, he added, is not limited to home games. "Fowlerville travels well," Brian said. "We usually have a lot of people who attend the away contests. Other schools like to schedule us because we generate revenue for them. That's not the situation with every school. Some of the places we go, you don't see very many fans in the bleachers. This speaks well about the values this community has when it comes to supporting the kids."

An off-shoot of this support are the Athletic Boosters who lend a helping hand to the program in a variety of ways—financially, as well as with their time and talents.

"This group of parents is so important to us," Brian said. "We are lucky (as an athletic department) to have a superintendent and school board who support us with the budget, but the

Boosters assist us with extra funds that enhance the program."

"We're able to have an athletic trainer on staff who works with our injured athletes, thanks to the Boosters who pay part of the expense," he pointed out. "The group also awards four scholarships to graduating seniors, buys letters and pins, and pays for a lot of extras like team bags."

He noted that the Boosters donate around \$20,000, which is raised by operating the concession stand during games and from a golf outing held in the fall.

The department, itself, has a current budget of around \$560,000 in expenses, with projected revenues of \$60,000 from gate receipts and \$12,000 from sponsorships.

The costs of running the department include Osborn's salary, the wages for the administrative assistant and for a portion of the athletic trainer's pay, along with hiring the necessary coaches, referees and umpires, and bus drivers to transport the teams to away games.

Apart from the day-to-day operations, the district has invested in the athletic department with money

continued on page 18



Livvie DuFore and Arin Szumlinski were members of last fall's volleyball team. *Photo by Frazzini Photography*

Fowlerville High School sports, continued from page 17

generated from bond issues approved by voters.

The competitive gym and weight room were part of the bond issue that converted the junior high building into the present high school and included new baseball and softball fields, a new soccer field, and a new tennis court. Those improved facilities, in turn, have allowed Fowlerville to play host to district, regional, and even quarterfinal tournaments for different sports.

"We get a portion of the gate and the Boosters get 100 percent of the concessions sales when we host one of these tournaments," Brian pointed out.

A bond issue passed a couple of years ago is continuing this history of upgrades.

"We now have a new track and field facility that includes bleachers that are able to seat up to 500 fans, a press box,

and a new running track," he noted. "It's going to be one of the top venues in the area, and we expect to eventually host the state finals, which will be a real feather in our cap."

The football field, meanwhile, has a new press box, LED lighting, and a new fence around the exterior. The soccer field will feature new dugouts, a new scoreboard, and share a new press box with the tennis court. In addition, both the baseball and softball fields will also have press boxes.

As the athletic director, Osborn has to make sure those venues are ready for their respective competitions.

His job description also covers hiring coaches for the teams, securing referees and umpires for the home games, getting bus drivers and buses to transport the teams to away contests, keeping track of the budget, and (what he says can be the most challenging of his tasks) drawing up schedules and, in the spring, often re-scheduling games that have been cancelled due to weather.

"I work hand-in-hand with Tim LaPlante (maintenance) and Kim

Hiveley (transportation) to make sure our facilities are ready and that our kids have transportation to events," he said.

* * *

Brian grew up in nearby Corunna, graduating from high school in 1996. Not surprisingly, he played sports. From there he attended Muskegon Community College for two years and then finished at Aquinas College in Grand Rapids where he earned a bachelor's degree in 2001, with a major in education—his areas of expertise being physical education and social studies. After college, he coached the college's baseball team for two years while pursuing a Master's degree in athletic administration and coaching from Western Kentucky University.

"I took one class at the campus in Kentucky, otherwise my studies were done on-line," he noted.

After student teaching a year at Kent City, Osborn secured a position at Corunna as a physical education instructor and over the ensuing years coached varsity baseball, junior varsity football, junior high basketball, and girls golf.

He came to Fowlerville in the fall of 2013.

Brian and his wife Elli have three children: Kaiya, age 10, is in fifth grade, while Brandon and Blake are eight years old and in second grade. They attend Southwest Elementary in Howell where Elli is a teacher.

Being an athletic director, he noted, was a career goal, adding that he enjoys the job.

"I grew up in a gym," he said. "My dad was a coach for nearly 30 years.

NOTE: *The 2020 high school spring sports season for Fowlerville and other Michigan schools was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The action came as a result of all K-12 schools being closed in mid-March to help stop the spread of the novel coronavirus and then the suspension of in-person classroom instruction in any building for the remainder of the current 2019-20 school year.*

So, I would get out of elementary school, and I'd go to the gym. I saw the impact that the older kids had on me, and I tried to pass that on when I was an older kid in the high school and then when I came back in the summers during college to help out.

"I just loved being around sports and using the game to teach life lessons," Brian said. "I think giving back to the game, and helping teach those lessons, is what I love the most."

And it is those lessons—learned in practices and on the playing field—that (he feels) are what makes sports both valuable and important for student-athletes.

"When a kid has to deal with adversity, as they will in sports, they learn to put their chin up, throw back their shoulders, and grind through things," Brian noted. "That's good to learn because there's going to be many times in life when they will have to do just that. I think we can give them an opportunity to practice those lessons

here and to deal not only with adversity, but also with success. How do you stay humble?"

Part of the overall lesson, he added, is their realizing that when they do fail, as most of us will, "it's not life or death," but an opportunity to learn from that failure and do better the next time.

Another special aspect to sports is having the larger community rally around a team, particularly one enjoying some success—making a run for the league championship or a post-season title.

"Everybody feels rejuvenated," Osborn pointed out. "It adds more pride to everything that goes on. You drive down the road and see the Gladiator banners hanging up and the signs in the business windows. There's something about high school sports that creates this pride and loyalty in a community, especially a smaller community like Fowlerville. It's just special."



The Fowlerville community proudly supports high school sports.

Acapulco Tanning, continued from page 15

in-law, so that family connection was what helped me get the job."

She stayed there for a year before going back to school.

"I earned an associate's degree from Schoolcraft Community in office administration," Gail said.

While the education came in handy later in life, she found that working in an office was "not my thing."

She married her husband, Doug, on July 21, 1990, noting that "we were high school sweethearts."

"Doug works as a borer operator, installing underground gas lines," Gail said.

The couple and their children moved to the Pinckney area 20 years ago. Dino and his wife, meanwhile, had also relocated to Livingston County where he opened a tanning salon in Howell. He subsequently offered Gail a job.

"I had worked there for two years when he decided to open a larger facility

in Fowlerville and offered my husband and I a partnership," she pointed out. "So, we came here."

The rest, as they say, is history.

Gail has three children: Jordan, age 25, who works at Acapulco Tanning; Jada, 22, who resides in Kalamazoo; and Jace, 13, who is at home.

After 15 years of being in business, she said her favorite part is the customers, adding that "A lot of them have become friends."

"I feel that I'm a people person, so this type of business fits into that," Gail said. "I also enjoy it because our customers come here, spend time, and usually leave feeling better."

Acapulco Tanning is located at 8079 Country Corner Drive, in the plaza off South Fowlerville Road, just south of I-96. The salon is open 10am-9pm Monday thru Friday and 10am-4pm Saturday and Sunday. The phone number is 517-223-9400.



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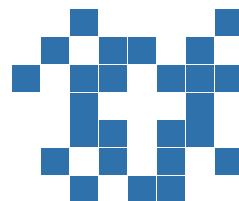
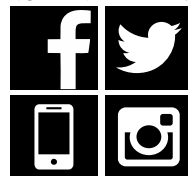
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Total Security Solutions held a Grand Opening celebration in June of 2019 of its new, nearly 48,000 square foot facility on Garden Lane in Fowlerville.



Jim Richards, the CEO of Total Security Solutions, cut the ribbon at a Grand Opening celebration held on June 6, 2019.

Report on Fowlerville Industrial Parks

“Over 27 Years of Progress”

The Local Development Financing Authority—better known as the LDFA—has been administering the Industrial Parks in our community for over 27 years—doing so on behalf of the Village of Fowlerville.

The parks are located on East Van Riper Road, Garden Lane, National Drive and West Grand River, all of them contained within the LDFA District.

Since our first project in 1994, the LDFA has seen a great deal of growth and development, both in light industrial manufacturing facilities locating here as well as major infrastructure improvements within the district.

There are roughly 17 businesses operating within the district, with over 1,200 new jobs being created since 1995.

Among the Goals of the LDFA are:

1) Promoting Fowlerville as a ‘Great Place to Do Business’

Among the benefits Fowlerville has to offer is its central location within a 65-mile radius of Michigan’s larger cities, including Metro Detroit, Flint,

Lansing, and Ann Arbor, the easy access to the I-96 expressway, the availability of rail service, and the nearby Spencer J. Hardy Airport—plus a ‘Business Friendly’ attitude by local government and the community as a whole. These attributes are highlighted in a promotional video that is shown to prospective clients and interested parties. The video is available on the Village of Fowlerville’s web site: fowlerville.org under the LDFA heading. We would encourage anyone that has interest to visit the Village’s website and view the video.

2) Helping Current Companies with Operations & Expansion Projects

While attracting new development is a priority, retaining and assisting businesses already located here with their operational needs and expansion plans is equally important.

One recent expansion in Fowlerville was the opening of Total Security Solutions’ new 48,000 square ft. manufacturing facility which is located on a 4.2 acre parcel at the west end of Garden Lane—with room to further enlarge its footprint. The company had outgrown its former facility located elsewhere in the district. This

was estimated to be in excess of a \$5.0 million investment by the company.

Asahi-Kasei Plastics NA, which currently has a large manufacturing facility on East Van Riper Road, recently announced the purchase of its neighboring property—complete with a large warehouse—along with its plans to expand operations to include both properties into one campus. This will be an approximately \$4.35 million investment beyond the cost of purchasing the neighboring property.

3) Making Necessary Infrastructure Improvements

A key component to the growth of light industrial manufacturing in the district, and all of the jobs that are created, has been infrastructure improvements. Over the past 27 years, the list includes: two water towers, the expansion of water and sewer lines, a bridge over the Red Cedar River on Garden Lane, and road projects that involve asphalt paving and the installation of storm sewers and curb & gutter. The projects have often seen DTE Energy and Consumers Energy making improvements to their respective electrical and natural gas



Completing upgrades to the bridge on Garden Lane was part of an improvement project that took place in 2018-19.



Asahi Kasei recently purchased a neighboring parcel—complete with a large warehouse—and announced plans to expand operations to include both properties into one campus.

services.

With much of this work now in place, the LDFA has shifted its focus of late to maintaining this vital infrastructure. Since 2017 alone, approximately \$2.0 million was spent on road and other infrastructure improvements. Additional upgrades are outlined within the LDFA's Plan Amendment that was approved in 2019.

While these infrastructure investments have helped the companies within the LDFA District, the larger community has also benefitted from better water and sewer service, having Garden Lane as a travel route, additional tax revenues for our local governments, and the additional economic activity generated by those who are employed at the facilities.

The funding for the LDFA comes from property taxes that are captured within the district. These include the Village of Fowlerville, Handy Township, and Livingston County. Revenues are used to fund administrative operations and promotional efforts, make payments on money borrowed to fund earlier projects, and maintain a capital fund for any future projects. Some of the captured dollars are returned to the local municipalities.

The LDFA's annual budget and overall plan are approved by the Fowlerville Village Council. The administration of the district's operations and improvement projects are overseen



A recent project of the LDFA was repaving and making other improvements to a stretch of National Drive, a roadway that services factories located at the corner of West Grand River and Gregory Road.

by an appointed board. Current members include:

- Phil Utter**, LDFA Chair & Fowlerville Businessman
- Paul Harmon**, LDFA Vice Chair & Fowlerville Business Owner
- Bill Call**, LDFA Secretary & Handy Township Zoning Administrator
- Ed Alverson**, Handy Township Supervisor
- Carol Hill**, Village of Fowlerville President
- Doug Helzerman**, Livingston County Commissioner
- Ron Daly**, Fowlerville Business Owner
- Wayne Roedel**, Superintendent of Fowlerville Schools

The LDFA Board works with the Economic Development Council of

Livingston County and its consulting firm, Ann Arbor SPARK, in promoting the district to clients, assisting the companies in obtaining the necessary governmental permits, site-plan approvals, and tax-abatement requests when they decide to expand, and advising companies on job-training grants and securing loans.

The LDFA Board is proud of its accomplishments over the past quarter-of-a-century and appreciative of the support given by the Fowlerville Village Council, Village Planning Commission, Handy Township Board, and all other affected units of government along with the entire Fowlerville Community. Working together, we look forward to another several decades of Progress.

“It happened for a purpose,” said Roger Brady on how he got into the pet boarding business

By Steve Horton

So how did a fellow who grew up in Redford Township, was working as a fireman-paramedic for the City of Southfield, with a wife and young kids, end up owning a pet boarding kennel for the past 47 years in Fowlerville?

Well, you could attribute the series of events and decisions to happenstance, but Roger Brady—the proprietor of Brady Kennels on South Hogback Road—says in a quiet voice, “I’m a Christian. It happened for a purpose.”

At the very least it’s an interesting story and Roger, in offering details about his life and business, does so by telling a story and then another, rather than utilizing a straight-forward chronology.

“I was sitting on the porch with my Labrador when Jerry VanStee, who was driving by, stopped, began visiting and out of the clear blue asked if I’d like to help him train labs,” Roger recalled. “I said ‘yes.’ Now he lived over on South Cemetery Road and rarely had reason to drive down Hogback. But he happened to do so when I was on the porch. Also, he was a complete stranger. This was the first time we’d met.”

That meeting, and working together to train dogs, would eventually take the two of them to a pet boarding kennel in Bay City.

“I’d never seen one before,” Roger said. “I said to the owner ‘what’s this all about.’”

The explanation of how the business operated, plus the fact that you could make money babysitting a dog or cat, sparked an idea in his mind that this might be a good sideline business.

“I visited five different kennels in Farmington and Livonia, asking questions and trying to get as much information as possible,” he said. “I told them I wouldn’t be in competition and, in fact, one of the owners, a lady, said I could board her overflow once I



Roger Brady began his pet boarding business in 1973 by installing 12 kennels, along with a wash area and office in an outbuilding at the family home on South Hogback Road. Brady Kennels has grown since then. He’s shown here with his black lab at the entrance of one of the 79 kennels at the facility.

was ready.”

Encouraged by what he’d learned, Roger set about converting the outbuilding at his country residence into a place that could house dogs. This was in the summer of 1972

“We put in 12 kennels on the east side,” he said, “with interior cages and outdoor runs. There was also a small office and an area to wash the dogs and a room to house the cats.”

His goal was to be open by Christmas, but delays and having to oversee the project in-between his work shifts at the fire department pushed the date back to March.

Roger began putting the word out that Brady Kennels was open, with a boarding fee of \$3-a-day.

The response? Let’s say that there wasn’t a long line waiting once the doors opened. But it proved only a matter of time.

“I remember running in to tell my wife that we’d gotten our first customer,” he said. “It was a neighbor on Hogback Road. We also handled some of the overflow for the lady I’d talked to. We didn’t have to do that too long, since we started to get some clients.”

The gradual increase in customers,

including repeat business, prompted Roger to add 12 more kennels on the west side of the barn.

That was in 1975. A year later he put up a second building, with 26 kennels, a wash area and moved the office to that location. A third building was added in 2003.

"We have a total of 79 kennels for the dogs with runs, plus an area for cats and other pets," he said. "We have a wash area for larger dogs and one for smaller dogs, along with play areas."

Roger pointed out that there was a learning curve that's coincided with this expansion.

"When I started, some of the dogs were getting out," he noted. "I discovered that the wire cages needed to be more heavy duty. I also had to install different latches since there were dogs that could jiggle them open."

The new buildings have floor gutters which aid when cleaning out the kennels, and the mats are made of a special material that dries more quickly after being washed—two examples of finding more efficient ways to run the kennel.

Along with learning how to improve operations, the curve also involved learning how to handle the pets which have different personalities.

"We have a questionnaire that the customer fills out that we keep on file, informing us about the dog—whether they're a biter, do they get along with other dogs, are they afraid of storms or require certain medicines," he pointed out. "Based on what we're told, we can handle them in a certain way. We also get their phone number in case of an emergency, and we have access to nearby veterinary care."

Roger said he's also learned a few tricks, like having a thick glove when picking up a cat to protect him or the help from bites and scratches, and tricking a finicky pet into consuming its meal or pills.

"We want to see an empty dish bowl," he added. "As for getting them to take their medicine, we might use peanut butter, cheese, or a hotdog or



Brady Kennels houses mainly dogs and cats but can also accommodate other small pets at their facility on Hogback Road in Fowlerville.

hamburger."

Brady Kennels also requires that incoming pets have certain shots with the goal of avoiding the spread of diseases.

The curve extends into the business operations as well.

"I have a report card we give to a customer when they come to pick up their pet, detailing what we did during their stay," he pointed out. "I have a blue one for males and a pink one for females. I found out, early on, that some owners didn't like me referring to their female pet as a 'he', so this allows me to avoid that potential problem."

He also reconfigured the driveway to alleviate the mini-traffic jams that occur late Sunday afternoon or early evening when customers arrive to pick up their pets.

While dogs are his main pets, followed by cats, Roger pointed out that over the years "we've had parrots, a flying squirrel, iguanas, a chinchilla, and we now have a rabbit that stays with us quite frequently."

During the early years of the business, Brady Kennels was a family operation, with Roger's wife, Diane, and his children helping out.

"I would work a 24-hour shift at the fire hall, so Diane would take care of the business," he noted. "As each of our six kids got old enough, they pitched in as well. On my day off, I'd work at the

kennel all day, making improvements and taking care of things."

Later on he hired part-time help, but he pointed out that for many years he's been assisted by his daughter-in-law, Vicki Brady.

Roger also had more time to devote to this business when he retired from the fire department in 1992.

He said that a philosophy he's had, and still practices, is to keep investing in the business.

"I like to do something new every year," Roger explained. "It might be a major project like the new buildings or something smaller like installing a concrete sidewalk in place of a graveled walkway. A lot of businesses don't put money back into their operations, but I feel it is important."

The customer base, after 47 years, includes local pet owners, as well as those from neighboring communities. "Most of our out-of-town trade comes from towns in Southeast Michigan," he said.

Roger added that the busiest times are in summer, after school lets out for vacation and families take time off, along with the holidays—July 4th, Thanksgiving weekend and the Christmas holiday—season when many people travel.

A 'down' period is usually the weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas

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The play yard at Brady Kennels allows dogs some outside play time while they are staying at the kennel.

Roger Brady, continued from page 33

when people tend to stay home, he pointed out.

Roger started off by asking other kennel owners questions, picking their brains for information. He said that he's now able to provide that information to others, but added, "Whenever I go some place, I often visit a kennel to see how it's operated."

As a side note, he noted that four of his children, when younger, raised animals that were used by Leader Dogs for the Blind.

* * *

Another story, tied to how he got into the pet boarding business, is how the family ended up in Fowlerville.

Roger attended Redford Union High School and it was there that he met Diane. After graduating in 1960, he joined the National Guard and spent six months at training camp. From there he worked at two different factory jobs and then joined the Detroit Police Force in

1963 as a patrolman. That necessitated that he move into the city.

In April of 1964, he and Diane were married and resided in a small house. A few years later he took a job with the Southfield Fire Department.

A life in the suburbs seemed to be in the cards. But then he went rabbit hunting in Brighton in 1970, which at the time still had a lot of open spaces.

"I was out in the field with my dog and found that I really loved being in the country," Roger said. "I went into the real estate office. I had two kids at the time and told the agent what I was looking for.

"We couldn't find anything in our price range of \$30,000," he continued. "We went to Howell and still couldn't find anything. The lady suggested we look in Fowlerville."

A farm home with five acres was listed by the real estate firm of Riby Holmes and Alex Tait for \$35,000.

"We walked into the place on a Saturday, looked at the kitchen, and my wife fell in love with it," he noted.

"You could barely move in our kitchen in Detroit. There was also a barn and an outbuilding. I'd never really been in a barn before."

The Bradys, with no money to put down, offered \$31,000, but Roger felt they'd need to sell their Detroit home for at least \$21,000.

"We got an offer for \$19,000," he said. "I wasn't going to accept it, but a friend of mine said 'if you really want this place in Fowlerville, what's two thousand dollars'. So, I accepted and we bought this place. We loved the town and living in the country. Diane eventually got involved in all kinds of activities."

Those included volunteering at St. Agnes Catholic Church, being a Girl Scout and Cub Scout leader, taking a waitress job at Nickerson Farms Restaurant, and working at the Handy Township office. When the children were young, she was also involved in school activities.

The children, all grown now, include: Becky, Dan, Jill, Cindy, Jackie, and Matt, along with 11 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Roger sits on the board for the dog park in Howell and attends St. Agnes in addition to overseeing the kennel.

At age 79, he says he'd like to sell the business and retire to a smaller home with a pole barn "where I can tinker" and have a tractor with a snow plow so in the winter I can clear the neighbors' driveways."

He added that it'll take a "certain type of person" who will be able to afford the business and property and want to take over the boarding kennel as it's set up.

Meanwhile, he'll continue operating Brady Kennels, a task he doesn't mind doing for a while longer.

"I love it," he said. "I like the dogs, and like running the business. I'm a talker and like visiting with our customers."

Brady Kennels is located at 3650 Hogback Rd., Fowlerville. Phone number is 517-223-3939. Website is: www.BradyKennels.com

Fowlerville couple's passion for childcare making an impact on the lives of local families

By Ashlee Buhler

Whether she was working in childcare or working as a pediatrician, Cassie LaButte knew she was destined to work with children as part of her future career. Growing up, both her parents came from large families. Her mom came from a family of 14 and her dad was one of 7. As the oldest sibling in her own family growing up, LaButte said she always had that caretaking responsibility.

"I just grew to love it," LaButte said. "As a child, we always played school or babies. Those are the memories I have growing up."

After graduating from Pinckney High School in 2003, LaButte enrolled at Eastern Michigan University and began taking classes toward an early education degree and nursing degree. LaButte knew that if she was going to pursue nursing, she was interested in pediatrics. However, her gut instinct was telling her to get more involved. LaButte began working at different childcare facilities, first as a lead teacher and eventually an assistant director. She also worked as a nanny for a family of five. That's when she decided to make her dream a reality.

In 2009, at the age of 22, LaButte decided to open her home to families in the community and create Roo's Corner. Although she faced uncertainty as a young mother, starting a business with a one-year-old son at the time, she knew she could make an impact on the lives of other children.

"I decided to let the family I was a nanny for know that I was going to pursue this passion and educate children in my home," LaButte said. "I didn't know how it was going to go, but honestly it evolved on its own. It was like a snowball effect, it just continued



Cassie and Darin LaButte are the owners of Roo's Corner Childcare and Preschool, located in Downtown Fowlerville.

to flourish."

For several years, LaButte ran the daycare out of her home in Fowlerville with at least a dozen children enrolled in her program. As the business grew and the wait list for care expanded, LaButte started to think of ways she could evolve her business, including moving to a new, larger location in Downtown Fowlerville.

"A lot of these parents don't know what quality care looks like and they just say, 'Oh they have kids, they're operating, they must be a great program.' And that's not always the case," LaButte said. "I really took the next couple of years trying to decide where we could expand our program. We were so thankful to find where we are today, where we are able to show families what quality care is and be able to provide that for more than just the few that I could take care of at my home."

Since the summer of 2019, Roo's Corner Childcare and Preschool has

been housed at 206 E. Grand River Ave. However, before that opening came months of renovations which began in May of 2018.

"The space we are in was completely gutted so it was considered a new construction build," LaButte said. "It was quite a process to build everything in here and make it what we needed it to be, but it was a clean slate and we kind of got to create how we wanted it to be and it was exciting to do that."

What started as a gutted building with no bathrooms, all concrete floors, metal stud walls and an overall "scary" appearance (as LaButte put it), soon transformed into a friendly and inviting childcare center with a home-like feel. That home-like setting is something LaButte feels sets her daycare apart from others.

"A lot of my families that I had when I ran the business from my home wanted a home setting and I didn't want to take that away from them," she said.

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Roo's Corner offers preschool for children beginning at age 3.

Roo's Corner, continued from page 35

“So, we worked very hard and went through a lot of hoops with the building department to create that kind of feel. We have upgraded residential carpet in here, nice vinyl flooring — so it doesn’t look like a school—and installed soft lighting.”

LaButte’s father-in-law custom made all the wood in the building, including pine trim windows and a 6-foot wide barn door that divides the preschool room from the toddler and infant room. “Those are just the extra things we took upon ourselves to make sure we were creating that home environment for the families,” LaButte said.

LaButte has also been able to utilize a grassy parcel behind the building as a play area for the children. It’s currently fenced off into two sections— one for infants and toddlers and the other for the preschool kids.

More importantly, the larger building now allows LaButte to serve more families. She started with 15 children that transferred from her home daycare, and that number grew to 26 by the time the new location opened. Just three weeks later, 55 children were enrolled at Roo’s Corner. She now has a team of 10 people to help meet the increase in demand.

“It was insanely exciting and more fast paced than I anticipated,

but honestly it fills my heart with so much joy to be able to facilitate and fulfill this dream that I’ve had since I was working back at home with a tiny house,” LaButte said. “It still brings tears to my eyes because it’s such a strong passion that I have, but I’m so thankful for all the people who allowed this to happen and made this dream real because it really is a dream come true.”

Roo’s Corner offers infant and toddler care Monday through Friday, year-round, from 6:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Roo’s also offers a preschool program.

“On the preschool side we allow them to come whether they are potty trained or not because we feel that the family setting, where we all learn together, helps promote potty training. Our preschool program starts at 3 years

of age and goes up until kindergarten age,” she pointed out.

Once ready for kindergarten, LaButte said she works with the parents and the school districts of Fowlerville and the surrounding areas to place the child with a teacher that works best for them.

LaButte said being able to give back to the community by guiding and educating children has been an important job, one that she’s honored to have.

“Having such a big impact and being able to allow families to come here and trust us to cultivate these little minds and help them explore and learn, that is what drives me every day,” she explained. “I honestly think being able to provide quality care within our community is the biggest, number one goal and I feel that I have satisfied that.”

The daily smiles, however, are what reminds her of why she ended up here in the first place.

“I love the smiles,” LaButte said. “They come in and hug me and say, ‘Good morning Miss Cassie’ and those smiles make my day. It doesn’t matter how your day has been, these little people make you happy.”

Cassie LaButte and her husband Darin live in Fowlerville with their three children Broxton (12), Brooklyn (10) and Brystin (6). For more information on Roo’s Corner visit <https://www.rooscorner.org/> or call 517-223-1190.



Roo's Corner also offers infant and toddler care Monday through Friday, year-round.

Fowlerville businessman serves community with security & storage companies

By Ashlee Buhler

A.J. Pikkarainen wears different hats as part of the Fowlerville business community. They include a security systems company he took over several years ago after working as an employee, the more recent addition of a self-storage business, and owning several rental homes.

His journey to becoming an entrepreneur began straight out of high school when he met a small security business owner. In 1998, just two days after graduating from Fowlerville High School, Pikkarainen landed a job with this firm and never looked back.

Working in the security trade was something Pikkarainen said came naturally.

"I had a counselor back in school that had a saying 'find something you like to do and figure out a way to make somebody pay you to do it.' So I used that analogy," A.J. said. "I was always tinkering with this stuff as a kid, I always liked electronics and stuff like that, so it kind of ended up being a natural fit."

Pikkarainen worked with the security company Ram Services in Howell until 2009. It was at this time that he took over the business and formed Pikk Services, a security company that designs, builds, and installs alarm, camera, and access control entry systems. They now service around 600 customers throughout the state of Michigan and neighboring states.

While operating this business and traveling around the country has kept him busy, he and his wife Katie Pikkarainen—the proprietor of State Farm Insurance Agency in Fowlerville—also invested in a few single-family rental homes and a duplex in town, adding that to their business portfolio.

In the last few months, Pikkarainen has expanded his business aspirations in



A.J. Pikkarainen shows off part of a security system offered by his company, Pikk Security Services. He took over an existing company, located in Howell, in 2009 after working for the firm since his high school graduation.

a completely different direction.

Pikk's Self Storage is what he calls his most recent endeavor. It began near the end of 2019 when he purchased the former Oak Tree Mini Storage property off Van Riper Road and took over the operation, albeit with a new name.

"It just felt like a good business model," Pikkarainen said of the decision to launch a second business. "I feel like storage is a strong market and there is always a desire for it. It was a way to further grow our portfolio."

Pikk's Self Storage currently has 60 storage units on site. They have also added outdoor storage parking for vehicles, boats, and RV's.

Piggy backing on this, he added U-Haul moving truck rentals to the location. In addition, A.J. Pikkarainen plans to open a second location for storage on the former Gascon's Greenhouse property, located on West

Grand River between Fowlerville and Webberville. He had also purchased that property last year.

A.J. and Katie have three children: Madison, Ella, and Alex.

When he is not working, he enjoys playing outside with his kids, spending time on the lake where the family has a cottage, and doing anything he can do to just get away and have a little fun.

For many, the thought of managing two businesses might sound daunting but for Pikkarainen it's become second nature.

"I wear a lot of hats and I'm getting pretty decent at juggling," Pikkarainen said with a laugh. "Fortunately, I have a pretty good team that helps keep me organized, and we all kind of work together. It seems to be working, and we just keep moving forward."

The daily challenge is what he enjoys

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A more recent business endeavor by the Fowlerville businessman was purchasing the mini-storage facility on East Van Riper Road in Fowlerville and adding U-Haul moving truck rentals.

Fowlerville businessman, continued from page 37

most about what he does.

"I like the challenge, and I like the way you have to think about it," he said.

"I like giving people peace of mind by providing a security system. I find that satisfying. And making them feel safe and providing them with a service that they need."

Pikk's Self Storage is located at

615 E. Van Riper. The phone number is 517-376-4241 and the website is www.pikkselfstorage.com. The phone number for Pikk Security Services is 517-546-9775. The email is: service@pikksecurity.com.

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Supporting Downtown Businesses



The Downtown Business District has seen a number of improvements in recent years, many of them the result of DDA projects and funding assistance.

Improving Building Façades



Money from the Downtown Development Authority's Façade Improvement Program is being used to help fund the new bricking on the exterior of the former Ford Garage.

Fowlerville Downtown Development Authority

Helping Make Fowlerville "A Great Place to Live & Grow"

The purpose of the Fowlerville Downtown Development Authority—known as the DDA—is to help support, enhance, and promote the small businesses located in or near the Downtown—with most of them situated along Grand River and Grand Avenue.

The tax money captured within the DDA District from the Village, Handy Township, and Livingston County is used in a variety of ways.

- support administrative operations;
- fund capital improvements and purchase property;

- develop a façade improvement program;
- promote special events;
- partner with the Village to cover expenses in the downtown area;
- create a culture to attract new businesses to the community.

Providing additional parking to the Downtown Business District has been a major priority. Properties have been purchased over the years with this purpose in mind.

Drawing more people to the Downtown is another goal.

Making storefronts more attractive and encouraging investment is also on the list of priorities.

During the DDA's current fiscal year that runs from July 1, 2019 thru June 30, 2020, the board has:

- Completed the purchase of real property at 154 N. Grand Avenue as part of the future development plan for the Northeast Quadrant.
- Upgraded the speaker system in the Downtown's Main 4 Corners area with more speakers and microphones that is used during the

Fowlerville Downtown Development Authority Board

The Downtown Development Authority Board, which administers the DDA District, operates under a plan approved by the Fowlerville Village Council. Members, who are appointed by council, consist of business owners & a residential representative. The current board includes:

Steve MacDermaid, Chair
Paul Harmon, Vice Chair
Aleta Kadletz, Secretary
Dawn Horton, Treasurer

Connie Shear, Handy Township Representative
Carol Hill, Fowlerville Village President
Kevin Caine
Jeff Kodet
Reggie Talbot
Karl Witt

Administrative Contact: **Michelle Lamb**,
 Fowlerville Village Treasurer
 mlamb@fowlerville.org
517-223-3771, extension 15

Ladies Night Out



Bringing more people to the Downtown businesses by sponsoring events like 'Ladies Night Out' is a goal of the Downtown Development Authority.

community's July 4th and Christmas in the Ville parades.

- Approved a grant through the DDA's Façade Improvement Program to help fund the exterior renovation of the

former Ford Garage on West Grand River.

- Supported 'Ladies Night Out' & the 'Small Business Saturday' shopping promotions that brought customers to local

Music in the Park



The Fowlerville High School Jazz Band has helped kick off 'Music in the Park' for the past two years. The concerts are sponsored by the Fowlerville DDA.

stores & shops.

- Sponsored the 'Music in the Park' concerts that were held during the past two summers at the Rotary Centennial Park.

FUN IN THE VILLE



The Strategic Planning Committee

was an idea created by the Downtown Development Authority to look for ways to help enhance and promote the community. The group sponsors the annual 'Fun in the Ville' event that includes various kids' activities, arts-and-crafts booths, and musical

entertainment.

The committee also supports local businesses by recording videos that can be used by the owner on their website or for other promotional purposes.

A future goal of the group is to locate a Community Center.

While the DDA is focused on helping local businesses within its district, the Strategic Planning

Committee embraces a larger view of the community that includes our local governments, the schools, churches, service clubs, the library, and non-profit organizations, along with area businesses. By combining all of these resources, the committee strives to make Fowlerville a "great place" to live, raise a family, work, worship, and enjoy recreational activities.

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Kodet's True Value Hardware		Ron Daly Designs - www.rondalydesigns.com	
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KW Corporation - www.kw-corp.com		Sandy Baker - Preview Properties.com	
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Local Development Financing Authority		Shaner's Cutting Edge	
www.fowlerville.org (517) 223-3771 ext. 15	30-31	(517) 223-7523	21
Livingston Spring Automotive Repair		Shear Image Salon and Boutique	
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Mayhew's Tree Farm & Nursery - www.mayhewstreefarm.com		State Representative Hank Vaupel - www.michigan.gov	
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Mugg & Bopps		State Senator Lana Theis - www.michigan.gov	
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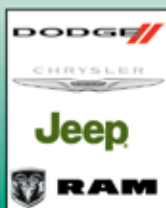
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