

OZAUKEE COUNTY TOURISM

Celebrating our amazing women in tourism

Women's History Month was established in 1987 to reflect on the often-overlooked contributions of women to United States history. The actual celebration of Women's History Month in March grew out of a week-long celebration of women's contributions to culture, history and society. In honor of this tradition, the Ozaukee County Tourism Board was asked to share the stories of a few of the many women making a difference by promoting tourism in our communities.

You don't have to look far to find a young professional making a difference in our county. **Amanda Hansen**, general manager at the Hampton Inn and Suites in Grafton, is on the Grafton Area Chamber of Commerce's Board of Directors and was president in 2021. She was also a member of the Ozaukee County Tourism Council Board of Directors.

Hansen joined Hampton Inn and Suites nine years ago, starting in sales, assisting in opening and overseeing multiple hotels and working her way up to her current position.

"I have really immersed myself in becoming involved in the community and on my way, I have met so many of the wonderful people of Oz," Hansen said.

Hansen enjoys creating an environment where a guest can come through the doors and feel like the Hampton is their home away from home.

Like many in the hospitality industry, one of Hansen's

biggest challenges is finding and retaining team members. After a tough few years the industry is booming once again, and visitors to Ozaukee County can be reassured that Hansen and her staff will continue to work hard to assure the happiness of their number one asset — the guest.

Cori Rice of White Rice Advertising has been working in the advertising industry for 30 years, and tourism-related nonprofits have always held a special place in her heart.

"There is a special joy that comes from spending time with friends and family, and I find it so rewarding to shine a light on places and events that bring people together for positive reasons and fun experiences," Rice said.

Rice moved to Ozaukee County almost 20 years ago, and it didn't take long for her to become a self-appointed ambassador for the area. Within months of establishing White Rice Advertising in Cedarburg, she was asked to join the board of the Cedarburg Chamber of Commerce, and then the city's Tourism, Promotion & Development Committee, and then the Ozaukee County Tourism Council.

She remains active on several committees, and currently serves as President of Festivals of Cedarburg. She relishes any opportunity to promote the amazing businesses and organizations we have here. Whether it's writing an article for a tourism publication, creating a marketing piece, helping plan an event or just participating in one of the many events Ozaukee



Submitted photo

Cori Rice does her part to promote Cedarburg by riding a camel during the Cedarburg Winter Festival.

County offers, Rice is always 100% committed to making sure everyone is having the best time imaginable.

Rice said her greatest challenge is managing her commitments.

"I love to be generous with my time," she said. "And I hate saying no when an organization asks for help... but I also have a responsibility to my family, my business and our firm's clients. There have been times when I've been asked to sit on a board, or donate my time to a project that I very much support, and I've reluctantly had to say no. I am realizing that nobody can say yes to everything and do it all well."

Lisa Green, vice president at Memories Ballroom in the town of Port Washington, has a can-do spirit, serving her

guests with calm professionalism, impeccable organization and a smile. She started with Memories as a part-time cook back in 2002 to make some extra money and get some adult time (she was running an in-home daycare at the time). Green was promoted to operations manager within a few years, and in addition to balancing the necessary responsibilities at Memories, she also worked full-time in food service at St. John's Catholic School in Port Washington and currently serves as the cook at Stepping Stones Day Care in Belgium.

Green said, "My greatest accomplishment has been having my children go through this journey with me. They worked here while growing up, and are still working here part time in different aspects of the business."

Green's son Jeremy is the head cook and does marketing/IT. Her daughters Samantha, Morgan and Madilynn are head servers and bartenders. Her son Kyle came aboard full-time and is the facility-maintenance-sound tech person. Her children's significant others also frequently step in to help out.

Green joked that her husband, Terry, is the only family member not officially employed as "he does not think he could work for me," but notes he does help out any time he is asked. Her goal is to someday own the business.

Whether you are attending Memories for dinner theater, Chicken Comedy performances, murder mysteries, special music or a private event, you can be guaranteed a relaxing night of top-notch

service and delicious food thanks to Lisa's skillful management.

Irene Buechler, owner of Buechler Farms in Belgium, is energetic, kind and extremely generous with her time and facility. Buechler has been part of the Ozaukee tourism landscape since she and her husband, Brian, had the opportunity to buy Brian's family farm in 2005, prompting the opportunity to start Buechler Farms business.

Buechler is full of amazing ideas that continue to grow and improve their business. She and her husband keep Belgium bustling with activities and events, from weddings, concerts and seasonal events to circuses and the annual Kick the Dust Up Rodeo. Buechler says her greatest success is "where we have come with the business and the opportunity to share our dream with others. It is the best feeling to see people enjoy what we have created."

Kristin Gies, executive director of Mequon Nature Preserve Inc., grew up in Mequon and wanted to give back to the community that helped raise her. As an environmentalist and botanist, she took the lead as executive director of the preserve in 2007 and tackled the ongoing challenge of restoring 510 acres to the thriving ecosystem it once was. The MNP was officially incorporated as a nonprofit in 2011, setting the groundwork for generations to come.

"Restoring land is a long-term goal," Gies said, "and working side by side with the right people is key."

She is very proud of the



Gies

staff, the board of directors and the many committee members who help guide the direction of the organization; and the hundreds of volunteers who have helped over the decades. She takes immense pride in watching the land respond to their efforts and witnessing countless species once again call MNP home.

According to Gies, one of their greatest successes is knowing that thousands of children who have experienced the natural beauty of this land have been inspired to lead a life that includes stewardship. Gies did not want to miss the opportunity to mention that funding is a challenge, and that the MNP is 100% funded by grants and donations, not tax dollars, but that the rewards are more than worth the challenges.

In honor of Women's History Month, please help us celebrate these and the other women in our county who contribute to the growth and development of tourism. For information on tourism in Ozaukee County visit www.ozaukeetourism.com and follow the Ozaukee County Tourism Facebook page. On behalf of the Ozaukee County Tourism Council, thank you for helping to make Ozaukee County a wonderful place for all to live, work and visit.

This is the first in a two-part series celebrating women in tourism in Ozaukee County.