

# Millie's Restaurant Opens and Runs Smoothly Its First Year

By Sean Ely

When Brad and Nancy Chambers decided to open a restaurant for the beginning of the summer season in May, they had ideas for menu items, ice-cream flavors, and the arrangement of seating. One particular item was still undecided, however, and that was a name for the restaurant.

The Chambers' have three daughters, but both Brad and Nancy knew that it wouldn't be fair to name the establishment after just one of them. So, they improvised, naming the restaurant "Millie's on Main" after the family's seven-year-old Portuguese water dog.

Family was the founding theme for the restaurant.

"Millie's was set up as a great place to come with the children," said Mrs. Chambers. "The kids love the ice cream. It was designed to make families feel comfortable, a place that everyone can enjoy."

The children are into the chocolate malts, she said, as well as The Whole Kit and Kaboodle, an item designed for the fearless with five scoops of ice cream, three sauces, five toppings, whipped cream, and a cherry on top.

Parents can also order a beer or glass of wine.

Manager Denise Hanrahan said a number of fathers who come in after a long day exploring the Island just look at the bar area and say, "Thanks," after they realize they can get a beer.

Since their opening day

Saturday, May 19, the eatery has served wraps, sandwiches, hot dogs, burgers, soup, salad, desserts, candy, and their most popular item, pizza. Their location on Main Street, next to the Carriage Tours office, puts them in a prime spot for business, said Ms. Hanrahan.

Millie's, Ms. Hanrahan said, is affordable and family oriented, and it has great food, a great combination for Mackinac Island.

"They shouldn't have to worry about money, because this Island is all about having a good time," she said. "It's a great family shop, a fun place, at a great location, and the building is incredible."

One of the larger items is the sandwiches, which Millie's features seven of. Five of them are priced at under \$7, and the other two are \$7.95 and \$8.25

Mrs. Chambers said that she usually can only eat half of the large sandwiches, priced in the \$7 to \$8 range, which are made with bread baked fresh every morning. They bring customers back, she noted.

"We love seeing locals in Millie's," Mrs. Chambers said.

The building, which was the Pub and Oyster Bar last season, didn't need much renovating, said Mrs. Chambers. Oyster Bar owners Deborah and Sandra Orr, she said, are expert at setting up restaurants, so she took the basics of what they did and built on it a little bit.

The Chambers' took out the platform that used to separate the bar from the restaurant area,



Co-owner Nancy Chambers stands at the bar in Millie's on Main, a new restaurant she opened Saturday, May 19.

added another narrow wall-insert table across from the bar, changed the lighting, and changed the awning outside.

"The concept is entirely different, because the pub was a sit-down restaurant," Mrs. Chambers said. "We wanted to be a little bit more fun, family-friendly, and quick. We didn't want to change the colors, because we really liked those. All in all, we stuck to the bones of the building, because we completely admired them."

Mrs. Chamber loves the architecture of the building and considers it one of the nicest on the Island, because it feels sturdy and it has a long history with lots of stories.

Mr. and Mrs. Chambers, who met on Mackinac Island in 1986, were both Michigan State University undergraduates at the

time. Mrs. Chambers was employed at the Iroquois Hotel, and later Grand Hotel, while Mr. Chambers was with Carriage Tours, which his family owns. Mr. Chambers was a hotel-restaurant management major at the time, but it's taken the married couple 21 years to get back to the restaurant business.

"He finally gets to do it, and I have come back to it," she said. "We had three little girls and now we've been able to do it."

One of the gratifying parts of putting hard work and a lot of time into an establishment is the feedback, and Mrs. Chambers said that is something that Millie's does not lack.

"That's always our motivation first, to please the customer," she said. "I shouldn't be shocked, because that's what we set out to do, but when I stand at the door and people say how great the food was, I always say to myself, 'Wow, we did it!'"

Mrs. Chambers said that her family loves seeing this place come to life. She said that it

never gets old hearing how much people appreciate Millie's on Main.

"It's very satisfying," she said. "Brad and I weren't at all prepared for that. Even in the streets, people will stop us and tell us that they were in Millie's and it was really great. We hear that and are just amazed."

Ms. Hanrahan said that it's amazing how people, instead of getting up and leaving after they pay, will actually go up to the counter and comment about how incredible their meal was. She believes that is something special about both the restaurant and the people who come in.

Hannah Chambers, who works as a greeter, loves talking to the customers that come into Millie's. She has a lot of interest in the business and has been working more hours a week as the summer has progressed.

Mr. and Mrs. Chambers didn't exactly sit down and think about what everyone else would like in a restaurant. They actually formed every aspect of the restaurant around what they wanted to see in a place on Main Street. Mrs. Chambers said it was formed as a place where her family could go.

"With three girls, we've always been looking for a place like this to go," she said. "This is for us. That's why we love it here."

She said that the Island is their passion. They care about Mackinac Island, so by setting up a place like this, they have kept in mind what would help the Island.

"How can we make this a better place for people to visit?" That's the question the Chambers continually ask themselves.

They feel like Millie's on

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## Armstrong Named Volley Coach

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will now solicit bids for the new doors.

Three other doors need repair, and the board will look at other maintenance issues, such as vent covers and water puddles building up on the outside of the school. Mr. Mosley suggested that an architect take a look at the areas and provide the board with a few options. The board hopes a local contractor might also be able to give advice.

The Building and Grounds Committee was directed to solicit two estimates to replace the two inner doors and the other three doors.

Superintendent Roger

Schrock noted in his report the need for new carpeting in the library and teachers' lounge, and that was added to the board's to-do list.

Terry Armstrong is the school's new volleyball coach, and she will be working with soccer coach Ken Straight to develop a system of practicing and conditioning for the girls who play both sports, so they don't get burned out. Mary Patay will assist Mr. Straight with soccer and will volunteer her time to help the children with conditioning. The idea of having one bigger conditioning session as opposed to numerous smaller ones appealed to the board.

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