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Investment Group Projects Breathe New Life Into Downtown Pottstown



Chuck Harders, Steve Everett, and Dan Glennon at Red Horse Motoring Club

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INVESTMENT GROUP PROJECTS BREATHE NEW LIFE INTO DOWNTOWN POTTSTOWN



Dan Glennon, Steve Everett, and Chuck Harders at JJ Ratigan Brewing Company



JJ RATIGAN BREWING COMPANY

There's a lot of excitement "brewing" in Pottstown these days. The Fourth Annual Pottstown Investors Conference is right around the corner and opportunities for entrepreneurs and developers in Pottstown will be highlighted once again. With the recent opening of JJ Ratigan Brewing Company in the Ellis Mills building at 225 East High Street, also the location of Splitting Edge Axe Throwing, along with the resurgent return of the popular "Pottstown Nights" car show, sponsored by Red Horse Motoring Club, the good news about Pottstown is spreading and revitalization of the downtown is picking up steam. Over the past two years, a steady stream of new restaurants and retail establishments have set up shop in the downtown, thanks to the vision and efforts of several groups of investor/developers, whose projects are focused on making Pottstown a regional destination for recreation and dining. And one innovative and enthusiastic group of entrepreneurs in particular — comprised of realtor Steve Everett, attorney Dan Glennon, and retired Navy Lieutenant Commander Chuck Harders— are leading the charge to once again make Pottstown a regional destination and hub of activity.



PHOTOS BY STYLISH IMAGES



RED HORSE MOTING CLUB

“Steve Everett, Dan Glennon, and Chuck Harders are the type of investors Pottstown wants,” explains Peggy Lee-Clark, Executive Director of Pottstown Area Industrial Development (PAID, Inc.). “They came to town with ideas and found buildings that would work for those ideas. They were very adaptable and did not look for the perfect conditions. People often refer to the good bones of the buildings here but, they are not easy to adapt for today’s purposes. In addition, many of the properties suffer from years of neglect, so to be able to get past that and put them back into productive use is very special,” she said.

“Pottstown is lucky to have committed people like Dan, Steve, Chuck, and a handful of other investors who are focused on what businesses they can start or help to bring here,” Lee-Clark continued. “Real Estate investment is part of their model, but it is not a singular focus. That is the difference today, from what we were expe-

riencing previously with individuals who had more of a speculation focus. Personally, I’m grateful to be working with people who have picked Pottstown to revitalize. It is an exciting and rewarding time for Pottstown and PAID.”

“PAID has been an exceptionally good director of development,” Dan Glennon offers. “Peggy Lee-Clark helped us not only realize a lot of our ideas, but also helped us identify different buildings. She’s facilitated dialogue between other owners, and I think she really has a great grand plan for what Pottstown could look like.”

Among a half-dozen ongoing projects in Pottstown, this group of visionary



SPLITTING EDGE AXE THROWING

partners brought the Red Horse Moting Club to the spacious Ludwick Motors building at 132 E. 3rd Street (and with it they are organizing and sponsoring the return of the “Pottstown Nights” car show this year). The partners have also revived the stately Ellis Mills Department Store at 225 East High Street, home to Splitting Edge Axe Throwing and the newly opened JJ Ratigan Brewing Company.

(Continued on page 8)



Pottstown Investors Conference in Works for April 17

The Fourth Annual Pottstown Investors Conference sponsored by Hobart’s Run, The Hill School, and, this year, Pottstown Area Industrial Development, Inc. (PAID), will be held on Friday, April 17, 2020, again at Hill’s Center For The Arts, 760 Beech St., Pottstown. Registration begins at 8 a.m., and the conference kicks off at 9 a.m.

“This conference has been a game-changer for our community: It has highlighted Pottstown business and real estate opportunities and success stories and has provided valuable information to potential investors from the immediate region and beyond,” says Cathy Skitko, director of communications for Hobart’s Run. “This year’s event will spotlight the processes and collaborative players involved with investing in our town, among other timely topics.”

The keynote speaker will be Don Chen, president and CEO of the New York City-based Surdna Foundation, an organization focused on social justice. Prior to his appointment at Surdna, Chen was the director of the Cities and States Program at the Ford Foundation, where his work supported urban development initiatives.

Conference attendance and, therefore, related expenses have grown significantly over the past three years, with nearly 200 participants last year. This year a very minimal \$10 registration fee is being requested to help defray costs of the lavish and very popular “Taste of Pottstown Lunch,” a restaurant showcase buffet included with registration, as well as other conference costs.

The conference organizers also are seeking corporate sponsors. A \$150 sponsorship includes four conference registrants (at no additional cost) and public recognition of the organization’s support, both leading up to and during the event. To become a valued sponsor or register for the conference, contact Hobart’s Run Administrative Manager Stephanie Trauner at strauner@thehill.org or 610.705.1018.

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COVER STORY

(Continued from page 7)

The establishment of the Red Horse Motoring Club two years ago in the resurrected Ludwick Motors building, was the first big project in town for the partners, and the triumphant return of the car show to High Street this year is big news for the borough. For decades, from the 1950s through 1990s, Pottstown was a mecca and regional draw for antique and hot-rod car enthusiasts. Every weekend night, from Spring to Fall, High Street was transformed into a scene out of the movie *American Graffiti* as scores of souped-up, shiny vintage cars cruised up and down the four lanes through the center of town, "revving" their engines at stop lights and occasionally spinning their wheels off the line when the traffic light turned green. The car cruising days are over, but the opportunity to draw attention to Pottstown among car lovers throughout the region has returned, as the new car show will be staged on High Street between South York Street and South Evans Street on the first Saturday of each month from May through October. Red Horse no longer requires an entry fee for each car and will have vendor spots at the show to further benefit local businesses. The shows will be organized around various themes, like Hot Wheels Camaros in August, will display hundreds of show cars, and will put thousands of pairs of feet on the street in downtown Pottstown.

The Red Horse Motoring Club building itself combines the needs of small business owners looking for fun and interesting space to host special events and meetings, and the needs of car clubs and collectors for a dedicated place for enthusiasts to congregate. The club utilizes its 12,000 square feet by offering different areas to relax, host a client, hold a meeting or have a private gathering. Space at the club is available for events, performances, exhibitions, as a pop-up gallery, or for a collective get together with up to 500 clients and colleagues while surrounded by rare vintage cars,



antiques and authentic industrial glory!

Chuck Harders is an avid collector and dealer of all things petroliia and automobilia and keeps his vast collection displayed throughout the club. The collection at Red Horse is massive, encompassing all original antiques dating from the early 1960s back to the dawn of the gas and auto industry. Any person, car enthusiast or not, could spend hours just enjoying the collection alone! As a member of The Red Horse Motoring Club, you gain full access to the entire building and collection, including a state-of-the art audio system throughout and 15-foot outside movie screen. An individual membership is \$125 per month. Corporate memberships range from \$125-\$700 (depending on the company needs). Members have exclusive access and amenity privileges.

In addition to the Red Horse Motoring Club, the partners further support the growth of Pottstown's future by establishing other small businesses such as Little Gym International, Ice Cream Café (now Rivster's), and Splitting Edge Axe Throwing and JJ Ratigan Brewing Company, both located in the Ellis Mills building at 225 East High Street.

(Continued on page 10)

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COVER STORY

(Continued from page 8)

“We’ve re-established Ellis Mills as a ‘place to be’ in the center of downtown,” Dan Glennon said. The top floor of the building is home to the popular Splitting Edge Axe Throwing, opened by the partners in December 2018 after visiting a similar facility in Philadelphia and noting the growing popularity of this recreational activity and competitive sport.

“We had the building,” Steve Everett explains. “We knew we were going to put a pub or a brewery in the first floor and the basement. The second floor was expansive. And then we went axe throwing. The place was filled. We had a ton of fun, and said ‘Why not?’” Splitting Edge was born, and a little over a year later, the business is thriving. “We think we have one of the more unique facilities out there,” Everett said. “It’s not just axe throwing. You come in here and there’s a piece of history. People enjoy the environment,” he said.

The venue has become a popular choice for birthday parties, team-building events, reunions, parties or just a fun night out with friends. Splitting Edge also hosts eight-week Tuesday evening competitive leagues, currently comprised of 19 teams. “It’s a busy

time,” Everett said. “(The teams) make up awesome names. It’s competitive. It’s everything you want it to be. You have a good time and make friendships and memories. We are also sanctioned to be part of the World Axe Throwing League. We have that twice a week as well, and that’s competing to go to the World Championships on ESPN. It’s huge. Cody Park, our manager, actually took third in the U.S. Open this past year for World Axe Throwing,” he said, adding, “And now downstairs the brewery opened, which is a 15-barrel brewery. We have a full-service kitchen with 12 beers on tap and a full menu. You can get small hand-helds or larger hand-helds. We’ll also have some entrée specials that are going to be different for the area, to set the tone for excellence. We are rolling out things every day. In about a month we’re going to have the basement open with a second bar, a game room, two pool tables, a 20-foot shuffleboard, and arcade games. You can go down there, have a drink, shoot some pool. And then obviously, with all this and our membership at Red Horse, there is reciprocity between the two as well,” he said, adding,

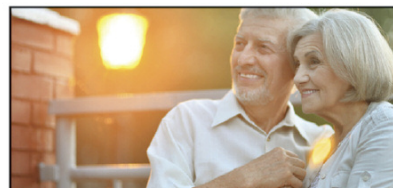
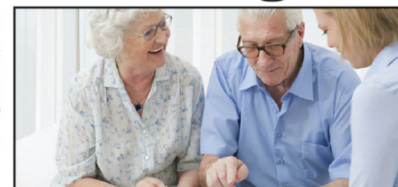
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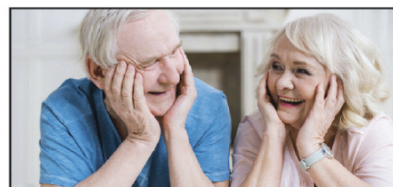
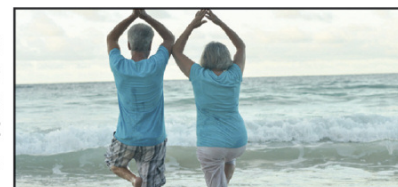


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"Really, Ellis Mills has become an event building. That was our goal and we're just about there. It's all an attempt to keep people in town. They drive on Route 422 and pass Pottstown, and we're trying to give them a reason to take the Pottstown exit to visit and to stay."

JJ Ratigan Brewing Company began as the brainchild of head brewer Randy Young. "It was always a dream of his to own his own brewery," Steve Everett explains. "He worked for Iron Hill Brewery and won awards with them. He was home brewing for many years when we were introduced to him. When we told him what we were doing, he wanted to be part of it. Here we are. All our house beers are made by him. Ultimately, we'll have all only house beers. Right now, we have some guest taps that are pretty desirable as well," he said.

The food at JJ Ratigan is also something special. "We have Hiram Quintano," Dan Glennon said. "He is a corporate chef who competes nationally on the barb-e-cue circuit. It's kind of an added benefit to doing what we planned on doing. This is taking it to the next level," he said.

The partners plans for future growth included replicating the successful Red Horse model in Peapack, NJ, an affluent suburb of NYC (Grand Opening in September), as well as Los Angeles and New York, as well as opening another axe-throwing facility in Malvern (Route 202 & 29), and to continue to develop and build on their investments in Pottstown.

"We've built them. Now we're going to expand them," Everett said. "Red Horse Motoring Club has room to grow, JJ Ratigan has room to grow. Splitting

Edge, all the same. We want to make them the best. We're here to compete."

The partners are starting to see the fruits of their labor, and the labor of fellow Pottstown investors, with the assistance of PAID, Inc, materialize. Chuck Harders, who came to Pottstown only two years ago, has seen a dramatic change in that short period of time. "I think walking on High Street from two years ago is a whole different place today," he said. "With the opening of The Blue Elephant (a new Asian-fusion restaurant located at 152 E. High Street), the change is really in swing. It's happening right now as we speak. And I think it's just going to get better and better and stronger and stronger."

"Residential and commercial pricing is already increasing in town, from what's happening in the downtown," Everett adds. "You're getting more qualified tenants coming in and you are seeing increased rents or flat rents. People coming in who will spend money downtown rather than just stay in their house or go to Phoenixville. That's important. We have better parking, better access, better buildings in Pottstown," he said.

"There's always room for growth but I think we've established ourselves downtown," Dan Glennon concludes. "I would tell anyone that there are plenty of opportunities left here in Pottstown. There are plenty of buildings. The facades of these buildings are amazing. Some of them, to rehab, take a little TLC, but they're old buildings, and it's well worth it. We've done a couple of buildings now, and knowing what we had to do, I would have gone in with open eyes, but we still would have done it. Well worthwhile."

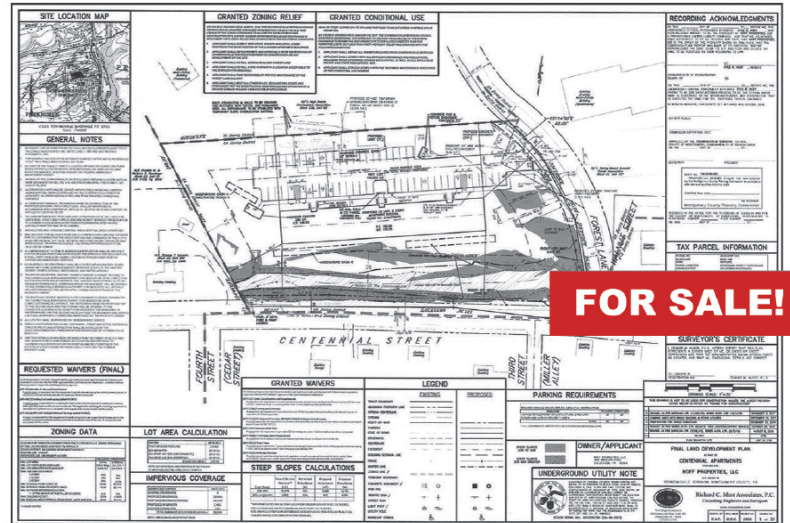
For additional information please visit

www.redhorsemotoring.com and call 904.424.7210;

visit www.jjratigan.com and call 484.524.8391; and check out

www.facebook.com/SplittingEdgeAxeThrowingPottstown/
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