

The Coop: A New Place to Roost

When Abbi Jones and her brother, Ben, first saw the building on Fredericksburg's West Main Street last summer, it reminded them of "an old chicken coop."

They were looking for a site to set up a new bar and club. They started digging into the unimproved storage area when they saw a sign. Literally.

"We looked up and saw a sign with a picture of a chicken coop," Abbi said. "And we thought, this is perfect."



Welcome to The Coop.

It took a lot of work to get there. The building had been long used as storage space for the antique shop next to it. There was no interior framing, no plumbing, no furnishings.

With Ben as "the muscle" and Abbi as the idea person, they rolled up their sleeves and dug in. The piles of "collectibles" lying about turned into an unexpected bonus. They decided to use what they found as décor for their new venue.

So today customers can sip beer and wine in rooms decorated with such desiderata as a wood toboggan, a spinning wheel, boxes of classic beer cans, and four old bars set up to serve those beers. Most interesting for anyone who lived in Fredericksburg before it became "Fredericksburg" is the original wooden Indian that stood in front of the old Domino Parlor.

The theme continues out back, where they created a fenced, shaded beer garden with long picnic tables and a roomy stage for live music.

The pair grew up in west Texas. Ben went into the oil and gas industry, while Abbi got her degree in advertising at the University of Texas and worked in corporate event planning. Both grew weary of the endless travel, and decided to start up their venture in Fredericksburg.

"Ben is always looking for things to get into," Abbi explained. "He is really smart and good at seeing potential. We saw a great opportunity to do events in an outdoor area."



They also both have a desire to do more for the community. "We want to develop this side of Main Street," Abbi said. "Slowly, some great businesses are moving down this way. We want to help drive more people over here."

So far it seems to be working. Businesses and B&Bs are sending people their way. Locals appreciate that it is away from the crowded downtown, with easier parking.

Abbi is bringing her experience in event planning to The Coop. They have installed a wine tasting room, are adding food service, and creating some unique events, such as the “yoga and brew” series. That involves doing yoga practice outside, followed by beer tasting from local breweries.

Music is in the mix once the weather warms up. They plan to add bands on weekends, with a combination of blues, country, and classic rock, or “stuff you can dance and hang out to.”

They also are kid friendly.

“We want to be a place anyone feels they can come and be comfortable,” Abbi said. “I don’t like to go to a place and feel out of place, by being too underdressed or overdressed. You can come here in sweats or dressed up.”



That vision is fitting for a place inspired by digging through piles of stuff.

“The Coop is about building experiences,” she said. “Yeah, you can go anywhere and have a beer. But I watch people play Jenga and they are having the best time. We want to create an experience. We want to be a place to make good memories with friends.”

The Coop

607 West Main in Fredericksburg.
Open 3–11 pm 7 days a week
until midnight on Friday and Saturday.
Web site is www.thecoopfbg.com

Photos by Phil Houseal

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