

Star Barn B&B and Star Barn Uniques featured in the Franklin Journal

Star Barn would like to thank columnist Paula Roy for highlighting two Madrid businesses in her recent column and allowing us to reprint it here.

Printed Friday, January 23, 2009 in the Franklin Journal

By Paula Roy

“Nothing happens unless first we dream” - Carl Sandburg.

Over the past year, two local ladies have been making their dreams come true. Though the outcomes are very different, both began with the same desire to create their own businesses, wishing to develop their particular interests, skills and talents, and benefit their community, as well. Allow me to introduce you to Ginni Robie and Caroline King, both of Madrid.

Ginni Robie and her husband, David, opened the Star Barn Bed and Breakfast last winter. The B & B is the culmination of a several year renovation and construction project, which turned the couple's 1850s home into the Star Barn Guest House and raised the new 5-bedroom B & B on the site of the property's original barn. Located high atop the hills on the Reeds Mill Road, 4.5 miles from Madrid Village off route 4, the spectacular view is just one of many highlights of a stay at Star Barn.

Along with the opening of the B & B came Star Barn Uniques Gift Shop. Ginni is especially pleased with the success of this endeavor. Her unique inventory fills the foyer of the B & B from floor to ceiling. Twenty-one vendors, up from just six last year, sold over \$1600 worth of “handmade quality” in 2008, with every one selling something. All the money goes right back to the vendors because Ginni takes no commission for displaying their products. She asks just \$1 to cover the cost of mailing them their checks. If they come in person to pick up their proceeds, they don't even have to pay that!

Uniques offers a wide variety of items from jewelry, knit caps, hand rolled honeycomb candles, and “body polish” to watercolors, woodcarvings, photographs, and quilts. The only requirement for displaying at Uniques is that it must be made in Maine.

Currently, Uniques' shelves feature the works of several local creators, including Pat Matulaitus (dried flowers), Lynn Thurston (maple snack boards), and Linda Farwell (drawstring purses), all of Phillips; from Rangeley, Maria Baker (water colors) and Dawn Towey (felted bowls); Jean Richards, Avon (dolls); Anne Baker, Strong (potholders); Linda Hardy (wood burnings and leatherwork) and David Boucher (birds carved in wood), and the Reeds Mill Ladies Sewing Circle (quilts), Madrid; and Sally Iverson, Eustis, (one-stroke paintings on mirrors, tiles, and glassware). Others are from as far away as Vassalboro.

Ginni is always looking for new contributors to Uniques. Contact her via phone or website if you'd be interested in adding your unique creations to her Uniques shop.

If you just want to stop by and check things out, the shop is usually open. That is, unless Ginni is conducting a yoga class, which brings us to the final piece in this success story – the Star Barn Yoga Studio, another special feature of the B & B. Ginni is also a certified yoga instructor. She offers weekly classes at Star Barn, as well as in Weld, Rangeley, Phillips, and Farmington. From the very beginning, a big part of Ginni's dream included holding a yoga retreat. That dream is coming true next weekend, January 30 – February 1, when Star Barn will host its first ever Yoga Weekend Retreat, “Beginnings”.

Since Ginni will have her hands full tending to her guests, including doing all the cooking for the weekend, she will not be conducting all the workshops herself. Participants will also benefit from the

expertise of professionals, Daria Babbit, Sarah Mulvey, and Sandy River Thomason. Space is limited, so Ginni urges anyone interested to make their reservations as soon as possible.

For more information about the retreat, Uniques Gift Shop, and all the other opportunities offered at Star Barn B & B visit online at <http://www.starbarnbandb.com/> or stop by.

If you're driving out to Star Barn, you'll pass the home of Caroline King, also the site of her new business, Maine Word. Founded to "meet the emerging need for quality writing and editing services in the region and around the world", Caroline's mission for Maine Word is "to improve the quality of the written word presented by individuals and businesses and to aid each in achieving their personal and professional goals through clear communications". Focusing on creative writing and editorial services, individual writing coaching, writing retreats, and writing classes for individuals and small business owners, Maine Word is the avenue through which Caroline has chosen to combine all the things she enjoys doing into a way to help people improve their writing skills, whether business, fiction, or poetry.

Some of Caroline's current offerings include classes in Business Writing for Small Business Owners and a New Writer's Class. The business class is to be offered in three sessions on February 3, 5, and 10 at Franklin Memorial Hospital. This workshop series will give business owners the skills necessary to write effective and creative marketing materials for numerous applications and to how to use creative ideas to expand their business through networking. Co-presenting this interactive and results-oriented workshop series with Caroline will be Marc Edwards of the University of Maine Cooperative Extension, co-sponsor of the event.

The series is only \$30 and Caroline promises that participants will walk away with written materials for their business, along with great ideas and resources. Call 778-4650 or 1-800-287-1478 to register. Space is limited and pre-registration is required by Friday January 30, 2009.

Her New Writers' Class also starts in February. Designed to introduce adults to the pleasures and challenges of fiction writing, Caroline says this class can serve as a great beginning to writing the great American novel. The class will help you to plan, write, and edit a short story during eight weekly sessions. The three-hour class will be on Monday evenings from February 9 until March 30. Budding writers will meet at the offices of Mountain Counties Heritage Center at 109 Church Street in Farmington.

Or, for those who would prefer to begin right away and work at their own pace, the class is also available in an email format. The New Writers' Class, in either format, will be offered for \$168.

Maine Word will also sponsor a Winter Poetry Retreat in February, the 20th – 22nd. And guess where? At the Star Barn B & B! (Isn't it amazing how everything comes together!)

This event, set "amidst the natural beauty and silence of the winter landscape", has been designed to provide writers from around the region a chance to leave the hustle and bustle of their daily routines behind and find the time to explore and develop their poetic voices. Along with gaining new tools, ideas, and inspirations, special guest, poet Doug Woodsum of Smithfield, will work with Caroline to offer a mix of structured time with writing exercises and prompts, poetry readings, and workshop critiques of your poetry. But rest assured, Caroline says there will be plenty of free time to write and relax, too.

Caroline and her husband, Michael, - and an assortment of furry and feathered friends - live just across the bridge in Madrid Village. Coming here in 2003, Caroline says it's the first place she's lived for more than a year since she was in high school. She's happy to have traded "all that big wide world" for her little corner of western Maine where she hopes to "take what I have, or help someone else take what they have, and make it into something good". Her commitment to her community is also demonstrated by her service as the vice chair of the Phillips Area Community Center and her membership on the Board of Directors of

the Opportunity Center in Avon.

Maine Word “continues to grow every month”, says Caroline. Check it out on her website, <http://www.maineword.com/> (by the way, the Sandburg quote at the beginning was taken from there) or call Caroline at 207-491-9810.

And don't forget to dream your own dreams!