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Innkeeper pours 25 years of dreams into B&B

BY JOSH BOATWRIGHT • JULY 26, 2009 08:49 AM

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MILLS RIVER — Dreaming about a small business is one thing, but actually making it happen can take a leap of faith.

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That's what Selena Einwechter discovered after 25 years of planning to open a bed-and-breakfast.

Not only did she plan and save for 25 years, she also persuaded a group of friends and business associates to buy into her dream by investing a total of \$10,000 in the form of advance room bookings.

"To have a dream for 25 years and never try it would be the worst thing that could happen to me," she said.

The Bed & Breakfast on Tiffany Hill is on 6 acres in the rural countryside of Henderson County, about 10 minutes from Asheville Regional Airport.

Unlike many bed-and-breakfasts, Tiffany Hill is a new building rather than a historic structure. Each of its five suites is decorated after the style of Einwechter's favorite Southern towns: Madison, Ga.; Natchez, Miss.; Beaufort, S.C.; Seaside, Fla.; and, the most popular, a honeymoon suite inspired by Charlottesville, Va.

Einwechter considered locating her inn in one of those towns but decided the mountains of Western North Carolina provided the best market.

Guests can see the region's many sights, then walk through the property's 2 acres of gardens or sit in a big, white rocking chair on the front porch overlooking rolling hills.

"People are so stressed these days," Einwechter said. "What I had hoped to achieve is a place for rest and relaxation."

Einwechter hatched the idea of opening a bed-and-breakfast during a backpacking trip across Europe in her younger years. But then life intervened: She spent a couple of decades working for companies that set up state lotteries in Florida, Georgia, Texas and North Carolina.

Along the way, though, she saved half her income, lived well within her means and planned meticulously. She also networked with lodging and business associations.

At an innkeepers convention several years ago, Einwechter ran into Linda Hayes, a friend from high school in Tampa, Fla., who had started a bed-and-breakfast in Pearisburg, Va., and was mentoring other business owners.



Selena Einwechter owns and runs the Bed & Breakfast on Tiffany Hill, the realization of long-held dream. (Steve Dixon/sdixon@citizen-times.com)

ABOUT THE BUSINESS

What: The Bed & Breakfast on Tiffany Hill.

Who: Selena Einwechter, owner and operator.

Where: 400 Ray Hill Road, Mills River, 290-6080, www.BBonTiffanyHill.com.

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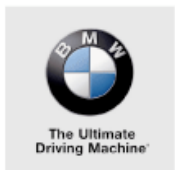
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Hayes said asking friends and colleagues to book rooms in advance to help fund the inn was an especially creative way to raise capital.

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"She's got a very entrepreneurial spirit, and she was very determined," Hayes said.

Michele Huggett, Tiffany Hill's first investor, met Einwechter while both worked in the lottery industry.

"I remember the day she walked into my office talking about it, and I immediately twirled around in my chair and wrote a check," said Huggett, who has become a close friend of Einwechter's over the years.

"You could tell her mind was constantly creating this wonderful place she wanted to build, and it was so easy to get caught up in what she was saying. You just wanted to be a part of it."

Einwechter admits she is going "against the grain" by entering the hospitality industry during a recession but sees reasons to hope business will be strong.

Much of her business so far has been from the advanced bookings, but online advertising and word-of-mouth are spreading the word.

Deb and Bob Doty, of Raleigh, booked a room during opening weekend after hearing about it from friends.

"It was so well-run that I would not have known it was opening weekend," Deb Doty said. "It has a homey feel, but it's not too casual. It's very comfortable."

The couple have been back since then and have already booked a third stay for August.

Einwechter runs the inn mostly by herself, with occasional help from friends. She cooks breakfast each morning for her guests.

She doesn't mind the hard work, and she doesn't worry too much about the risks she has taken.

"Courage is abundant in the abstract," she said. "You can think about things, but will you actually do it?"



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