

SUNDAY
December 2, 2012
The Tampa Tribune

Baylife & Travel

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JAY SINCLAIR

Bed & Breakfast on Tiffany Hill is a 5,000-square-foot Southern traditional inn. There are seven suites and a carriage house on the property. It recently was named one of the top 10 bed and breakfasts in the country by BedandBreakfast.com, based on travelers' reviews.



Selena Einwechter attended conferences and developed a business plan, a marketing plan and a floor plan for her inn.



Bed & Breakfast on Tiffany Hill room rates range from \$185 to \$275 year-round. The occupancy rate is about 60 percent.

Inn Her Dreams



Michelle Bearden
mbearden@tampatrib.com

A good way to get the measure of a person is to talk to a longtime friend.

So here's what Sharon Deitch Miller of Tampa says of her Robinson High School (class of 1972) classmate Selena Einwechter:

"She's got a lot of sides. A soft side and a spiritual side. She's got a business side where she's driven and ambitious. And then she's got a fun party side."

Her most amazing quality? "When Selena sets her mind to something, she makes it happen in a big way."

Her latest venture certainly qualifies as that.

For the first decade of her post-college life, Selena put her Florida State University criminology degree to use by working for the state, investigating land and condominium fraud. Then she became a lottery specialist, setting up statewide games in Florida, Texas, Georgia, North Carolina and even the United Kingdom. When she was downsized from that company in

Selena Einwechter wanted to open her own B&B. Now, thanks to a little luck, good friends and a lot of hard work, she's getting rave reviews



Einwechter's inn has gotten rave reviews for its gardens and breathtaking views.

late 2007 — or, as she puts it, "got the corporate boot" — Selena thought the third act of her life was about to be derailed.

For several years, she had been saving a percentage of her salary to open her

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Gifts to make traveling comfy and convenient

Music, beverages, health products and more can make the trip better

BY BETH J. HARPAZ
The Associated Press

Travel is fun once you reach your destination, but being away from home, getting through airport security and enduring long trips can be stressful.

It's no wonder, then, that when you ask, "What's a good gift for travelers?" the answer often is related to comfort and convenience. Here are some ideas for holiday gifts that make travel more pleasant, whether the traveler in your life is a frequent-flying sales manager or a bus-riding student.

For music lovers, how about upgrading flimsy earbuds to a set of headphones? Bose noise-cancelling Quiet Comfort headphones, at a pricey \$300, have been a top pick among travelers for years, but Consumer Reports also gives high ratings to many models under \$100, including headphones from Able Planet, JVC and Audio-Technica.

Is there a **neck-pillow junkie** in your life? You know who they are: They keep neck pillows stashed in bags and glove compartments in all sizes, colors and styles, from inflatable to bead-filled. Consider a new addition to the collection in the form of a neck pillow with built-in speakers. Mic Anderson, an agent with The Magic for Less Travel agency, bought one for about \$25 for her 14-year-old daughter, Sarah,

from a kiosk at the Minneapolis-St. Paul airport, and it was a hit.

"It plugs into my MP3 player or iPod," Sarah said. "I use it on car trips and plane rides, and I also use it in my room a lot." The speakers are inside the U-shaped pillow, so they sit beneath your chin on either side. Sarah says you can hear the music without disturbing the person sitting next to you, which her mom confirms.

Carol Gundrum, who also works for The Magic for Less, asked fellow travel agents for gift ideas and **packing cubes** were one of the top suggestions. Typically made from lightweight fabrics with zippers, packing cubes come in various sizes designed to fit inside luggage. Fans say they help compress clothing so



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3floz.com offers health and beauty products in sizes that are permitted in carry-on luggage.

Inn

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own bed and breakfast. She also had convinced friends to buy into that plan. Invest \$100 into my dream, she said, and when it is built, you will get the money back in one free night's lodging. Some bought up to a week's stay. In all, she raised \$10,000.

To find faith in that many people says volumes about Selena.

She attended trade conferences and got some hands-on experience filling in as an innkeeper. She developed a business plan, a marketing plan and a floor plan.

"I was planning until the cows came home," she says, laughing. Long divorced and with no children, she had the time to devote to the project.

Then came the unexpected blow of losing her six-figure job. That was a reality check.

It seemed as if her dream had just gone up in smoke. But her pastor encouraged her to stay with it. You can still do this, she told Selena. Things happen for a reason.

From that time forward, Selena's focus went from a business plan to a spiritual one.

"I think this was a lesson in trusting something bigger than you," she says.

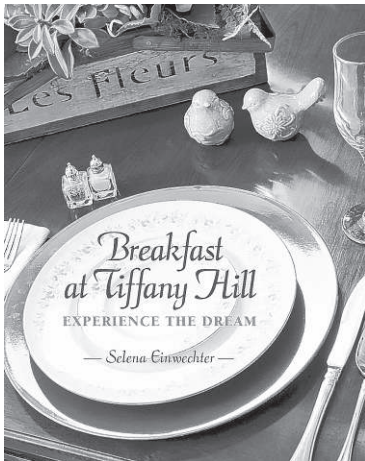
She visited sites for her potential inn in areas that had charmed her in previous travels: Charlottesville, Va.; Natchez, Miss.; Buford, S.C.; Madison, Ga. None was just "perfect."

Until she found a 6-acre site in Mills River, N.C., right outside Asheville. This is it, she thought.

Her timing was off. The nation's banking industry was on the verge of a major financial scandal, thanks to bad loans and an economic downturn. Getting a loan was not going to be easy. She cashed in her own portfolio for \$200,000, added the investment made by her friends and submitted her detailed plans.

Three of the lending institutions turned her down. She decided if the fourth one — a local bank — did the same, she would have to shelve her plans. This time, she got approved. In early May 2008, she got the money for her \$1.5 million project. The day after she closed the deal, construction was under way.

"A few weeks later, and the



MEET THE INNKEEPER

Selena Einwechter comes to town this week for two book signings. They include:

1 to 5 p.m. Thursday, E'LLAY Boutique, 10005 N. Dale Mabry Highway, Tampa

Noon to 7 p.m. Friday, La Joya Boutique, 2832 S. MacDill Ave., Tampa

For information on the signings, call (813) 888-6852.

To learn more about the inn or to order a copy of "Breakfast at Tiffany Hill: Experience the Dream," visit www.BBonTiffanyHill.com



STACEY VAN BERKEL

Einwechter recently self-published a cookbook with snippets of inspirational writings and innkeeper tips.

It's about visualizing that dream, making a plan and following through with it.

The tenacity it takes to accomplish this goal comes with a price. For the first two years, Selena wore every hat in her fledgling business, including ironing the bedroom sheets. It was quite a departure from the corporate world, where everyone fits in a specific slot. Taking time off was not an option. The one week the inn is closed at the end of February is devoted to a massive spring cleaning.

But that hard work is starting to pay off at Tiffany Hill, where room rates range from \$185 to \$275 year-round. Early on, a lot of her bookings were from friends cashing in their investment; since then, word-of-mouth and media exposure are keeping her occupancy rate around 60 percent — nearly 20 percent higher than the industry average.

And she finally turned a profit last year, though all of the money was put back in the property.

Selena now has a staff of five, which eases her considerable workload.

According to Money magazine, she hopes to generate revenue of \$265,000 this year, and to take a salary of \$75,000. Because she lives on the property and is able to write off her living expenses to the business, Selena's income will be about three-quarters of what she once made on the corporate fast track.

Not bad at all, for someone who started from scratch.

"Look how I'm living now," she says. "Yesterday I was playing in the dirt with the landscape guy. I wake up every morning to incredible beauty, and I meet such interesting people from all over. I've never regretted my decision to follow through with this."

It's easy to buy into Selena's enthusiasm. Susan Terrana of Tampa did when she and eight close friends rented out the inn for a four-day girls "pajama party." Susan found Tiffany Hill

online and was not disappointed when she walked in the door.

"Instant peace and bliss," she says. "There's not a detail she's missed, from lights turning on automatically when you use the stairwell at night, to the bar area with coffee and snacks just outside each suite. But the very best part is that she makes all the guests feel like they're best friends and she's known them forever."

"You truly feel at home there."

Getting swept up in Selena's passion and energy is easy. The two became fast friends with their Tampa connection. When Susan and her husband returned to Tiffany Hill last year to celebrate their wedding anniversary, the two women started talking about the possibility of putting a cookbook together. It wasn't anything Susan had done before, but now that she's retired from the insurance industry, Susan thought it would be a fun challenge.

"It was a lot more work than I had ever imagined," she admits. "Shooting 49 recipes in two days with a professional photographer, then figuring out how to size all those photos on my computer was pretty intense."

But the end result of the self-published book is something she takes great pride in now. "Breakfast at Tiffany Hill: Experience the Dream" (self-published, \$21) isn't just a coffee-table cookbook with beautiful photos. It also includes snippets of inspirational writings and innkeeper tips from Selena, as well as an action plan on making your own dream come true.

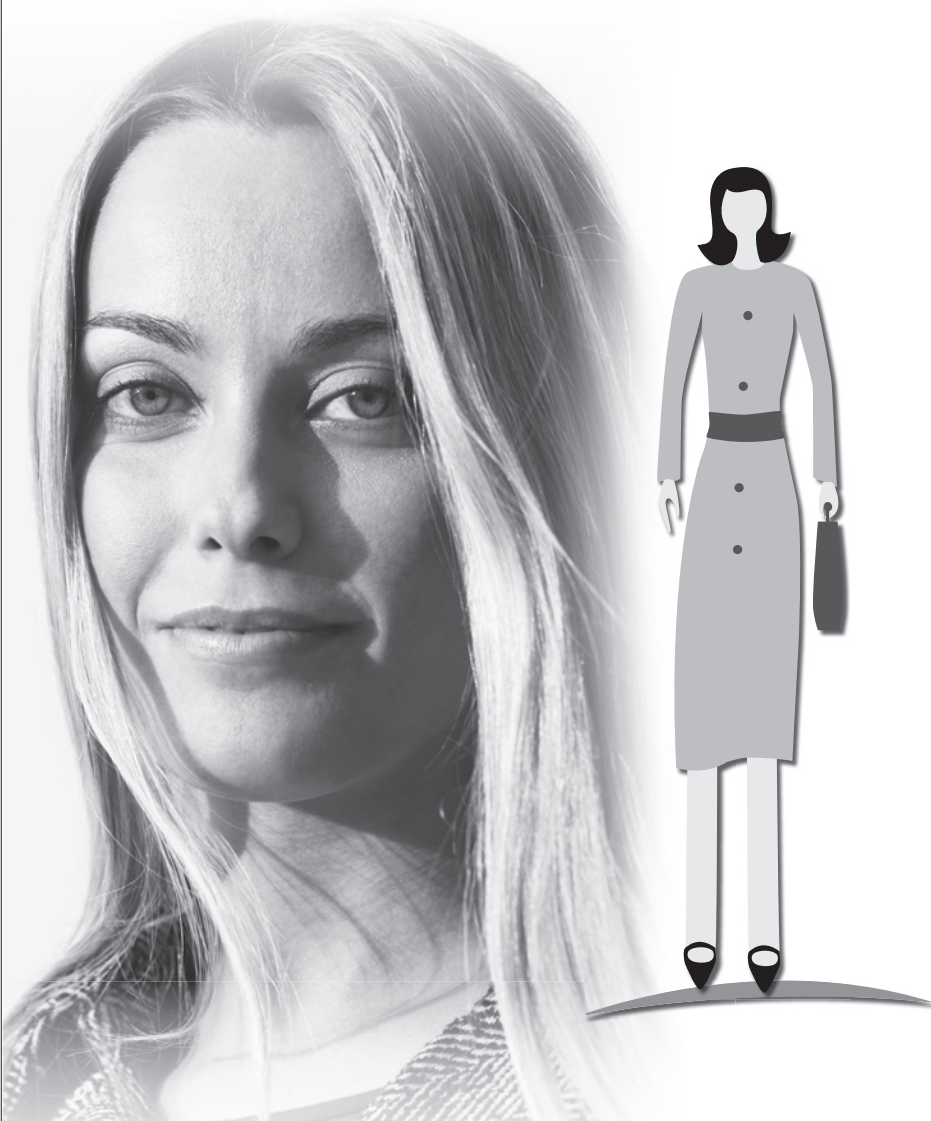
Since its September publication, Selena says she's already sold 600 copies. She credits Susan and the rest of the "book team" for their creative endeavors in making the book such a special keepsake.

This innkeeper is one happy woman. With a staff, her load is a little lighter. And with the inn's growing reputation as a top-notch destination, Selena says this realized dream is almost too good to be true.

And there's more to come.

"Tiffany Hill isn't the end of my destination," Selena says. "It's just part of the journey. I think God is calling me to do so much more. I believe I'm supposed to help people follow their dreams. If it happened for me, it can happen for you."

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