



York's Barbara Sheff focuses on giving back at the Candleshop Inn



Barbara Sheff stands outside the Candleshop Inn located in York Beach.

Amy Root-Donle/photos@seacoastonline.com

July 25, 2007 6:00 AM

What is your name? Barbara Sheff.

What is the name of your business? The Candleshop Inn. This was a candle shop at one time before being a bed and breakfast

How long have you owned it? We bought it in 1999, so this is our eighth season. That first season we had no guest base really. We got the house cleaned up, and I called a contractor to take down that wall over there and there was a wall across here, linoleum and shag carpeting here, and a suspended ceiling. He found dry rot and illegal wiring.

It was a mess. We made a number of renovations, including renovating three shared bathrooms and adding three others.

How old is the house? It was three houses put together in 1896. One of the parts is from the 1700s.

How was your first year in business? Our first guest came off the street and we had a lot of motorcycle people. There was another inn in town and the owners came by, Gil and Evelyn Billings, and they saw how much work we had done and sent us a lot of overflow guests.

How did you get into the business? We didn't look to buy a B&B. Because the house was in disrepair we could afford it. I'm actually a microbiologist and my husband is a pediatric dentist. I left microbiology, though, to do this full time. This house is not about making money. It's about giving back to others and has always had someone in transition that helps with the inn keeping. We've had two young couples over the years and a woman who was in a bad relationship. Everything we take from the inn we put back in.

I understand you offer yoga and host retreats. Talk a little bit about that. We built a yoga studio last year and do yoga every morning. I'm also a certified holistic nurse, and we have meetings every month with our mission being to help people learn self-awareness techniques. If you don't nurture yourself, you'll have nothing to give your family. We have massage therapists that come in, too, and we have a number of retreats throughout the year. We've had nursing retreats, quilting, scrapbooking, soccer girl tournament teams, 40 young women who just pledged at Boston University. We've had New Year's Eve parties, rehearsal dinners and brunches, and had one young woman who had a 30th birthday here and she hired a bartender and they decorated the deck. This may sound corny, but everyone who's come into my life has come here because the universe has brought them. Everyone who comes here is made to feel special.

What types of food do you serve? I serve whole food, granola, fresh braked bread, and smoked salmon for those who aren't vegetarian. I also have a staff of three Jamaican women who have become my sisters who make Jamaican specialties — dumplings, salt fish. I visit them once a year, too. They are wonderful.

You seem to truly care for the people you have met through the inn. Can you describe your philosophy behind your business? It is written on the walls of the dining room here: "If there is light in the soul, there will be beauty in the person. If there is beauty in the person, there will be harmony in the house. If there is harmony in the house, there will be order in the nation. If there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world."

That is my philosophy. My mission is to try and be the light. There is no TV here, no New York Times. I try to create an atmosphere where you can enjoy your family, sit on the deck, enjoy coffee, and listen to the foghorns. Each individual can make a difference. I wake up every morning and feel grateful.

The Candleshop Inn is located in York Beach and is open year-round with off-season rates from November through March. For information, call (207) 363-4087, e-mail stay@candleshopinn.com, or visit www.candleshopinn.com.

This bi-weekly profile feature highlights business owners in the York area. Know of someone who would make a good profile subject, or want to know more about a local business owner? Contact us at 363-4343 or yorkweekly@seacoastonline.com.