



ROOMS *with a* VIEW

LAKE GENEVA'S ONLY LAKEFRONT HOTEL OFFERS A YEAR-ROUND, CHARMING RETREAT WITH THE DEDICATED EFFORTS OF A BARRINGTON FAMILY, NOW IN ITS THIRD GENERATION OF OWNERSHIP, MAKING IT TRULY A LUXURIOUS LANDMARK DESTINATION.

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PHOTO COURTESY OF COURTNEY HEINZ, COURTNEY LEIGH PHOTOGRAPHY

Kara and Adam O'Dempsey with their daughters (from left) Scarlet, Everly, and Sydney.

ON JUNE 15, 1990, MY GRANDPARENTS OPENED THE DOORS TO THE GENEVA INN AND GRANDVIEW RESTAURANT, A WATERFRONT HOTEL AND RESTAURANT ON THE SHORES OF GENEVA LAKE. ADMITTEDLY, THEY DIDN'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY, BUT WHAT THEY DID KNOW WAS HOW MUCH THEY LOVED LAKE GENEVA.

THE GENEVA INN IS A 37-ROOM BOUTIQUE HOTEL, located directly on the shores of Geneva Lake, 2.2 miles from downtown Lake Geneva. It has been owned by my family for 30 years and has come to be known for its charming accommodations, traditional service, and spectacular views.

The birth of The Geneva Inn started with my Grandparents, former Park Ridge residents and frequent visitors to the Lake Geneva area. My Grandpa, a World War II veteran and savvy businessman, ran a global brand design and production art company with my Dad. It was a demanding business that required endless travel, sacrifices, and grit. For my family, Lake Geneva was a tranquil escape from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. It is my belief that it was my Grandparent's desire to find calm in our often chaotic world that inspired them to build an Inn that stitched leisure into the fabric of everything it exudes.

For decades, The Geneva Inn gave them a space and place to share their love of lake life leisure with others. They weren't involved in the day-to-day operations, but they had a vision for what they wanted The Geneva Inn to be—a luxurious destination to relax and enjoy the serenity of the lake. It was a destination for guests to be pampered and nature to shine. It was so many wonderful things, but behind the scenes, business wasn't always perfect.

In September 2014, my Grandpa passed away from lung cancer. After he passed, an outside management company was brought into overhaul operations and bring a more modern approach and touch to the business. Unfortunately, their efforts weren't enough to move the needle and the business continued to suffer.



Guests are greeted at check-in with a glass of Champagne.



Guest rooms and suites have been updated.



A newly refreshed bathroom.

A THIRD GENERATION OWNER STEPS IN

I didn't know the ins and outs of the management and financial issues the Inn was facing, but I was confident in knowing that it was time for a family member to take over and get entrenched in the business. I had just had our third daughter and was looking to return to work. I was hungry for the opportunity to fix something, especially something that was so dear to my Grandparents. I too had little hospitality experience, but I wasn't scared to take the leap. In 2018, I took over as director.

The early days were tough. Not only did I have to learn the business, the market, and the industry, I had over 70 employees relying on me to succeed. Failure was not an option. I knew we had to do big things quickly. And we did.

The restaurant was suffering the most, so I directed my attention there. The first step to turning things over was to fix our product. Our menus needed to be overhauled, our service needed attention, but most critically,

our company culture needed to be shocked back into life. Leadership that focused equally on the well-being and growth of their staff, to the company's growth, was essential. I had heard the saying, "happy cows make happy cheese," and that thought guided my approach to revamping our product.

A new executive chef was brought in. His creativity and leadership in the kitchen were the epicenter of the new 'us'. Difficult decisions were made. Some employees were let go, others resisted the change and left on their own accord, but we charged ahead and each day we got better, smarter, more efficient, and we became happier.

AN UNEXPECTED SETBACK

In August of that same year, just as I felt like we were hitting our stride, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. A diagnosis like this obviously rocks your home life and work life in an instant, but at the end of the day, cancer or no cancer, I still had an obligation to my family and my employees. People still counted on me, and I wanted to make sure I was leaving them in good hands.

So, while I set out on my cancer journey, my husband, Adam, stepped in and took over running the Inn. He is an eager problem solver, excellent leader, and was able to step in seamlessly.

Today, I am cancer free after having a double mastectomy in October of 2018. I am back at work, working alongside Adam now, both in life and in business. Cancer taught me the importance of having work-life balance, and together we strive to stress less and live more for ourselves, our kids, and our employees. Cancer also showed me the strength of the village that we had around us. Our village was so incredibly generous to us and remain so to this day. I've learned that leaning on those around you isn't a sign of weakness, it's what builds communities, friendship, and endurance, so I lean when I need to and catch others when they need a helping hand.


WE'RE "INN" THIS TOGETHER

Since Adam and I started running the Inn together, we have significantly cut expenses, refurbished many of the outdated rooms and spaces around the hotel, introduced a new menu focused on exceptional ingredients and execution, but most important, we have implemented policies and procedures that will enable our employees to learn, grow, and hopefully enrich their lives.

While we've seen great success in our product, service, and operations, our drive to put our employees first is what I'm the proudest of. Knowing that we can do it while still caring about the bottom line only inspires us to do more.

Our mission to put our employees first is more meaningful now—more than ever. As many of our staff have been challenged in these uncertain times, we have strived to protect them as much as we can. Without them, we wouldn't have a business, so it's our duty to give what we can to our staff, as well as the to Lake Geneva community.

As our Inn doors sit temporarily closed until May 1 and The Grandview is limited to carry out and delivery, we are continuing to keep our staff employed in addition to supplying hot meals to all staff members and their family three days a week.

These are unusual days, but we know they are temporary. When our doors fully reopen, we'll start making the cheese again, and what wonderfully happy cheese it will be. 



Executive Chef Chad Visger and Executive Sous Chef Abel Rosas



The stunning lake view at The Grandview Restaurant.



Eggs Benedict at The Grandview Restaurant. The restaurant is open for brunch and dinner seven days a week. Menus are seasonally inspired, with a focus on fresh and familiar ingredients.

KARA O'DEMPSEY AND HER HUSBAND, ADAM, LIVE IN BARRINGTON HILLS WITH THEIR THREE DAUGHTERS. SHE WAS BORN AND RAISED IN THE INVERNESS/BARRINGTON AREA. HER HUSBAND IS FROM AUSTRALIA. THEY HAVE LIVED IN BARRINGTON FOR THE PAST NINE YEARS. TO CONTACT THE GENEVA INN, CALL 262-248-5680. VISIT ONLINE AT GENEVAINN.COM, AND FOLLOW ON FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM @THEGENEVAINN.



On Tuesday April 7, The Geneva Inn team handed out 1,000 free bags of fresh produce to the Lake Geneva community during the COVID-19 pandemic.



The Grandview offers fresh seafood, Prime steaks, and Wisconsin comforts which are at the core of its many dishes. The Inn also has an extensive wine menu and wine lockers. In the summer, guests enjoy brunch, dinner, and drinks daily on the outdoor patio overlooking the lake.