

Not willing to wait for Port's rebound

■ *Dockside Deli owner says now is ideal time for restaurant expansion*

By MARK JAEGER

Ozaukee Press staff

Don't bother Mary Ann Voigt, owner of Port Washington's Dockside Deli, with tales of economic doom and gloom.

She's too busy planning for the future.

For Voigt, that future is not too far off, as the popular dining spot at 218 E. Main St. has almost finished a major expansion project.

When the dust settles early next month, Voigt said the restaurant will double the size of its delicatessen and almost triple the room for seating.

"For me, the big thing is getting more seating. A lot of times in the summer, people will walk up to the door and see people are waiting to be served and walk away," she said.

The expansion will provide seating for 43, including an area that can be closed off with a curtain for smaller groups. On those blissful summer days on the Lake Michigan lakefront, about two dozen tables are available on the harbor-side deck.

Voigt has been a hands-on owner for 10 years, working behind the counter with her full-time staff on a daily basis.

Because the deli is open for breakfast, that means she is on the scene at 6 a.m. making the soups of the day and other specials.

"I am lucky to have four really talented cooks working here. We really are like a family," Voigt said.

The staff and regular customers are excited by the prospect of expansion.

"Like a lot of the changes we are making, the suggestion we got to create a room for meetings was made by customers. Once a month, we have a car collectors group come in and they pretty much take over the entire restaurant. With the meeting room, they will have a place of their own," Voigt said.

The expansion also allows her to make improvements she has been longing to make for years.

"We will be adding a pick-up window, again in response to a request from customers, so people who place orders on the phone don't have to wait in line," Voigt said.

The deli will get a hard-pack ice cream service and a frozen-yogurt maker so that smoothies can be offered.

Careful attention was given to the design of the expansion, Voigt said, so customers will be unable to tell where the old deli ends and the new space begins.

A sweeping, copper-covered soffit will link the two sides once an existing wall is removed.

"I wanted everything to flow," she said.

Voigt enlisted some high-end help with the project, tapping into the City of Port Washington's Main Street program.

The national program is designed to assist communities re-invigorate their troubled downtowns. In Port's case, the central business district features a handful of prominent vacancies — including the spaces formerly occupied by Smith Bros. restaurant and Lueptow's Furniture.

"I'm a big believer in the Main Street program. I think it is a step in the right direction for our downtown," Voigt said.

"What Port really needs is a big, anchor store that will attract people to town ... although no one seems to know what that anchor should be."

Audiology specialists settle in at Saukville office

Advanced Hearing Aid and Audiology Associates has opened an office at 620 E. Green Bay Ave. in Saukville.

The professional team is headed by Kathleen Haasch, a certified doctor of audiology with more than 20 years experience in the clinical field.

Haasch has experience in diagnostic audiological testing, hearing aid dispensing and electronystagmography.

She is a member of the American



DOCKSIDE DELI OWNER Mary Ann Voigt (top photo) reviewed details of the restaurant's expansion plans with contractor Michael Hartmann. The deli, which fronts Port Washington's north slip, often draws overflow crowds during the summer — prompting the decision to add seating. Voigt (lower right photo) inspected the copper-clad soffits being installed as part of the project.

chor should be."

Voigt worked with local architect Jorgen Hansen of Port City Studio in designing the addition.

She also used Main Street program interior designer Lyn Falk of Mequon to come up with what Voigt described as a "vibrant" color scheme.

Falk hooked Voigt up with contractor Michael Hartmann of Belgium, who specialized in restaurant projects in the metropolitan area. He is now semi-retired, but willingly accepted the project.

Hartmann's connections with suppliers proved valuable.

Speech Language and Hearing Association, American Academy of Audiology, Wisconsin Speech Language and Hearing Association and the Academy of Doctors of Audiology.

Joseph Aussem is a graduate clinician at the office. He is enrolled in the clinical doctoral program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Aussem specializes in hearing conservation programs, hearing screening for patients with dementia and aural rehabilitation.

He said Voigt's goal of matching the two sides of the deli was a challenge, especially when it came to flooring that was almost a decade old.

"I called the supplier and he said the tile we wanted was discontinued eight years ago. But, he scoured the countryside and said he found about 300 square feet," Hartmann said. "I told him, 'That's great, because we only need 280 square feet.'"

Although he enjoys working on the restaurant, Hartmann said Voigt's attention to detail makes the job demanding.

"This is one of those situations where it would have been easier to build new than to expand the existing restaurant," he said.

Voigt said people may question why she's expanding at a time when other businesses are closing or scraping to get by.

"It is a bit of a risk taking on a project like this now, but I have always been a bit of a risk taker," she said.

There is a silver lining to the gloom of the economy, too, she said.

"I have found this is an ideal time for a construction project because contractors, suppliers and even architects are looking for work," Voigt said.



Voigt (lower right photo) inspected the copper-clad soffits being installed as part of the project.

"I started thinking about expanding the deli a couple years ago, and the price I am paying now is about half what the original quote was."

She and her husband Don, long with Jim and Karen Vollmar, are co-owners of the retail center that houses the deli, but Voigt said that family connection is not the only reason she chose the setting for her business.

"I love the location. We draw all of the boaters, bike riders and hikers using the harborwalk during the summer," she said.

"And even when it slows down in the winter, it is still beautiful to look out the window and see the lake."

Year-round business has been so steady, Voigt said, the need to expand became apparent.

"We can be very busy during the summer, but our downtown customers are loyal all the time. There are faces we see every day at lunchtime," she said.

The deli specializes in sandwiches, soups, salads and desserts.

"Everything is homemade, and that is our niche. When you are in business in a small town, people know pretty quickly if your food is good," Voigt said.

Photos by Mark Jaeger