

Amid Pandemic, Two Event Venues Open, and Thrive, in Michigan City

by Kim Nowatzke

In an atypical year, two venues have expanded the lineup of options in Michigan City for events like weddings, parties and reunions.

Just a month before COVID hit the area, Tim Enright and Ashley LoMaglio purchased the historic “Canterbury” building at 907 Franklin St. Originally built in 1867 as St. John’s Evangelical and Reformed Church, it became Canterbury Theatre in 1968 once the church relocated. After sitting vacant for decades, the location was renovated in 2012 into The Uptown Center. Enright and LoMaglio began renovations in March, with a focus on transforming the building into an authentic venue with a beautiful mixture of restored history and necessary modernization.

“We pride ourselves on the fact that we were able to preserve a piece of history, but also give it a more contemporary look,” Chief Operating Officer Jeremy Rossi said. “The process of renovating a building built back in 1867 was not an easy feat.”

The long list of items “restored, replaced, preserved and/or enhanced” in Phase 1, he said, included: replacing the roof and gutters; restoring the original mosaic tile and vaulted ceiling; replacing the carpet with luxury vinyl; adding a state-of-the-art sound and light system; and enhancing the original pipe organ.

Uptown Social opened Aug. 29, hosting Michigan City High School’s Class of 2010 reunion. The venue’s brand officially launched Sept. 4.

“We had over 150 guests in and out of our building at our launch party and received nothing but compliments and praise,” Rossi said. “We couldn’t have asked for a better turnout.”

The Nov. 6 sold-out live show Felix and Fingers



Uptown Social, 907 Franklin St.

Dueling Pianos benefitted Dunebrook, a local nonprofit that supports and strengthens local families.

“A vast majority of our events will benefit a local charity,” Rossi noted, “which means that when you buy a ticket to one of our live entertainment events, you are also giving back to our community.”

Rossi touched on the impact COVID has had on Uptown Social.

“COVID hasn’t made anyone’s life any easier, and operating a venue is no exception,” he said. “As a venue that consistently hosts large gatherings, we are monitoring and adhering to any changes in regulations and precautions, as the safety and well-being of our staff and our clients is and always will be a top priority. We have implemented new policies and procedures, and we are providing hand sanitizer stations, and touchless soap dispensers, hand sinks and hand dryers to our guests. We fully sanitize our tables, chairs and surfaces in addition to other proactive COVID cleaning measures to ensure the safety of our guests and employees. In addition, all employees, guests and vendors are subject to temperature and mask checks upon entry.”

Barrelhouse at Zorn, 113 York St., is the other



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