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How Twisted River Farm grew into a year-round operation serving North Iowa

ALYCIA DIONEDA SCHNEEDLE
The Osage Oracle

Twisted River Farm did not start the way it looks today.

Before the farm had an on-site store, a weekly farm box program, winter greens in hoop houses, and pickup locations across North Iowa, owner Steve Strasheim was raising a small batch of meat chickens while still working what he called a “town job.”

“We started the farm as a hobby, raising meat chickens,” Strasheim said.

Strasheim said the road to farming full-time was not a straight line. He grew up on a sugar beet farm in eastern Montana, but said that experience did not give him much connection to food in the way he thinks about it now.

“There was no real connection to the food or anything like that when I was a kid,” he said. “It was just like, we get to run big equipment, and we’re doing the work.”

After college, he spent years working in sales and marketing, including in minor league sports. But around 2012 or 2013, he said he and his family started paying

more attention to what they were eating. That led to greater interest in local food and in how small farms actually work.

“I was super interested in the process of growing food, but also just the economics of how local niche farms are able to survive,” Strasheim said.

At the time, the local food movement had not fully taken hold in North Iowa the way it has now. He and his family started going to the farmers’ market in Mason City and looking for local food, but one thing they had trouble finding was local chicken.

So he decided to try raising some himself.

Strasheim and his family did not own land at the time and were living in Nora Springs. After repeated requests, his in-laws allowed him to use a small plot of land outside Plymouth, Iowa, where he began raising about 100 meat chickens each year.

That was the beginning.

The name Twisted River Farm comes from their time living near the Shell Rock River in Nora Springs.

As his interest grew, so did the

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PHOTO COURTESY OF TWISTED RIVER FARM

Steve Strasheim holds boxes of fresh produce prepared for distribution at Twisted River Farm. The farm supplies customers through its farm box program, farmers markets, and on-site store.



PROVIDED PHOTO

After 27 years in business, Ken and Diane Emerson have sold Emersons On Main to Joann and Mike Wells.

Emersons On Main closing; large clothing sale begins March 26

BY STEVE THOMPSON

Residents of Osage may be surprised at the sale signs in windows of Emersons On Main. After 27 years in the clothing business in Osage, Ken and Diane Emerson have decided to sell their storefront to Joann and Mike Wells, who currently own and operate Create.

This past week the Emersons returned from their current home in Mount Airy, North Carolina to help prepare their clothing store, located at 731 Main Street for their big closeout sale which be-

gins on March 26. The large crew of workers have lined the store walls with thousands of clothing items which will be sold at discounted prices.

Emersons began their clothing business in 1999 after purchasing Flemings Clothing Store. “We were working at Fox River where I was Ken’s boss, and he still tells people I am his boss,” said Diane, who had worked at the Fox River plant for 31 years before retiring to start their business. “Ken had graduated from college with a Business and Marketing Degree, and he always

wanted to start his own business. He always liked the fashion industry. Our son Derick was a year old, and basically he grew up in the store,” stated Diane.

After buying Flemings Clothing the Emersons began handling women’s clothing, along with a full line of men’s apparel. “I started my Sew and Sew embroidery business in 2004. I was way up on the fourth story at 731,” continued Diane. “Then in 2008 we opened a clothing store in Clear

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Riceville’s Wolthoff turns adversity into national honor

BY CHRIS C. NELSON
Publisher, The Osage Oracle

RICEVILLE — The moment Brooklyn Wolthoff’s name was announced, the gym fell into a kind of stunned celebration — applause, cheers and disbelief all at once. For Wolthoff, sitting among her classmates, the realization took a little longer to arrive.

She hadn’t even known she was in the running.

In front of family, friends, teachers and teammates, the Riceville High School senior was surprised as the national winner of the prestigious NFHS Heart of the Arts Award, one of the highest honors in high school activities. Selected from eight sectional recipients across the country, Wolthoff will be recognized this summer in Salt Lake City.

“I thought we were just going into an assembly to recognize our team,” Wolthoff said. “Then everything started happening. When they said I won, I was just — I didn’t even know I was nominated. I was shocked. To be valued enough to win that award is just a huge honor.”

The Heart of the Arts Award recognizes students who have not only excelled in fine arts, but who have done so while overcoming significant personal challenges. Few stories embody that mission more completely than Wolthoff’s.

Diagnosed with dyslexia as a first grader, Wolthoff faced ear-

ly academic struggles that could have easily defined her path. Instead, they helped shape it. With the support of a teacher who would later become her speech coach, she found her voice in an activity that would ultimately become central to her life.

“If it wasn’t for her advocating for me to get that diagnosis when I was in first grade, I probably never would have gone out for speech,” Wolthoff said. “I owe a lot of this to her, my family and my entire speech team.”

Her journey only grew more complex. In eighth grade, Wolthoff was diagnosed with postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome. During her junior year, she began experiencing seizures and was later diagnosed with a neurological functional disorder, a condition that took away her ability to walk and dance.

Through it all, she never stepped away from speech.

“Brooklyn has taken her personal situation and used it as fuel,” said Stacy Hansen, executive director of the Iowa High School Speech Association. “On top of being an outstanding speaker and communicator, how she has used her story to uplift and affirm others is incredible.”

Wolthoff’s impact extends beyond the stage. A 3.9 GPA student and member of the National Hon-

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