

MARKET: Jolbert looks to enhance, not change, successful village endeavor

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two to four counties in a day, trying to convince different farmers and artisans to join the Lewiston market. Looking back, it makes me laugh at all I did to convince those individuals to take a chance on me and a new market. Luckily, several agreed to put their faith in me, and the vision I had for the Lewiston market, and for that, I am eternally grateful.

“Several of those vendors have been at the market since its inception in 2018 and have helped make the market what it is today. Many may ask, ‘Then why leave?’ or ‘Why now?’ if the market is at the height of its success. A lot of thought went into making the decision to step back as manager of the market and, believe me, it was a difficult choice to make; an emotional decision for me. However, making this decision allows me to focus more of my attention on my day job as a mental health counselor.

“It felt like the right time for me. Building a business, for me, is creating something that will make a real difference in other people’s lives, being proud of a job well done, and then having the courage to know when your job is done. I have never worked harder at anything, and I can honestly say I achieved what I set out to do – which is why I feel confident turn-



Rachel Jolbert at the Lewiston Artisan Farmers Market. (Submitted photo)

ing over the rein of the Lewiston Artisan Farmers Market to someone who has the same drive and dedication to this community and at seeing the market succeed.”

Jolbert has one degree in baking and pastry arts from Niagara County Community College, and a second degree, in hospitality administration, from SUNY Buffalo State University.

At the Lewiston Artisan Farmers Market, her vendor booth is

called Three Little Hens Baking Co.

“I have three daughters, which is where the name comes from. I’ve been baking professionally for 14 years,” Jolbert said. “I focus on homemade scones, muffins, cookies – just really homey, simple but delicious products, and I use as much local ingredients and local fruit as I can.”

That includes partnerships with Ransomville’s Senek Farms and Wandering Gypsy Brewing Co., Sanborn’s Schul Farmstead and Niagara Fall’s Lend-a-Leaf Tea Co.

Jolbert said the idea of community is what initially attracted her to become a market participant. She worked part-time for two seasons (2020, 2022), before becoming a full-time vendor this summer.

“I was born in Lewiston; I’ve owned two homes in Lewiston; my kids go to school at Lew-Port. Lewiston’s always been home,” Jolbert said last Saturday. “I started in 2020 during the pandemic. I was on maternity leave, so I was looking for something to do. And then I realized how fun it was. I brought my mom, and there were so many people that we know, that we’ve always known. So, I think it was that connection – getting back into the community that I love so much.”

The camaraderie Jolbert found at the market exceeded her expectations.

“One-hundred percent,” she

said. “So, along with the Lewiston community, the market itself has its own community, and a lot of the vendors actually work together, whether they’re (selling) bread to another vendor, or baked goods to another vendor, or fruit used in teas and different juices and products. The vendors actually have a community amongst themselves that I think is really special.”

Jolbert explained, “I’ve been working at the Lexington Co-Op in Buffalo for the past five years, which is a natural grocery store. Jamie and I had talked a couple months ago. My brain has always been kind of an ‘and,’ and then I never realized this could be an ‘or’ situation. And so, the more I thought about it – and my kids are getting older, and they go to school in the community and are involved in a lot of community activities – that being closer to home, and having an opportunity to grow my business as a vendor – and also have such a big part in the market – was a really cool opportunity that I wanted to take advantage of.”

“I have a lot of ideas (laughs). And I have a lot of really good relationships with vendors at the market. So, I called Jamie back and asked if we could go get coffee, and then it went from there.”

In the time since that conversation, Jolbert’s culinary and hospitality training has kicked into high-gear, triggering a flurry of ideas on how to enhance certain areas of the market.

That said, Jolbert said visitors shouldn’t worry about wholesale

changes – or wholesale in any capacity, for that matter.

“The vendors, it’s still going to be a producers market; so, we are never going to allow wholesaling at the market,” she said. “It’s an artisan (market). You have to make or grow the products that are sold here – and that’s another thing that really makes the market special. I only plan to grow the market larger with more of those types of vendors; and I really want to get some kids activities and just enhance the market and kind of build on what Jamie has spent the last six years building: This amazing foundation.”

Symmonds said, “Rachel approached me a couple months ago with an interest in getting more involved with the market and potentially taking over some of the day-to-day tasks involved in running it.”

“I have known Rachel for over 15 years. I have watched her grow into an amazing woman who is wholeheartedly dedicated to her family, work, and this community. Rachel’s vast knowledge of the industry and her unparalleled work ethic, I believe, makes her the perfect candidate to take over the job as market manager. I have total confidence in her abilities and can’t wait to see all the wonderful things she will do in the future.”

She added, “Stepping back from the market has been a difficult decision for me, and yet I am comforted by the fact I am leaving it in very capable hands. I feel as though I have solidified friendships and connections which will last a lifetime. It has been an honor working with the vendors and watching the market develop into the success it is today. For me, this isn’t goodbye, but hello to new beginnings.”

Jolbert and Symmonds attended Monday’s Village of Lewiston Board of Trustees meeting to formally announce the change in market leadership.

Mayor Anne Welch said, “We’ve known you forever, Rachel.” She and Jolbert’s mother, Karen Goodman, worked together in the clerk’s office. “We’re here; if you ever need anything, just come and talk to the girls in the office. We’re here for you, too.”

Welch told Symmonds, “Thank you so much for all those years,” as the audience provided a round of applause. “It’s great on Saturdays to have that out there. Jamie, you’ve done a fantastic job.”

Trustees voted to approve the change of ownership, as well as Jolbert’s request to hold a fall festival for families at the market on Oct. 7.

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