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# LIhome

Veda Daley Joseph and Wilfred Joseph, owners of Arbor View House on the North Fork.



## Rolling out the **welcome mat**

HAVING ADAPTED DURING THE PANDEMIC, LI BED-AND-BREAKFASTS PREPARE FOR A FRESH SEASON OF GUESTS **C6**

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SHARLENE BRADSHAW

# Local innkeepers

Bed-and-breakfast owners look ahead to a strong season

BY TOM SCHLICHTER  
Special to Newsday

**B**y their very nature, bed-and-breakfast operations are supposed to be inviting, cozy and far more intimate than staying in a large hotel. For many guests, it's the niceties like high-end beds and linens, home-cooked breakfasts and interaction with friendly hosts, as much as proximity to interesting and fun things to do, that really take a stay to the next level.

To attract and keep their customers coming back for more, successful B&B owners focus on developing a distinctive atmosphere, targeting specific audiences and differentiating themselves from the competition. At least that was the case before COVID arrived on the scene.

As the pandemic engulfed Long Island in early 2020, B&Bs had to close for a while per a New York State order. Most suffered cancellations and lost revenue even once reopened. But the innkeepers have been resilient and innovative, surviving and even thriving, and are now looking forward to welcoming guests as the weather gets warm.

## 'DO BREAKFAST RIGHT'

"If you don't enjoy meeting new people, opening a bed-and-breakfast isn't for you," says Wilfred Joseph, 78, who runs the circa-1790 Arbor View House in East Marion with his wife, Veda Daley Joseph. "Most who get into this business stay for less than seven years — and many leave after realizing they dislike dealing with guests."

Joseph should know. He's a member of the North Fork Bed and Breakfast Association and Promotion Council, and sits on the board at Discover Long Island, which promotes tourism in Nassau and Suffolk counties. He says B&Bs come and go, but those that last have



Deirdre Ventura, owner of The Harbor Rose Bed & Breakfast in Cold Spring Harbor.

## NOW ONLINE

North Fork B&B co-owner Wilfred Joseph discusses adapting to the pandemic.

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owners who enjoy meeting guests, show them a fun time, and deliver an experience different from the competition. He's taken that lesson to heart.

When the Josephs opened their four-guestroom inn in 1999, they made three priorities, he says: "Assume all guests are good people, have the best beds and linens possible, and do breakfast right." The first item helped the couple feel comfortable allowing strangers into their home because, as Joseph notes, "In a true B&B, owners reside in the same building as guests."

The morning meal at Arbor View House is lush, with spices and dishes that reflect

Veda's Jamaican and Wilfred's Guyanese roots. The three-course breakfast features fresh fruit, a small salad and something special tailored to the idiosyncrasies of guests — think salmon cakes, crab cakes, homemade breads and biscuits. Vegan, kosher, low-salt and gluten-free meals are options.

Another nice touch is the couple's local knowledge. They'll tell you what events are going on, where to take a hike and which restaurants or vistas are best to visit. They also offer a variety of massage services performed by licensed masseurs, plus aromatherapy baths.

## THE COVID PIVOT

"Of course, we have had to make some big adjustments because of the COVID outbreak," says Joseph. "When the pandemic first arrived, dozens of overseas guests canceled their bookings, and at one point we closed due to government mandate. We survived on our savings and the kindness of those who requested gift certificates rather than cash back."

As the pandemic evolved, the couple instituted contactless check-in. Originally, they asked unvaccinated guests to eat in a separate room and to avoid mingling. These days, everyone must wear a mask in public areas of the house, and proof of vaccination is required to stay. For the time being, massage options have been suspended with emphasis shifted to the aromatherapy baths.

"The changes came with a price, but they are necessary," says Joseph.

## A FOCUS ON HEALTH

As owner and innkeeper of The Harbor Rose Bed & Breakfast in Cold Spring Harbor, Deirdre Ventura has tailored the experience there to reflect her environmentally sensitive and healthy lifestyle.

"I live here with my teenage daughter, Zara," says Ventura, who is in her 60s. "I'm conscious of modeling behaviors and values that will help her stay healthy and become a responsible citizen in this world."

Set in a home built in 1846 that is meticulously maintained and upgraded, The Harbor Rose has three guest rooms with Egyptian cotton linens, feather pillows and down blankets. A purification system provides drinking water bottled on the premises. Breakfasts are kosher, gluten-free, dairy-free and vegan. Ventura points guests to nearby historical sites and North Shore beaches.

"We recycle, compost, grow

# open their doors



Artist and co-owner Michael Cardacino at East Hampton Art House Bed and Breakfast.



Arbor View House Bed and Breakfast in East Marion.

vegetables, belong to a local CSA organic farm, and do everything possible to minimize our carbon footprint. All this costs more money to supply and implement, especially now, during the pandemic, but it's better for the planet and healthier for my family and guests," Ventura says. "Plus, I love knowing my guests feel better when they leave than when they arrived."

When the COVID pandemic decimated her bookings, Ventura completely reworked her business model. Originally, her guests were those attending seminars at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory. Once those events went virtual, she switched to attracting guests from Long Island and New York City with the promise of escaping the bustle of daily life without needing to pass through an airport.

"The switch worked," Ventura says, noting all her rooms are being reserved on a regular basis. She has upgraded to medical-grade UV lights to disinfect guest rooms, and is spending several hours more cleaning each day than in the past. She doesn't specifically ask if guests are vaccinated, but all are required to mask up in public areas of the house. "Everything looks good going forward," she says.

#### 'BUILD ON YOUR PASSION'

At the Stony Brookside Bed & Bike Inn in Stony Brook, Elyse Buchman, 63, and her husband, Marty Buchman, 62, promote cycling. "We market

within the bicycling community, in which we are very active" Marty says. "It's a good start to build on your passion."

What really sells the operation, though, is the couple's excitement in showing people a good time — and their deep knowledge of cycling. Bikes are complimentary at this B&B, and the Buchmans, who host fundraising rides for the New York Bicycling Coalition, point their guests to routes matched to skills and experience.

While the Buchmans don't ask if guests are vaccinated, they do volunteer that they are. Anyone in a common area needs to wear a mask at the inn, which is closed for the

winter and will reopen in April. "Last year saw a lot of COVID-based cancellations and we took a heavy loss," Marty Buchman says. "This season has been robust enough to offset those losses, and we've seen an increase in visitors from NYC who want to get away from their small apartments to get out and ride."

#### CREATING AN ARTFUL B&B

When the economy went bust in 2008, artists Michael Cardacino and Rosalind Brenner had just finished constructing a sprawling family compound in East Hampton where they planned to live and care

for aging relatives — but when the phone stopped ringing with artwork orders and both family members died, a friend suggested they open their home as East Hampton Art House Bed and Breakfast.

"We had two free rooms, the grounds were quiet and spectacular with a great pool, and there's a private beach around the corner," says Cardacino, 69. "We're also a short car ride from East Hampton village and all the amenities for which the South Fork is famous, including wining, dining, galleries and beaches."

Cardacino uses innovative techniques to make 3D computer sculptures while Brenner

is a mixed-media abstract painter.

One of the best aspects of their setup is their B&B income complements their art income. "We display our work throughout the house and our guests see it being created," says Cardacino. "Sometimes we sell art right off the wall, and we get a surprising number of commissions from guests, too."

The couple were well settled in their business when COVID caused heavy cancellations. They refocused their business on New York City prospects wanting to visit locations where social distancing was easy for celebrating milestones.

Guests are asked to wear masks when interacting with others outside of their own groups while in the house, Cardacino says. Tables are well separated for breakfast, so masks are not required there, and use of the indoor pool is restricted to one visiting couple or group at a time, so no masks are required there, either.

The pandemic was just another challenge of many of the innkeepers say. But it's worth it.

"There's always a curveball coming your way, but running a B&B can still be a rewarding endeavor," Wilfred Joseph says. "Most people at night lock their doors to keep the world out. In this business, you lock your guests inside your home. That says a lot about both our guests and owners."



East Hampton Art House Bed and Breakfast.



Marty and Elyse Buchman at their bicycle-centric Stony Brookside Bed & Bike Inn.