

Gilmanton's Own Market gets a test run

Written by Adam Drapcho

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Gilmanton's Own board members Paula Gilman, Sarah Baldwin-Welcome, Alicia Smith and Keith Descoteaux celebrate the opening of the organization's first market, which sells Gilmanton-produced foods and crafts and located within Four Corners Brick House antique shop. (Adam Drapcho/Laconia Daily Sun)

By ADAM DRAPCHO, LACONIA DAILY SUN

GILMANTON — A little more than a year ago, a group of people who either grow or appreciate food grown in Gilmanton organized a meal. The event, which showcased the talents and diversity of the food growers in this small town, was met with such an enthusiastic response that organizers set their sights on more ambitious objectives.

In February, Gilmanton's Own, a nonprofit organization, was founded. The group has been building momentum over the course of the year, holding a series of "Taste of Gilmanton" dinners and pop-up markets.

"In each, we did exceptionally well," said Sarah Baldwin-Welcome, president of the board of directors for Gilmanton's Own. The events have raised about \$7,000 for the organization, which it hopes to use toward the opening of a storefront that will provide a space for shoppers to purchase food and crafts made in town.

That goal was realized on Tuesday, when Gilmanton's Own Market opened in a small space within the Four Corners Brick House. It wasn't the first choice – Gilmanton's Own had hoped to open in a decommissioned fire house, but logistics couldn't be worked out. The board of directors is still looking for a place it can call its own, but in the meantime, they are excited to announce what amounts to a beta version of their

market.

Anne Bartlett and Karen Jenkins, owners of the Four Corners Brick House antique shop, have made available a space that, though small, allows Gilmanton's Own to further test the market's appetite for local foods and goods.

"Anne and Karen were very kind to offer this space to find out if the people of Gilmanton are really going to come out to support this," said Baldwin-Welcome.

Gilmanton's Own Market, within Four Corners Brick House, will be open Tuesdays through Sundays through the end of December. There are currently six local farms working together to stock the market. Shoppers should expect to find vegetables and maple syrup, beef, pork, chicken, dairy products, mustards, honey, soda, jellies, herbs and spices, canned pickles and fruit spreads, and baked goods. Local artisans will provide cards, calendars, jewelry and paintings, and they hope to soon offer soaps.

But there are more than 40 farms in Gilmanton, and many of them will be watching the market to see if the success of the Taste of Gilmanton dinners will translate into a retail setting.

"There are many more (farms) in the wings, waiting to see how we do," said Keith Descoteaux, a board member and vegetable farmer.

Come spring, Gilmanton's Own hopes to have secured a much larger space for its market. Further plans include an educational center and the purchase of equipment that can be loaned to its members. If the support that the organization has seen so far is any indication, those objectives are possible.

"We feel very optimistic that with every step we take, we get further and further toward our goal," said Baldwin-Welcome. "We have come a long way in 13 months, when we were just a group that got together to say, 'What can we put together for a meal?'"

