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**Closing the Deal**

Christopher Thompson

Tap House Grille is a hidden gem

ONCE IN a while you stumble across something you recognize as truly unique. And that happened to me when I came across the New England's Tap House Grille in Hooksett.

For those that are unfamiliar with the Tap House, it's a restaurant that opened in January at 1292 Hooksett Road. If you're coming from Manchester, it's a little over a mile north of the Cinemagic movie theaters. Situated in a strip mall and sharing store frontage with a big named bank and other well-known retail stores, the Tap House is in a location you wouldn't expect.

I'm far from a restaurant critic and don't claim to be an expert on the food service industry, but I do know something good when I experience it. Due to my schedule and lack of time to allocate towards cooking, I tend to eat out a lot more than I'd like to admit. I've had my fair share of restaurant experiences, and that's why I feel compelled to share my experience at the Tap House.

First and most importantly, the restaurant business is a people business. Sure, you have to have good food and a desirable atmosphere, but that is expected. It's all about the people and the experience they have. And that is one of the most important aspects of the restaurant business the Tap House has truly figured out.

It only took a few visits for the wait staff at the Tap House to figure me out. They were very in tune with my routine and have always done an amazing job making me feel like I was coming to eat at a friend's house. Although it wasn't obvious to me, this approach is by design and part of what they want every customer to feel.

The last time I went to the Tap House for dinner, I followed my usual routine, sat down at the bar and ordered a drink and dinner. As I was finishing my dinner and the waitress asked me if I wanted another beer, I realized that this was the fourth person that night that had waited on me. That's something you just don't see very often.

Everyone who works at the Tap House has a team mentality. It shows and it's one of the only times I've ever experienced that in a restaurant. It wasn't about the individual waiter or waitress that was serving me. The entire staff was focused on making sure I was taken care of. And they did that flawlessly.

After I finished eating, I decided to track down the owner

► See Deal, Page B2

Pint Publik is aleheads' delight

◆ **Comfort food, draft beer:** Queen City's latest eatery offers exotic flavors in a British-style pub.

By **DAVE SOLOMON**  
New Hampshire Union Leader

MANCHESTER — Chris Davis of Goffstown was only 5 when his family immigrated from Jamaica in the early 1980s, bringing a tradition of Caribbean cooking to their new home in New Hampshire. Davis and his two partners are

now sharing that tradition with visitors to Pint Publik House, a newly opened bar and restaurant at 1111 Elm St.

Pint combines the ambiance of a British-style pub, with the big-screen technology of a sports bar, the comfort food of a diner and the exotic flavors of the West Indies, not to mention an extensive beer selection.

After 25 years in the local restaurant business, most recently as general

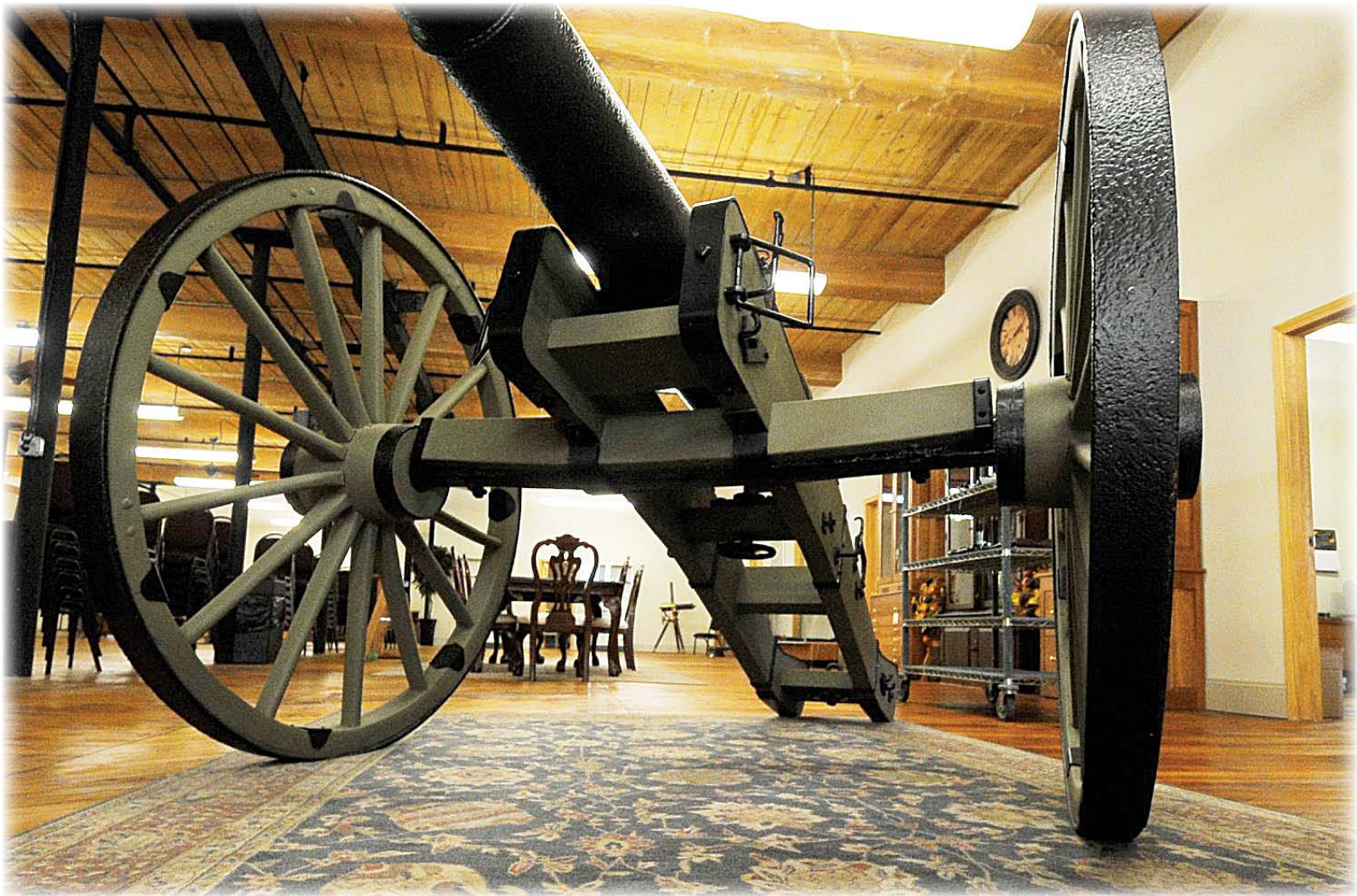
► See Pint, Page B2



Partners Chris Davis and Roy Arsenault at the entrance to the Pint Publik House, which recently opened at 1111 Elm St.

DAVE SOLOMON / UNION LEADER

GREAT NEW USES FOR A GREAT OLD BUILDING



A large cannon is seen on display at Amoskeag Auction Company in the Waumbec Mill at 250 Commercial St., in Manchester.

THOMAS ROY / UNION LEADER



Bricks and antique wood flooring make a warm atmosphere at The Loft Salon in the Waumbec Mill.

THOMAS ROY / UNION LEADER



A collaboration room and office layout at RiverStone features a mix of modern and natural elements.

THOMAS ROY / UNION LEADER

Business thrives at Waumbec Mill

In the commercial real estate world, securing 95 percent occupancy in a 450,000-square-foot building is a feat worth celebrating, even more so when you're talking about a

century-old Manchester mill building no one much wanted when Shane Brady and Arthur Sullivan bought it for \$10,000 plus \$200,000 in back taxes in 1995.

Waumbec Mill — the equivalent of a 20-story office tower flipped on its side — is now home to a major insurance company, a national auction house and an assortment of tech startups, research and development firms, salons, nonprofits and other small businesses that have set up shop at 250 Commercial St.

Brady Sullivan recently announced the completion of 10 deals totaling about 18,000 square feet it has signed over the past several months. But the property began inching toward its

latest peak about 18 months ago, says Benjamin Kelley, an associate broker whose first project was Waumbec Mill when he joined the company more than seven years ago.

"We just finished what we consider a transformation of the building. We took it from a mixed-use quasi-industrial building and turned it into a creative, flexible work environment," Kelley said. "It's attracted a real eclectic mix of tenants. And we've shifted away from those

older traditional industrial uses that you used to see in the Millyard in the '80s and '90s.

Those spaces boast 14-foot ceilings, exposed bricks and beams, and room to grow as those startups expand and need additional space.

PillPack, a prescription service that fills, sorts and delivers medication in

► See Notebook, Page B11

**Mike Cote**

Business Editor's Notebook



Port City sports apparel business up and running

By **GRETYL MACALASTER**  
Union Leader Correspondent

PORTSMOUTH — Kara Welch had hardly hung her shingle before word got out in the athletic apparel industry that she was starting her own business.

After 15 years in the industry, working for the likes of Reebok, Timberland, New Balance and Vision, Welch gained a reputation in the field of athletic apparel product design and development.

She started Athena Apparel Solutions LLC in 2010 out of her home. Through word of mouth,

the company has grown to three employees and a small office in the heart of Market Square in the downtown.

In three short years the company can also already claim big name clients including Reebok, New Balance, Sperry Top-Sider and Sauce Hockey.

In 2014, New Balance will launch a new golf apparel line designed by Athena, and an area company, Spirit Designs, will launch a new line of paddleboard wear also designed by Welch and Athena employee Kim Ortengren.

Welch said what makes Athena unique is the full service provided for clients, from ideas to production.

Athena can handle design, technical design, development, sourcing, merchandising, as well as researching trends in fashion and innovation of fabrics.

Welch said she always knew she wanted to work in the clothing industry. Her mother was a seamstress, and Welch began sewing at a young age. She earned her undergraduate degree in

► See Apparel, Page B2



Kara Welch, founder of Athena Apparel Solutions in Portsmouth, poses with two new lines they are working on both local and international clients.

GRETYL MACALASTER





A section of a long hallway gives an idea of the massive size of the building.

THOMAS ROY/UNION LEADER

## Notebook

Continued from Page B1

personalized packets and mails them to customers, recently moved to the Waumbec from Cambridge, Mass.

“They wanted that unique startup feel, but they didn’t have the Cambridge budget so they came back here,” Kelley said. “They had some New Hampshire roots. We’ve seen a lot of that: newer, dynamic businesses that don’t want traditional concrete and steel.”

The flexible spaces can accommodate two- or three-person businesses that just need 500 square feet to large corporate clients, such as the RiverStone Group, an insurance company that occupies the fourth and fifth floors and leases nearly 150,000 square feet.

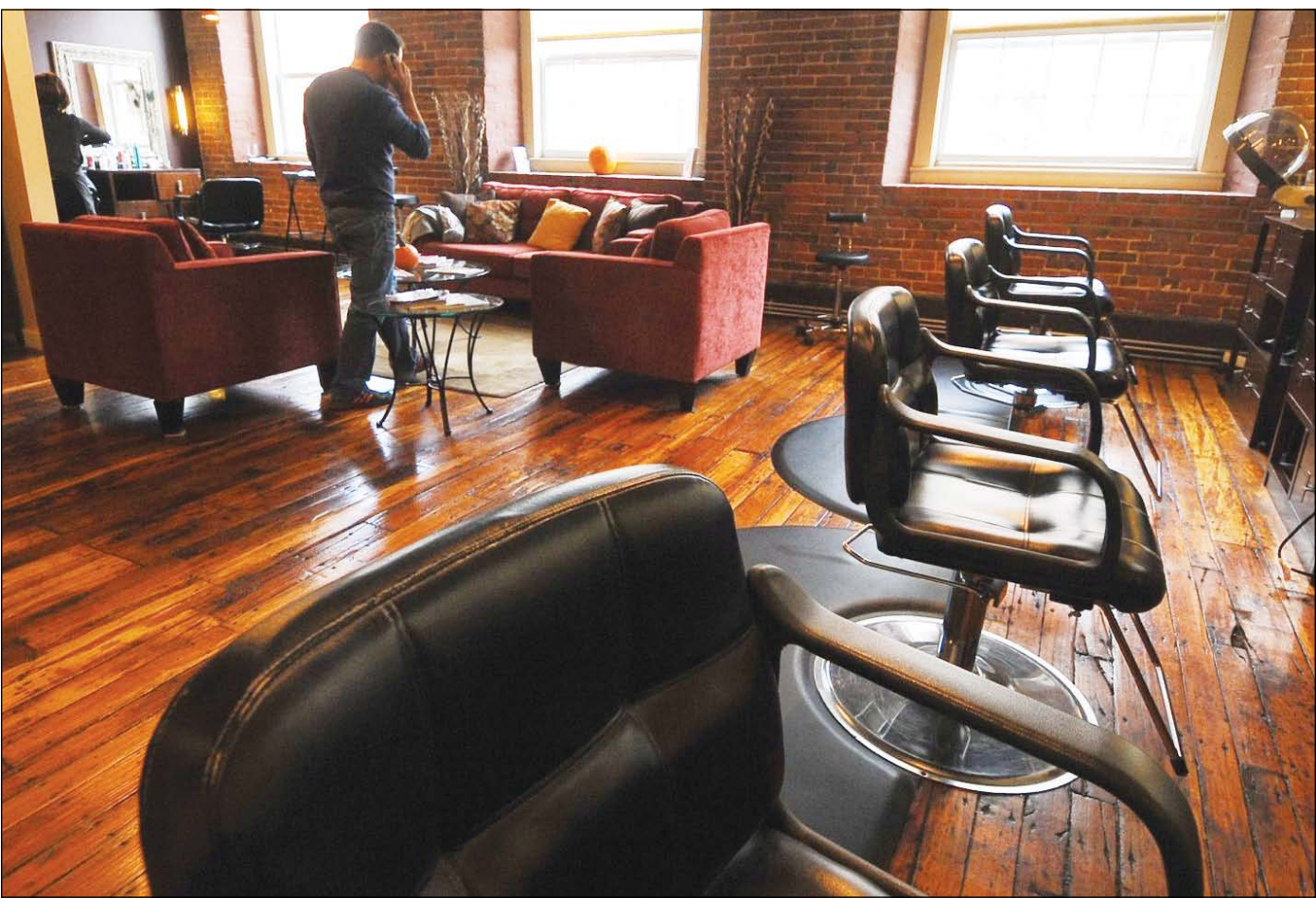
“They were one of our main tenants when we started developing it, and we built the building around them,” Kelley said. “They developed their own

space, but they were crucial to our further developing of that building.”

During a tour of the building Friday hosted by Kelley and Sullivan for the Union Leader, Carol Baldwin, human resources manager for RiverStone, offered a view of the company’s renovation project, which aims to replace its remaining Dilbert-style cubicle environment on one side of the building with the sleek open-concept look of its already renovated space. The new version eliminates private offices for managers and dumps those gray-carpeted workspace walls in favor of lower-rise, etched-glass partitions.

RiverStone moved to Waumbec in 1999 and has been a major presence in the building since its arrival.

“RiverStone was in downtown Chicago and they were looking at where they wanted to relocate in the country. They relocated



A row of chairs is pictured at The Loft Salon situated in the Waumbec Mill.

THOMAS ROY/UNION LEADER

here because of the airport,” Sullivan said.

RiverStone is among the companies that have employees living across the street at 300 Bedford St., a building now known as the Lofts at Mill Number One. Brady Sullivan converted to 110 apartments that opened several months ago and is fully occupied.

“We’ve been able to get huge synergy between those two buildings,” Kelley said. “During the day, when those tenants are gone, it provides overflow parking for the Waumbec and vice versa on the weekends when those tenants are there and they can use the Waumbec parking for guests.”

Kelley said it’s the environment that many professionals crave, one that eliminates a commute.

“It speaks to the bigger picture of what’s going on — people coming out of suburbs and moving to the city to live,” he said. “It’s about as close as you can get to a live/work combo. There is nothing like that

right now that truly exists in Manchester, but this is pretty close to it.

Mike Cote is business editor at the Union Leader. Contact him at 668-4321, ext. 324 or mcote@unionleader.com.

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