

A Showcase of Elsah General Store, 3 Years Strong

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ELSAH - Blair and Dory Smith had two things in mind when they opened Elsah General Store in April 2015. The first thing in mind was that it had to be an actual working General Store, serving Elsah and the neighboring communities by providing everyday necessities such as butter, local eggs, milk, cheese, juice, sugar, flour, meats, pasta, cereal, chips, and countless other essentials.

At the same time they were hoping to give visitors from a wider radius a unique and memorable shopping experience in a beautifully restored building, dating back to the 1870's, with its original countertops and floors, to find pottery, cards, books, gifts, collectibles, old fashion candy, vintage bottled soda, ice cream, a pastry counter, and the "Goodies Table."

The Elsah General Store is celebrating three years of business and is going strong into their fourth. When Blair and Dory purchased the building, that used to hold JK Keller & Son, they had no intention of opening any type of store. They had set up the storefront as their grandchildren's playroom. But as the years went on, they saw a need for something like this in the historic Village of Elsah. After being a part of the Elsah Holiday House Tour, hearing stories from the visitors and seeing the visitors eyes light

up when they first entered, they knew they had to do something. When they opened, they had no expectations of what the future would hold for them. In the three years of business, Blair and Dory are very pleased with the way this idea has unfolded. “The Elsah General Store is a hidden gem. It is a must see when exploring the quaint, beautiful Village of Elsah,” says Augie Wuellner, Partner/Financial Advisor of Alton Securities & Asset Advisors, and Board Member of The RiverBend Growth Association.

The Elsah General Store has become known for its selection of 50 varieties of vintage bottled soda, and shoppers love to come in and see what’s new on the shelves. Their shoppers also love the ‘Goodies Table.’ On the table, shoppers can find sweet treats they might not see every day. These treats include gooey butter cakes from McArthur’s Bakery and Ann & Allen Bakers, bread from Fazio’s Bakery on The Hill, sweet bread from La Bonne Bouchée, Billy Goat Chips, Dad’s Cookies, Kakao Chocolate, Hank’s Cheesecakes, and much more. Most of what is on the ‘Goodies Table’ comes from the St. Louis Area.

Blair and Dory had thought that the local folks, who don’t cross the river as often, would enjoy having an opportunity to purchase some treats that they don’t see all of the time. Elsah General Store is always looking for ways to make the shopping experience memorable and unique. Besides the ‘Goodie Table’, another way they do this is to bring in nostalgic brands such as Fowlers Mill, and carry as many local items as possible. To the extent that they can, Elsah General Store keeps adding unique, iconic brands that fit their goal. According to a customer from the Lockhaven area who was at the General Store to buy ingredients for her salsa, “Blair is a great community team leader.”

One key to their success has been the Village of Elsah. Its seemingly untouched historic presence and beauty have made it a ‘must see’ for visitors from all over the region. According to Blair, people love the drive alongside the Mississippi River, and if they know of, or have read anything about Elsah, they pull off the River Road for a lap through the village, just for a chance to soak in some of its rich history and natural beauty. With the opportunity to stay at one of the two lovely bed and breakfast inns, and then visit the Elsah General Store, it gives people visiting the chance to imagine what life might have been like.

If you would like to visit Elsah General Store they are located at 22 LaSalle St. You can contact them by calling 618-556-0709, or email them at elsahgeneralstore@gmail.com. Don’t forget to give their Facebook page a like to keep up with what is going on not only at the General Store, but also the Village of Elsah.

The RiverBend Growth Association supports Elsah General Store and their members by offering a Showcase to member businesses. Please visit <http://www.growthassociation.com/page/member-benefits/> if you would like to know more about this member benefit.

The RiverBend Growth Association is the Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development organization for the 12 communities known as the Riverbend. For more information about the Growth Association, please visit www.growthassociation.com or call (618) 467-2280.

