

Godfrey Travel Agent Shares About 40-Year Career in Travel Industry

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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ALTON/GODFREY - Travel agent J.R. Rynders, who works with Travel Leaders in Godfrey, has visited several locations in her lifetime, but there's something special about the Riverbend. Rynders is in the spotlight this week in the North Alton-Godfrey Business Association.

Rynders explained that Travel Leaders speaks with dozens of clients every day who want to travel all over the world. The business helps connect clients with the hotels, activities and airlines that will make their trips go smoothly so that travelers can relax and enjoy the trip.

"I always wonder how people can get on the internet and be thrown 50 different hotels. How do you even begin to know?" Rynders said. "And I can't know all of them either,

and things change over time...But I've got a pretty good idea and I can narrow it down to maybe 15 instead of 50. If you want to do that, that's wonderful, but otherwise, you should come to a travel agent and let us navigate that."

Rynders can even help clients decide where they want to go. She can work with clients over the phone or email, but she prefers inviting them to the Travel Leaders storefront in Monticello Plaza in Godfrey, where she can show them pictures and information about different destinations.

She also enjoys sitting down with her clients so she can find out more about them and what they'd like to do during their travels. By learning about a client's lifestyle, she can make better decisions about how to accommodate them.

"It helps us to know how to navigate what is going to work better for them," Rynders explained. "Some people, they're comfortable with a more moderate trip. They don't want a lot of activities or have a certain budget. And then we have others that maybe we short-sold them because they are accustomed to a nicer kind of home, and so we need to know. If you live in a \$500,000 house, I don't want to put you in a two to three-star hotel. You need to be comparable to what you're comfortable with."

These details are major parts of Rynders's job, and she's always eager to work with clients to help them find the best trip for them. She said most people come to the agency with a few ideas about where they'd like to go and what they'd like to see, but their conversations help finalize the details.

There are a few trends in the travel industry that might inform a traveler's decision, as well. Jamaica is Rynders's favorite place to visit, but she noted that cruises have gained popularity since the COVID-19 pandemic. She encourages summer travelers to contact Travel Leaders now so they're ready to go by the time June approaches.

"If you're thinking summer travel, you need to be calling about it, because people are just booking. I have so many people who are already looking for 2025," she added. "We are very friendly in that even if you are insistent on booking something on the web, that's fine, but if you need a little help and want some information, we're there to help you out with that. And we've got books in the office that are sometimes helpful too."

Rynders also noted that the North Alton-Godfrey Business Council has helped Travel Leaders connect with other businesses, and she is pleased by the experience she has had as a member of the council over the past 15 years.

"It's just truly the meet-and-greet of the people and finding out what is going on in the area because there's always somebody promoting something," she said. "It's just getting

to know all the other business people. It's just like living in your neighborhood; you don't always get to say hi to your neighbor. When you're with your fellow business people, it's kind of nice to say hi and have that face-to-face."

For more information about Travel Leaders, call 618-462-8900 or stop by their storefront in Monticello Plaza in Godfrey. To learn more about the North Alton-Godfrey Business Council, visit NAGBC.com.