

Craft brewing with purpose in Alpha, Michigan

Sarah Giddings

It's not just about creating specialty craft beer - the Alpha, Michigan Brewing Company brews with a purpose. Since opening Memorial Day weekend of 2018, the business, run by friends Mike Bjork and Stuart Creel, has raised thousands of dollars for various causes, including, scholarships, 4H and Trout Unlimited.

"Giving to the community is the backbone of our business and mission," said Creel. He explained that anyone wanting to do a fundraiser is welcome to talk to them and see if the project is a good fit. Once an event is scheduled, Creel and Bjork do much of the legwork to promote it, leading to excellent results.

After retiring from their previous occupations, the two friends decided to create a business based on their shared passions: beer and community. They currently have several beers on tap ranging from porter to ale, with names that reflect the area such as Alpha American Ale and Brule River Red. During peak season, they have as many as 12 hand-crafted beers available.

"We intentionally did not focus on one type of beer. We wanted to brew a range," said Bjork.

Creel and Bjork work together, brewing most mornings with the help of

yeast manager, Mike's wife Mary Bjork, dubbed "The Ferminator" by Mike and Stu. They open for business Wednesday through Friday from 3 p.m. to 8 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday at 11 a.m. They don't bottle yet, but do offer refillable 64 oz. Growlers and 33 oz. Howlers which they say are very popular with campers in the summer.

"We get a lot of people stopping in on the way to camp to fill up a growler to take along to camp," said Mike.

A unique undertaking, Alpha Brewery doesn't offer food, but they have partnered with many local businesses to provide customers the best of both worlds.

"We partner with the Pasty Corner for "Pasties and Pints" on Thursdays; people can order ahead and the Pasty Corner will deliver here for customers. We also encourage people to bring in food from The Curious Pig, over in Crystal Falls or Logan's Place," explained Creel. "We have recently been working with the Alpha Mastadon Senior Center and that's been very popular."

Far from a typical bar, the Alpha Brewing Company, located on the circle in Alpha, Michigan, caters to families, with kid friendly games and snacks available.

Staying unique and sustainable is important to



Stuart Creel, Mary Bjork and Mike Bjork are owners of the Alpha Michigan Brewery.

the business, whose bar was upcycled from the Alpha Inn and dates back somewhere between 1889 -1910. The guys worked to restore the original mahogany and had local artist Tracie Wayman recreate the maker's sign on the front. Wayman also creates artwork for each beer, reflecting the personality and local flair of each individual brew.

Upcoming events at the brewery include a fly-typing class "Bar Flies" to raise money for Trout Unlimited. The class will be held April 25 at 6 p.m. For more information, stop in the brewery or call Seth Waters (906) 284-9305.

A "Boards, Brushes, and Beers" event will be

held May 8 beginning at 5:30 p.m. Participants will create a painting to take home and enjoy Alpha Brews. Cost is \$40. Sign up online at cfcommunitycenter.com.

The brewery will celebrate their one-year anniversary Memorial Day weekend, May 25 and 26, so stop out to and see what they have to offer.

They also plan to be at Brewfest in Iron Mountain on June 8 with samples to share.

Big things are happening in the "smallest village in America with a brewery," so stop in and see for yourself.

See advertisement on page 11 for more information.



Mike Bjork adds hops to the brew. The Alpha Michigan Brewery follows a precise procedure to create their craft beers.



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