



# Hospitality adjusts amid COVID-19

Lacey Schofield acknowledged that the effects of COVID-19 “have been rough” on business but the good news is things are looking up.

Schofield is general manager of Best Western Angus Inn, 2920 10th.

“We have lost a lot of business,” Schofield said. “Some examples involved guests that would have

attended the Great Bend Farm & Ranch Show, multiple ball tournaments, weddings, class and family reunions, and several corporate conventions.

“However,” she added, “on the upside, almost all have rescheduled for next year. So, we do have many things to look forward to.”

In mid-August, Schofield noted that Sunday-through-Thursday business “has greatly improved over the last few weeks. On these days, we rely heavily on our truck drivers and work crews. We are fortunate this business has returned, for the most part.”

Nevertheless, weekend business has not yet recovered. Many events that would draw large crowds were canceled.

Since the start of the pandemic earlier this year, prospective guests have been asking questions about the Angus Inn’s cleaning procedures, especially people from areas where the virus is more prevalent. When these

calls come in, Schofield and her staff offer reassurance about their enhanced protocols.

“We have made many changes in the rooms,” the general manager commented. “We have pulled virtually all items that cannot be sanitized, such as pads of paper and pens, laundry bags, amenity trays, etc. And we removed decorative items such as bed scarves and accent pillows.

“In addition, we have purchased an electrostatic sprayer to sanitize all areas in the lodging room after a guest checks out. We want the room to be ready for the next guest. These are just a few examples of the many procedural changes we have in place.”

Schofield, who has worked at the Angus Inn since February 2007, said she has “always loved the hospitality industry. I have wanted to be in the hotel business since I was in high school. I think it started with my love of traveling.”

The fringe benefit is “I have an amazing boss in Loren Unruh and the staff here is fantastic.”

Unruh opened the hotel with 48 rooms and added on twice; now it has 90 rooms, the Courtyard and indoor pool. Originally, the pool was inside the Courtyard but was eventually moved to its current location, which is much easier to secure.

The Courtyard is a “huge piece of the hotel,” Schofield said. “It is a great spot just to hang out, or enjoy the indoor pool, hot tub, video games, pool table, ping pong table and the big-screen TV.”

In addition to reunions, the Courtyard is home to receptions, graduation parties, election-watch parties, vendor shows, corporate and family holiday parties, convention banquets and other meals, and many more events. “My husband and I even had our wedding ceremony there,” Schofield noted.

Pool parties, with up to 25 people, are \$30 per hour. Both pool and Courtyard activities must be booked in advance.

Room amenities and features include free WiFi and Netflix, smart TVs, Blue Ray players, refrigerators, freezers, microwaves, coffee makers, hair dryers and ironing boards. A shuttle is provided to guests at no charge.

“And we are pet friendly and smoke free,” Schofield pointed out.

The Page and Perkins also are big attractions for some guests. “They love the convenience of walking across the parking lot for their meals and to have a beverage,” Schofield explained.

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Electrostatic sprayer for sanitizing

Best Western is a member-owned, non-profit company. Each location is independently owned and operated. The Great Bend property, which employs 20-25 people, was constructed in 1976 and opened in 1977.

During these years, “Great Bend has been a wonderful location for travelers,” Schofield said. “We have a unique situation because three highways converge in one spot – K-96, U.S. 56 and K-156. A lot of people pass through our area.

“There also is a long, long list of activities pertaining to Mother Nature and the big outdoors. This is especially important now because of the importance of social distancing.”

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