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# A THOUSAND REASONS TO VISIT PARKERS PRAIRIE

January 14, 2021

By Heather Rule

Thousand Lakes Brewing Co. in Parkers Prairie opened just before Christmas 2019, but the history

or the family-owned business goes back a decade when a group of brothers-in-law brewed beer at home.

It started with Amelia Harren wanting to make hard cider. "While we got everything, we

said, "let's grab a beer kit, too," said Matt Harren, who's an owner of Thousand Lakes Brewing along with his wife, Amelia, and Kevin Siepker Jr., who's married to Amelia's sister, Amanda.

About five years into brewing, their homebrew club, then known as the Woodside Brew Bros., entered competitions getting "some unbiased feedback" to help improve their beers. They won some categories and started talking more seriously about turning it into a brewery business, according to Harren. "We were thinking about going down that road anyway," Harren said. Seeing their beers do well at competitions and receiving positive feedback was the affirmation that helped "push us across that line to move that direction" into the brewery business, Harren said.

The name – Thousand Lakes Brewing Co. – is a nod to its location and Otter Tail County's more than 1,000 lakes, "tip of the hat" to the county and the reasons many folks live in or visit Otter Tail County, Harren said.

The tap room is in the front of the house, with seating for 60 to 70 people. Customers can see the brewing area and the equipment through a glass door. Thirsty patrons can choose from a variety of 11 beers on tap, plus non-alcoholic options like root beer or cream soda. They can also snack on Harry's frozen pizzas or free popcorn.

The space is family-friendly, with a collection of games and coloring books.

Though the owners previously lived in the Twin Cities, Thousand Lakes Brewing is very local. Harren grew up in Eagle Bend and lives east of Parkers Prairie with his wife and four children. Siepker Jr.'s wife, Amanda, grew up near Parkers Prairie.

Harren worked in IT project management at Polaris but quit his job to focus on his "dream job" at the brewery,

"which has been fun to do," Harren said. He added that it's been fun to see the support from the community and travelers so far, seeing how much they enjoy the beer and the

space. "Seeing some of that stuff come together and work like you hoped it would, has probably been one of the most gratifying things," Harren said.

Only a few months after the brewery opened, the owners were thrust into a different business model when COVID-19 forced restaurant and bar closures in the spring of 2020. Though the brewery was closed to customers, it still sold beer in growlers and cans via take-out.

Check the website at [ThousandLakesBrewing.com](http://ThousandLakesBrewing.com) for current info and hours.

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