

Issue 63 - January/February 2023

Monadnock Table *It's Local!*

LIVING AND BUYING LOCAL IN YOUR REGION & BEYOND

Rise of the Homebodies

Plus:

Yummy Hummus

Our Towns: Wilton, NH

Garage Made Wood Crafts

& More!

"Heading Home," multimedia,
by Carole Gourvellec.

See artist's profile on page 6



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WILTON MAIN STREET



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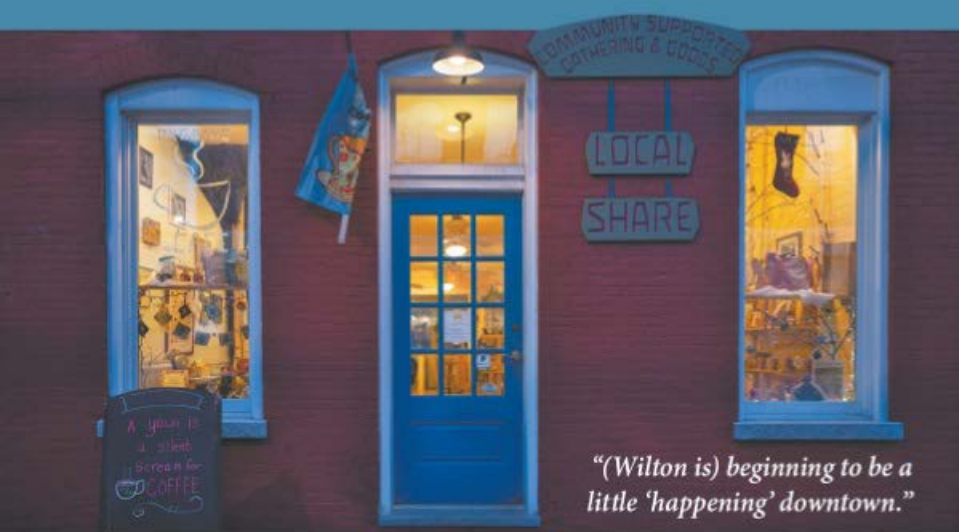
WILTON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Good Things Happen When Community Comes First

By Caroline Tremblay
Photos by Kelly Fletcher

The stately town hall and
theatre in downtown Wilton.





"(Wilton is) beginning to be a little 'happening' downtown."

One thing that's amazing about the Monadnock Region is that there are so many examples of rural being done right. For example, how about a Main Street that has actually grown and become more of a community hub despite a pandemic? Look no further than Wilton, where community is the favorite flavor, and

people actively invest in local living.

"Wilton is our home, and we wanted to bring a fresh new environment to town," says Christopher Gordon, owner of Copper Kettle To Go, which pulled up a spot at 39 Main St. just over a year ago. Gordon's plans for the restaurant were underway before COVID hit, so he persevered.

"We wanted a place where people could gather and to bring something completely different from other local establishments," he says.

With in-house dining for lunch and dinner and a Sunday brunch, the eatery also ensures all its meals can be prepared for takeout and offered at reasonable prices.



A sample of locally made products at GiGi's Country Store in Wilton.



Noah Proctor makes a pumpkin martini at the Copper Kettle.

Gordon says the response from the community has been "Amazing! We have built so many friendships."

In its short tenure, Copper Kettle has also become a destination for live music, featuring local singers and songwriters like April Cushman, Justin Cohn, and Matt the Sax, who also play in Boston and all around New England.

"It's really brought the town together," Gordon says.

Beyond the entertainment, guests are big fans of the ever-changing menu, listed daily on social media and Google (under the "Updates" tab).

"We keep it small to serve nothing but high-quality, fresh food," Gordon says.

Some of the most popular plates have been pretzels with homemade beer cheese, steak and cheese eggrolls, and potbelly burritos. Of course, the full bar with its surprising craft beezz and hard cider selection doesn't hurt either.

A Wilton renaissance?

Copper Kettle isn't the only small business feeling the momentum.

"It's beginning to be a little 'happening' downtown," Gordon says. When he bought his building, numerous storefronts were for sale. Now, most are full.

"Wilton is starting to make some noise in surrounding towns," he says.

Just down the street, another new business also took the plunge during the pandemic. GiGi's Country Store opened after owner Janet Dewitz lost her job and decided to take a leap of faith. The business has had its ups and downs, but she's proud to have made it through her first winter, even during the pandemic.

"I hope to continue to grow," she notes.

The community has been behind it from the very first inking that the country store was opening. While Dewitz was setting up shop, numerous

WILTON, NH

Founded:

- First part of the township "Salem-Canada" in 1735
- Regranted as "Number Two" in 1749
- Incorporated as "Wilton" in 1762

County: Hillsborough

Land Acknowledgment:

- Pennacook
- Wabanaki (Dawnland Confederacy)
- Abenaki

Population: 3,677

Elevation: 384 feet

Area: 25.8 square miles

people knocked on the door, brought flowers, and wished her well.

"I think the community's trying very hard to keep the small businesses up and running," Dewitz says.

This doesn't surprise her.



"The community in Wilton and Lyndeborough is phenomenal. She's glad to be giving back in her own way.

"We work with a lot of local people and veterans, and I think that's a big draw. I truly believe the way to go these days is that we all have to work together," she says.

Dewitz works with veteran farmers to source local meats and produce and specialty items such as honey and leather. Promoting healthy eating is a priority for her, and she aims to provide a selection of non-GMO, gluten-free foods that "don't taste like cardboard," she says.

While it can be challenging to source the foods without buying in bulk, she's coming up with creative collaborations.

"We have a lot of local vendors that are willing to work with us, and I think that's a key thing," she says.

Not only is she grateful for her regular customers but also for the new faces that arrive downtown during programs coordinated by the Wilton NH Main Street Association. For instance, just before the holidays, the town enjoyed Wander Through Wilton, which gave locals a chance to shop the nostalgic downtown — from antique stores, boutiques and salons, to a range of impressive foodie spots.

Another Main Street favorite is the Wilton Town Hall Theatre, built in 1886 and originally used as a playhouse for traveling shows. Now fully equipped to offer movie experiences with impressive sound and picture, the theatre draws locals in to munch freshly popped popcorn and take in a range of intellectual and artistic films. The theatre can also be rented for private viewings and remains a fixture for film lovers in the region.

"Especially the way the world is nowadays, you need the community behind you, and I think Wilton has that," Dewitz says.

Take, for instance, the success of the popular coffee stop, LocalShare. It's an extension of nearby Plowshare Farm, a farming community where people with a



New stores are breathing life into downtown Wilton, New Hampshire.



range of abilities live and work together in an inclusive neighborhood.

At LocalShare, visitors can find beautiful, handmade goods created by residents of Plowshare and other local crafters. The eclectic space is also home to a coffee shop, craft studio, and gathering space for community members.

On the subject of third places, Hilltop Café, situated in an 18th-century farmhouse, is a go-to for locals, as well. Dining is offered by reservation and features a mouthwatering farm-fresh, environmentally and socially responsible menu.

And there's more to this tiny town

Of course, if you're talking community, a visit to the Temple-Wilton Community Farm (TWCF) is also a must. The farm has been in operation since 1986 and moved to Wilton about 20 years ago. The current location on Abbot Hill provides proximity to both the High Mowing and Pine Hill schools.

"The schools and the farm, along with other institutions in the area, grew out of the same movement for human and social renewal, based on the philosophy

of Rudolf Steiner," says Brian Drayton, president of the board of trustees.

The town has supported the farm in myriad ways over the years, and TWCF is grateful for the region's commitment to local farming.

"Our mission is to create a self-renewing, biodynamic farm organism — soil, animals, gardens, woods, wild creatures and people — one of whose products is nourishing food," Drayton says.

He points to the emotional and spiritual benefits of green spaces, biodiversity, and community as additional benefits.

While the farm's core team is comprised of men and women highly skilled in growing food, raising animals, and building community, TWCF thinks of their CSA members as farmers, too.

"They all share in the financial risks and the joys of a good harvest," Drayton says.

Each winter, TWCF creates an estimated budget. Then members commit to a pledge amount for their households, allowing them to enjoy vegetables and milk during the growing season.

"Members are supporting the farm as a whole ... rather than paying for specific amounts of food," Drayton says.

Folks use what they need while being considerate of others and purchase other foods, such as eggs and yogurt, at a slight discount.

The farm store remains open during winter, primarily supplying root vegetables, dairy items, and other goods made in the area, like bread and cookies. Locals are encouraged to stop by the store and find more info at twcfarm.com.

"The climate is changing fast, and this is having an impact on farms and on food security," Drayton notes.

TWCF is working to be as sustainable and resilient as possible, which he sees as a broader theme.

He says, "This also means working to build the community life so that our members and the wider community can celebrate the gifts of the earth and the seasons and undertake the hard work of agriculture with gratitude and hope." 🌱