Written by Mark Jaeger
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SLOW POKES LOCAL FOOD has been offering Ozaukee County residents healthy things to eat and drink since 2006. Store owner Kathleen McGlone has now purchased the building at 1229 12th Ave. in Grafton.

Photos by Mark Jaeger

Building improvements eyed, including addition of second-floor classrooms

When Kathleen McGlone opened Slow Pokes Local Food shop in Grafton in 2006, natural food was a relatively untested commodity in Ozaukee County.

Business has been steady in the store at 1229 12th Ave., but McGlone is not content to leave things as they are.

The first change, she decided, is to make the transition from tenant to building owner. Closing on the building sale is scheduled for April 1

“I’ve got 1,000 ideas in my head, although translating them for a contractor may take some doing,” McGlone said.

“It is time to do or die in this economy. It is time to make improvements to the building as an owner and not as a renter. The first thing will be to do some renovations and to create an office and classrooms on the second floor.”

Eventually, she said, she would like to add a small cafe to the building and venture into wholesale distribution of products.

“This is a 120-year-old building, and it can be unbearable downstairs when all of the cooler compressors are running. Unfortunately, you can’t do everything at once,” McGlone said.

The focus of the offerings at the store is healthy eating.

For that purpose, the shop has become a clearinghouse for people who live with food allergies or want to make significant lifestyle changes.

“The problems the typical American diet cause are surfacing in our children. There are so many cases of ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) and ADHD (Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder), and many of them are
diet related. We are feeding our kids food they cannot digest and their guts are a mess,” McGlone said.

She is careful not to suggest foods that simply transfer the problem, such as replacing wheat-based food with gluten-free options that can also be difficult for a body to process.

The store sells a veritable garden of fresh, organic produce, along with gluten-free granola, muffins, cookies, cakes, pizza, soups and entrees, as well as coconut milk kefir and custards.

For the past four years, registered dietitian Laurie Meyer has led classes at the store, giving McGlone more time to devote to the retail aspects of the store.

“Laurie has been a real blessing for us and brings real expertise. When I make suggestions, people can’t help but think I am trying to sell them something. Laurie is seen as an objective voice,” McGlone said.

McGlone is equally proud of the store’s role in supporting local agriculture.

“We deal regularly with 20 local farmers, some of whom are very local,” she said.

The store even carries a variety of locally raised meats, including beef, bison, turkey and chicken.

McGlone said the Grafton location has been ideal for her, even if some customers disagree.

“Many of my customers say the best location for a store is wherever they live, but I live in Grafton and I wanted the store to be where I live,” she said.

By buying the store, McGlone said, she is making a commitment to the community.

“I’ve got two children to put through college. I’m not going anywhere,” she said.

Slow Pokes is open Mondays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Tuesdays through Fridays from 10 a.m. 6 p.m., and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.