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State Theatre – Brenda Baker

913 Washington Avenue, Bay City MI



From the outside, the 109 year old **State Theatre** looks like your typical old-school theatre; from the inside, this place is anything but typical. Formerly the Bijou Theatre, when you pull open the grand outer doors, you walk into a lobby containing the box office. There is the window with a small hole to talk through – just like in the movies! This is where I met Brenda Baker, a lovely lady who wears many hats around the theatre. As I introduced myself, the aroma of buttered popcorn drew me toward the concessions and then I caught a glimpse of the jaw-dropping stage and seats. I cannot begin to describe the Mayan themed décor, and I urge you to come in and check it out (Brenda would love to give you a tour).



Because of its extravagant interior, Brenda truly does love giving guests tours. Besides managing the box office, Brenda updates the Facebook page, answers phones and coordinates all 70 of the active volunteers. She works with Paul Phillips, Director of Operations, and Mike Bacigalupo, Chief Operating Officer, and jokingly said that there is some “poking fun” at one another, but they all work really well together. The **State Theatre** hosts movies and music in Wenonah Park throughout the summer, along with many shows and productions throughout the rest of the year inside of the theatre. This theatre is a trademark of Bay City and as Brenda said “there is a lot of opportunity for some really great entertainment.”



Originally from Bay City, Brenda lived in Florida with her family before working at the **State Theatre** for the last two years. She spent the majority of her time with kids, working in child care and being a preschool teacher. Throughout her eight year stay in Florida, Brenda would “complain because there was nothing like St. Laurent Brothers,” which is one of her favorites here in Bay City.

I asked her if she had a favorite memory working at the theatre. “One afternoon a young man stopped in. He was going on a first date and was looking for more intimate seating so he and the girl could get to know each other. They came down at intermission and he introduced me to her. They had a great time. A year later he came in and asked me if those same seats were available for a show that evening and when they came down at intermission to see me again, they were engaged!” This theatre means so much to that couple, as well as the Bay City community. It’s one thing to talk about its significance; it’s another to experience it yourself. Treat yourself to buttery popcorn and quality entertainment at the **State Theatre** in Bay City and say hello to Brenda, one of the Theatres shining stars.

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*Written by Taylor Fisher, Summer Intern for Bay City
Downtown Management Board
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Half Mile Handmade

904 N. Water Street Downtown Bay City, Michigan



Owner Capri Wisniewski - Image by [mLive](#)

The white and rickety porch door that lives within the houses of many Michiganders also led me into **Half Mile Handmade**, and it was the first indicator that I was entering a place where hard-work and handmade are no strangers. Bay City native Capri Wisniewski stood proud and approachable near the checkout counter of her shop. She was ready to engage in conversation the moment I introduced myself. Her store is a reflection of herself, and their personable interior and spunky exterior are what drove our interview.



Half Mile Handmade storefront

A few years back when the store fronts in Downtown Bay City began filling up, Capri knew it was time to take the leap and open a store of her own. Currently living in Columbus, Ohio, she knew Bay City was the ideal location to open this type of business. Contrary to popular belief, the items that fill **Half Mile Handmade** come from all over the U.S. and this wide net allows shoppers to buy beautiful handmade items with a “modern aesthetic.” Capri calls her crafters the “coolest creative people,” and says working with them is the best part of owning her business.



Signs made by the many vendors selling with Halfmile Handmade

Crafting isn't the only thing she is passionate about. I'm sure that many can relate to Capri's love for music, and she was introduced to it from a young age: "I didn't get the music talent," says Capri, "but I love karaoke." I appreciated how her face lit up when I mentioned concerts. "One of my favorite [concerts] was Paramore [...] and I never miss Brand New when they're near," she says.

Toward the end of our conversation, Capri's mom brought out a fabricated cat from behind the counter and beamed at her daughters "first intimate experience with a sewing machine." Capri mentioned that she was a "lifelong crafter" who "always wanted to open a store in Bay City." With support from family, friends, and community, Capri gives others the avenue to "make their handmade dreams a reality" at **Half Mile Handmade**.

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*Written by Taylor Fisher, Summer Intern for Bay City
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Tonduē Medical Spa

715 South Washington Avenue, Bay City, Michigan



Owner Roxanne Tondu

The allure of exposed brick and dazzling lights viewed through the windows of **Tonduē Medical Spa** caught my attention as I made my way through the door. Owner Roxanne Tondu was with a customer so I wandered around the boutique-like store front, gazing at the Bay City made jewelry and makeup line. Pamphlets about Botox and fillers were also on display, and I discussed lash extensions with aesthetician Erin as I waited. Roxanne joined us in conversation, gave me a warm welcome, and shortly after we began our tour before sitting down to talk.

When choosing a location for her first brick and mortar business, Roxanne chose Downtown Bay City because it felt like a "mini Chicago." Her eye catching store front often captures the curiosity of passerby's. During my tour I noticed that her treatment room had a relaxing feel to it. "I want people to feel comfortable when they come in," she said.



As Roxanne and I talked, we found a mutual love for Pure Barre. "I'm kind of an addict of Pure Barre," she said, "it's an all over body workout with controlled movement and the instructors are extremely intelligent." I was shocked to discover that she was also a martial artist and runner.

Roxanne mentioned that she didn't have a lot of time to participate in those activities anymore, considering "[her] kids are [her] biggest hobby and they have been since they were born. They're just so fun." As if she wasn't already animated, speaking of her children brought a new spirit to our conversation.



To be honest, the idea of pokes and needles made me uneasy. Sitting and talking with Roxanne opened my mind to something new. "I love the ability to help someone feel better about themselves," she said. And her products and treatments are just that – small tweaks that allow people to exude confidence and feel comfortable in their own skin. In a world that criticizes every small imperfection,

Roxanne and her staff at **Tondue Medical Spa** are nothing short of a gift that everyone should consider unwrapping.

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Written by Taylor Fisher, Summer Intern for Bay City Downtown Management Board

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Perfectly Imperfect Creations

108 Third Street, Downtown Bay City, Michigan



Owners Melissa Bergey, Chris and Rachele Schalow.

I walked through the softly lit entrance of **Perfectly Imperfect Creations** only to be greeted with hugs and laughter. Part-owners Chris and Rachele Schalow and Rachele’s parents Steve and Melissa Bergey made me feel like family as we sat around a beautifully crafted dining table, one of many items available in their store. I was amazed at how easily the conversation flowed, and how they answered my questions as a unit. This warm embrace of conversation was present through the entire interview and is just one reason customers look forward to stopping in.



Melissa surrounded by their stock of Annie Sloan Paint.

This hand crafted furniture store is relatively new to Downtown Bay City, but the enthusiasm within is nothing short of amazing. "My favorite part of owning the business is the people we get to meet," said Melissa. Everyone else shook their head in agreement. In addition to the "Annie Sloan Paint" and their custom order option, Rachele and Melissa also enjoy teaching paint techniques in the workshop.

I got a peek of the families' competitive side when Rachele brought up their current "Dresser-off." "Everyone is throwing \$5 in" and whoever sells their dresser first wins the money. The group erupted into laughter at Rachele's explanation, although I'm *pretty* sure I sensed some tension in the air.

Chris and Rachele used to foster dogs and when asked, Rachele responded (with a laugh), "I have a problem." Fostering fulfilled her "need to help" after life became too busy to continue volunteering with the Bay County Humane Society. Although they no longer foster, Steve talked of how hard the decision was to stop: "Every time [Rachele] would say 'Don't let me do it again,' I would tell her, 'Rachele, me telling you not to do it is basically me saying, Rachele go get three more dogs.'"



Chris and Rachele with a few of their one-of-a-kind hand-painted pieces.

As the family began to speak of their other obligations, I knew I was talking to a group of hardworking people. All four of them have full-time jobs, plus, Chris is going to school. This business is a creative outlet for all of these lovely people and I could tell they are proud of the pieces they make. I'm grateful they took some time to speak with me and delighted to have such genuine people here in Downtown Bay City.

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Photography by Avram Golden, Golden Gallery & Custom Framing, 113 Third Street, Bay City, MI