

Repurposing An Old City Landmark – The Olde Wicks Factory Special Events Center

Some people think big, while some people think really BIG. Jennifer Ostrander, owner and operator of Core Elite in Highland, along with her husband Frank and daughter Shannon, have purchased the former Wicks Organ building and have grand plans for the facility.

In 2011, the Ostranders opened Core Elite in space she leased on the west edge of Highland. They began with the goal of helping Highland High School cheerleading team improve their results at the state competitions. They have grown quickly and now train several local cheerleading squads, both middle school and high school year-round. Last year the Wicks building became available and the family purchased the property. After substantial cleaning and renovation, they were able to relocate the business to an 18,000 square foot area of the building in March of this year and have begun operating in their new space.

But what to do with the rest of the massive 80,000 square foot complex that was first opened in 1906?

Jennifer decided to open The Olde Wicks Factory Special Events Center. Once all phases of construction are completed, the Special Events Center will feature four large banquet facilities – three indoors and one outdoor. Currently, one of the indoor facilities as well as the beautifully landscaped 3,000 square foot outdoor patio are open and available for bookings.

On a recent tour of the facility, Jennifer outlined her plans for each of the large rooms, and several of the smaller ones in the building. Walking through the various areas, a fully-formulated plan was laid out. Each of the bigger rooms have “vision boards” with photos and descriptions of what she has planned.

The bigger rooms, one referred to as The West Hall as well as a future Grand Hall, will be perfect for weddings and wedding receptions. Two of the smaller rooms will serve as bridal suites where the bride and her matrons can prepare for the big day (the bridal suite features five makeup/hair stations, a mimosa bar, and spacious, comfortable seating). Another room near the big halls will be available for the groom and his party.

Jennifer said the rooms can also be used for any type of community event with both open spaces and banquet seating. In fact, bookings have already taken off. Multiple rooms, including the Stained Glass Hall and a bridal suite, are already available. The West Hall will be completed later this fall. Reservations have been filling fast, with the first wedding scheduled for the West Hall in December of this year and the Stained Glass Hall already having hosted several events. The patio is also currently available as a beautiful outside venue. In addition, Core Elite is available for birthday party rental as well as offering their other camps and classes.

The entire facility maintains its industrial feel and décor, while each room is repurposed to meet the needs of a full-service events facility. “We are revamping the old girl,” Jennifer said. Recently, Barb Wick, formerly of Wicks Organ Company, stopped by for a tour with her extended family and the many renovations have her stamp of approval. “She was so excited we were incorporating the Wick name and history into the new facility,” Jennifer said.

The goal, Jennifer says, is to build an events center that will serve not only the immediate area, but also bring business out of the St. Louis metro area.

A recent commenter on Facebook said, “The vision and hard work of the Ostrander family will make this a premier venue for weddings and other events, too. They are revitalizing this factory into something special for so many to enjoy in the future.”

With such big plans, Jennifer is very happy with her relationship with Bradford National Bank and Highland commercial lending officer John Keeven. “John is so interested in our project that he’s calling me. I’m so wrapped up as the general contractor of this project, that sometimes the paperwork gets lost in the shuffle. ‘I got it’ was a common phrase I heard from John. He makes sure the financial end of this project is taken care of.”

Keeven said, “The Ostrander family is great to work with. Their vision and drive to bring new life to this Highland landmark is quite remarkable.” He added, “Bradford National Bank is honored to be a small part of this project that will benefit the entire area for many years to come.”

For additional information, look up The Olde Wicks Factory on Facebook or call (618)530-1339. For information on Core Elite, visit www.coreelitetumbleandcheer.com or call (618)654-8030.

Bradford National Bank was founded in 1867 and has locations in Greenville, Highland, and Marine. For further information, visit www.BradfordBank.com.

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Photo One: Rich Knebel, left, and John Keeven, center, from Bradford National Bank, discuss The Olde Wicks Factory Special Events Center project with owner Jennifer Ostrander.



Photo Two: Rich Knebel, Kayley Woker, and John Keeven look over the Stained Glass Hall with owner Jennifer Ostrander.



Photo Three: The Bridal Suites will feature hair and make-up stations for the bridal party.



Photo Four: A vintage Wicks Organ will be showcased in the Grand Hall of The Olde Wicks Factory Special Events Center.



Photo Five: Jennifer Ostrander, center, shows the progress on the West Hall, which is slated for a December 2018 opening.

