

Vance Chatel

Bed and Breakfast at Bird Hill Farm

WARE - Nestled in a bend on one of Ware's most picturesque streets, the Bed and Breakfast at Bird Hill Farm is a comfortable respite for guests whether they're looking to relax in a serene rural setting or to express their creativity at an on-site artistic workshop. Host Vance Chatel welcomes people from all over the world into his home, located at 145 Upper Church St., where he seamlessly combines his cooking skills, love of entertaining, friendly teaching style and artistic talents. "Bird Hill Farm Bed and Breakfast is a cohesive way for me to bring all of my interests together," said Chatel. Chatel, who consistently earns five-star reviews from his guests for his gracious hospitality, credits the Quaboag Valley Community Development Corporation (QV CDC) with helping him to make his bed and breakfast such a success. "I felt like they were with me every step of the way," he said.

Chatel grew up in Holyoke where he demonstrated a culinary interest at an early age. "As a kid I would borrow cookbooks from the library," he said. While living in San Francisco and New York City, Chatel honed the catering and cooking skills he calls upon today to prepare the fresh, local foods he serves his guests. Chatel is particularly at ease when meeting new people and is fascinated with learning about other cultures. "I've always been a city person," he said. "Now that I live in a rural setting, I really appreciate hosting people from all over the globe. I feel like they bring the world to me right here in Ware."

Chatel earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Commonwealth Honors College at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. He operates his own graphic arts business, Vance Chatel Design, and also teaches Design at Holyoke Community College. Chatel enthusiastically shares his love of the arts with his bed and breakfast guests, leading workshops on topics such as creating vision boards and collages, stenciling, and design. "I'm always coming up with new workshops and events," he said. "Stay tuned!"

When Chatel and his partner, Jason Wysocki, moved into Bird Hill Farm in 2012, they soon realized that the layout of the antique home's interior would lend itself perfectly for a small bed and breakfast. Although Wysocki passed away in 2014, Chatel has been determined to carry on their dream.

For Chatel, bringing the Bed and Breakfast at Bird Hill Farm to fruition has been a labor of love, one that the QV CDC helped to make it possible. "They walked me through the process," he said. His first step was taking the QV CDC's business planning course. "Actually, I took it twice, once for my design business and once for the bed and breakfast," he said. While Chatel's busy schedule made it challenging to find the time to take the courses, he said he's glad he did. "Yes, you can pay someone to write a business plan for you, but then it's not really your plan," he said. "By taking the course, you can ensure that it's your plan and your vision you're working towards."

Additionally, Chatel took advantage of the support services available at the QVCDC, including meeting with a consultant to review his business plans. “I really needed that follow-up,” Chatel said. “They made sure I understood everything.” Chatel also applied for and received a small business loan for a pellet stove to make the bed and breakfast even cozier for his guests.

Since then, Chatel has been ServSafe certified through the QVCDC and has also participated in the organization’s Harrison and Diane Quirk Financial Fitness Club. “I would recommend the QVCDC to anyone,” he said. “The business planning helped me build a solid foundation for both of my businesses. I had been held back by fear of the unknown. Working with the QVCDC gave me the confidence to take that step from planning to actualization.”

For more about Chatel, his bed and breakfast, and the workshops he’s offering, visit www.birdhillfarmbnb.com. For more about the QVCDC, visit www.qvcdc.com.