

WALLOON LAKE

New owners rechristen rustic lodge

WALLOON LAKE — With a history dating back to the late 1950s, a lodge along M-75 near Walloon Lake is moving into a new chapter following a recent purchase by Michael and Monica Farrier.

The lodge was established in the early years of Northern Michigan's ski boom. It has hosted thousands of skiers, families, youth camps, church groups, athletes, musicians, and seekers of the Northern Michigan experience.

Through the years, the lodge changed hands as well as names — first known as the Village Inn, then as Boyne Valley Lodge, and recently rechristened as Elvyn Lea Lodge by the Farriers.

Nick and Anne Baic, who owned the site prior to the Farriers' purchase, built a successful business through more than 20 years, which included hosting families, ski and church groups and band and athletic camps. While some of these groups will return to the lodge, the new owners plan to expand the business to appeal to more adult groups with interests in arts and education, as well as broaden the use of the athletic field and trails on their 44-acre property.

"Where others have seen an athletic field, we see an 'Elvyn Lea' (roughly, the name means 'meadow of elf friends') surrounded by an enchanted forest," said Monica, referring to the 1.5-acre open lawn behind the lodge, which is surrounded by hardwood trees.

Michael described the spot as "a natural amphitheater in the forest."

"We envision a variety of events taking place here, from live theater and music to weddings," he said.



COURTESY PHOTO

Elvyn Lea Lodge, formerly known as Boyne Valley Lodge, is located along M-75 near Walloon Lake.

For Monica, who has officiated at weddings in northern California and Michigan since 2009, the setting is reminiscent of wedding venues in the California redwoods of Saratoga and the Santa Cruz mountains. "When it comes to natural beauty, nothing beats Northern Michigan," she says. "Our Event Green is a spectacular canvas for outdoor events. And we can offer something more here — privacy. With accommodations on site, families and other groups can enjoy the lodge and grounds surrounded only by those they have chosen to be with."

The Farriers see location as an added benefit. Walloon Lake village, with popular new restaurants and shops as well as beach access, is situated nearby.

Inside the lodge, the Farriers are upgrading rooms and amenities, but maintaining the rustic charm. Michael, an engineer and inventor by trade, spearheads maintenance and structural improvements, and they work on décor and amenities together.

The log-beamed ceilings and central fireplace in the main lounge remain, and guests can gather around the fire in newly acquired rocking chairs.

A second multi-purpose lounge is available for reading, quiet conversation, or planned activities such as movies or presentations.

Walls and ceilings are original knotty pine throughout, and each of the 22 guest rooms has its own bathroom and shower. Some rooms have been

reconfigured to include queen size beds, and flannel and fleece blankets promise comfort while helping to maintain an authentic lodge feel.

"Our goal is to provide quality rustic accommodations," said Michael, "another way of saying casual, clean, and comfortable."

Free Internet access is available throughout the lodge for those wishing to connect to the outside world. For weary travelers, massages and facials can be arranged just down the hall in a separate room. Art with nature and Michigan themes reflects the interests of the new owners, as well as their desire to support local artists and

businesses. They have also made a number of pet-friendly rooms available for those traveling with their dogs. Leashed dogs and their humans are also welcome on the 2.5 miles of walking trails on the property.

Breakfast is included with the lodging fee, and additional meals can be arranged on site in the lodge's commercial kitchen.

The Farriers plan to focus on group lodging with an emphasis on planned visits, including family reunions, weddings, educational programs, retreats and community events.

"We host only groups here," Monica explained. "We want to provide a

memorable experience for our guests during their time here, not just a place to stay while they are here to do something else."

Monica adds that the operators do offer opportunities for individual lodgers during theme weekends, which are based around special events hosted by the lodge or that are taking place in the local community.

The first theme weekend will be the first weekend in May, with a May Day Celebration planned for Sunday, May 4.

For more information on this and future events, visit the Elvyn Lea website at www.elvynlea.com or call (231) 535-2475.

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