

with a little help from beer

By ALEXA SCHERZINGER ascherzinger@advertiser-tribune.com

It's 6 p.m. on a warm Thursday evening, and Tiffin's Laird Arcade Brewery feels ... normal.

A few gentlemen at the far side of the bar are making small talk with the bartender. Several women cycle in and out, trying beer flights and seltzers.

Music hums over the speaker systems.

Other than the bottle of hand sanitizer at the bar, there's no way you could tell this bar survived a pandemic.

It wasn't always this way.

Months ago, there were clear shower curtains draping from the ceiling to divide all the tables, which couldn't be spaced out since they're nailed to the floor. The staff were wearing masks and sanitizing like crazy. There were only three seats at the bar

The beer-making process already requires intense sanitization, so the LAB's back room was already cleaner than most places. That deeply implemented process wasn't going anywhere.

Most notably, the taproom was completely closed for almost three months in early 2020.

"Like many businesses, COVID was extremely impactful to us," said Eric Kuebler, co-founder and co-owner of the LAB. "Our taproom was closed for months, and that alone was an extreme blow to the business."

The LAB was tracking its best months leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic. Usually, January is slow for breweries, but it was uniquely busy in 2020.

Kuebler and his team were eyeballing expansion opportunities, from new buildings to new services to grow the business.

The pandemic grinded that process to a halt.

Continued on Page 3





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Continued from Page 1

All the money they had set aside for the expansion had to go toward keeping the business afloat.

Kuebler and his team did get some Paycheck Protection Program money, and a few other grants. Additionally, their bank let them take a six-month deferment on loans. But mostly, Kuebler credits the community for keeping the LAB alive.

When the taproom was closed, and when liquor laws were changed to allow carryout alcohol, many of the brewery's loyal supporters came to purchase carryout growlers and beer.

Aside from the total closure that happened last spring and the various curfews implemented by the state, the LAB never changed its business hours.

"We wanted to give our customers a feeling of normalcy," Kuebler said. "There's all this chaos and anxiety and nervousness that everyone's been experiencing, and we all experienced it in a different way, but I think what was important to us was to have someplace you could go to feel normal."

That's why the brewery brought back live music the second it was allowed again.

Typically, the LAB has live music every Saturday night. The artists are booked a year in advance, so all throughout the pandemic, Kuebler was calling and canceling with a musician once a week.

Even after small live performances were back, Kuebler had to deal with artists getting sick and canceling often.

The performance space used to be crammed into the corner of the taproom, but it recently moved out into the lobby space of the Laird building in order to keep people more spaced out. This worked well with DORA, since people could take their drinks into the hallway to have some stretching room.

"It was important to us to maintain that normalcy and sense of security," Kuebler said. "To help people kind of forget about things for a little bit, if they wanted to."

Kuebler and his team were active supporters of the DORA concept before it ever came to fruition. He said it was a long time coming.

"DORA's been great. It's sad that it took COVID for it to get passed," he said. "But it's one good thing to come out of it."

Now that traveling is an option again, the LAB has been getting a lot of statewide attention for "brewery tourism," where people visit different taprooms across the state to sample unique beers. The LAB has been included in Tag-A-Brew, the 419 Ale Trail, the Ohioan Tap App and more.

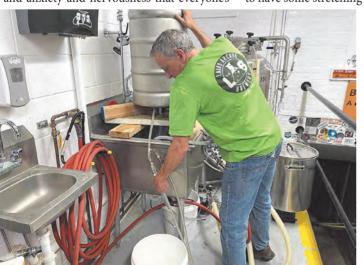
Kuebler said DORA works well with brewery tourism because visitors can explore the town while they're drinking instead of just beelining from car to bar and back.

"For me, it's a win for my community, my hometown," he said. "People can go visit other retail businesses they wouldn't have otherwise. It generates more revenue in the town."

Now that DORA is becoming more permanent, the brewery is offering growlers on a regular basis — a product that wasn't so readily available pre-pandemic.

Unfortunately, the space the LAB is in isn't big enough to sustain a supply of bottles and cans, or a labor-intensive canning line, so carryout in that fashion is limited. However, that could change — since the business is getting back on track to pre-COVID numbers, the owners are back to looking at expansion opportunities.

"I'd say we're on the verge of fully bouncing back," Kuebler said. "We aren't quite there yet, but we're definitely getting there."







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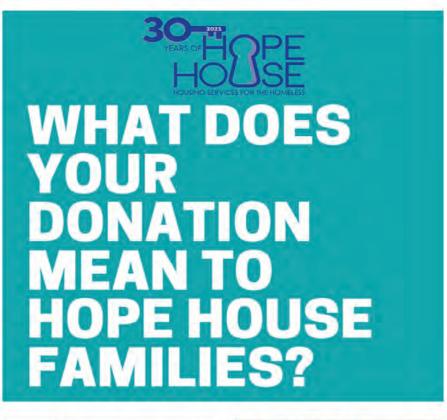
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October is LGBTQ+ History Month

Celebrate

Saturday, October 9th 2021 from 6pm-9pm

The Ally Awards will be virtual this year. Please join us in applauding and celebrating this year's nominees:

Corporate Ally of the Year: Cooper Tire & Rubber Company (Goodyear)

Small Business Ally of the Year:

Findlay Brewing Company

Community Based Org Ally of the Year: First Christian Church

Individual Advocate of the Year:

Dr. Brian Treace, Ed.D.

Dr. Brian Treece, Ed.D.

Youth Advocate of the Year: Markus Dixon

This tradition was established in 1994 by a high school teacher, Rodney Wilson. Rodney believed that a month should be devoted to teaching and celebrating gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender history. In 2006 Equality Forum took responsibility for content, resources, and promotion. The main activity is the highlighting of 31 icons that have represented and furthered the efforts for LGBTQ+ inclusion across the nation. See this year's list of icons here https://lqbthistorymonth.com/. Representation is important to help model to young and older people that LGBTQ+ individuals can survive and thrive. This is true at the national level with this year's list of 31 icons, but also at the local level with individuals such as the late and beloved 'Ben Hippensteel/Candi Wantsome?' There are also countless Straight Allies that are standing up in our community from school teachers to small business owners, the impacts of their actions are lifesaving and vital for the members of our community who experience the most stigma and marginalization as a result of their held identities.

This LGBTQ+ History month we urge you to consider how you too can stand up, show support, and be a representative for inclusion in our community. Every effort counts and positively contributes to an environment where we can all find belonging. Placing a small pride flag on your desk or in your window, becoming a member of our Ally Directory, or simply respecting an individual's pronouns are just a few examples of small actions that can have a huge impact. Representation Matters. Representation Saves Lives. Representation Makes Our Community Stronger.

Our mission is to empower our diverse community to lead healthy, successful lives through focused resources, inclusive activities, and a vibrant supportive network serving Findlay and the surrounding communities.

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CEDAR POINT'S HalloWeekends RETURNS!

SANDUSKY —
By IZZY KELLER
Special to the Register

Cedar Point's HalloWeekends celebration returned Friday, September 17.

After skipping a traditional Halloween celebration in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the beloved spooky event is back with old park favorites and new attractions.

HalloWeekends runs through Oct. 31. The amusement park is hosting daytime and nighttime events, along with live entertainment and new food choices, on select dates and times throughout HalloWeekends.



Cedar Point has two separate events: "Tricks and Treats Fall Festival" and "Banished." "Tricks and Treats Fall Festival" is geared toward families with events like pumpkin decorating, mazes, trick-or-treating and more family fun.

The amusement park's nighttime fall events for adults and others who enjoy a good scare include haunted houses

and fright zones. Cedar Point Haunt is coming back, featuring six outdoor fright zones and five indoor haunted houses. The outdoor fright zone, "Blood on the Bayou," is debuting on Adventure Island.

The newest addition to Cedar Point's haunted nighttime lineup is "Banished," a new event taking over the Frontier Trail. Banished focuses on a group of mean-spirited creatures attempting to take revenge on townsfolk living on the trail.

Additionally, live entertainment is planned throughout Cedar Point's final, major event of the season. The Jack Aldrich Theatre is hosting Midnight Syndicate, a northern Ohio duo known for scary music and sound effects. The Blowing Glass Theatre is hosting a special rendition of "Tell-Tale Heart" by Edgar Allan Poe. The poetry

reading is in addition to more than 10 live shows taking place in the theater.

In terms of food, Cedar Point is serving a new collection of fall-themed dishes, including candy corn cupcakes and pumpkin bread pudding. Returning to HalloWeekends is "Night of the Living Fed," Cedar Point's autumn-themed dining experience.









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