

Bakke: Baker uses 'little baby steps' to overcome loss of fingers

By **Dave Bakke**
THE STATE JOURNAL-REGISTER
Posted Oct 19, 2008 @ 12:32 AM
Last update Oct 19, 2008 @ 12:50 AM



 [Close](#)

Dave Bakke/The State Journal-Register

After she lost nine of her fingers, Susan Shaw used to hide her hands in her pockets. Now she is a successful baker and owner of a catering business, Central Illinois Catering.

Copyright © 2009 GateHouse Media, Inc. Some Rights Reserved.

Original content available for non-commercial use under a [Creative Commons license](#), except where noted.

Bakke: Baker uses 'little baby steps' to overcome loss of fingers

By **Dave Bakke**

THE STATE JOURNAL-REGISTER

Posted Oct 19, 2008 @ 12:32 AM

Last update Oct 19, 2008 @ 12:50 AM

She still gets questions, Susan Shaw does, about how she can be a successful baker and caterer when she had nine of her fingers amputated. How does she measure? How can she prepare dough, pick up utensils, stir, open a cupboard or do the many other things that go into this?

Some people look, but they don't ask. Susan says people shouldn't hesitate. She welcomes the questions has no problem talking about how she does it.

"I want to motivate people," Susan says, "who don't think they can do things."

That is why she agreed to talk to clients of Sparc and why she agreed to be interviewed for this column. She has come a long way from those difficult first months of 2003 after her fingers were amputated.

"I used to hide my hands in my pockets," Susan says.

Susan is a Springfield native. She moved with her husband, Ernie, to Elkhart seven years ago. Five years ago her troubles began.

She had undergone surgery and believes it was a lingering infection from that surgery that led to flu-like symptoms in January 2003. She became disoriented and dizzy, was vomiting and dehydrated when her husband rushed her to Lincoln Memorial Hospital in the middle of the night.

Doctors discovered that Susan had sepsis, a blood infection, was in septic shock and near death. She spent eight days in intensive care, losing nine of her fingers and all 10 of her toes. But she lived.

"They didn't think I was going to make it," she recalls.

Recovery was a struggle at first. Those were the days when, out of embarrassment, she hid her hands. Gradually, she began to realize that life was going to go on whether she had fingers or not, and she was going to go on as well.

She started rejoining the world with, she says, "little baby steps." Volunteering at her church, Elkhart Christian, built her confidence. She eventually tried baking at home and found that she could do it.

Peggy Brown, former owner of Elkhart's Talk of the Town restaurant, asked Susan to bake some pies to sell at the restaurant. Bigger steps.

Her interest centered on catering. She enrolled in Lincoln Land Community College's hospitality and culinary arts program. That was the biggest step yet.

"I was confident that I could do it," Susan says. "My reservations were about the other people. Would all of the other students think, 'What is this crazy woman doing coming to this class with no fingers?'"

As is often the case, people's fears are worse than the reality. Nothing like that ever happened.

"When I first met her," says Jay Kitterman, program director of hospitality service and culinary arts at LLCC, "she had a number of concerns, including what other students' reactions would be. A lot of it had to do with her confidence level. She had incentive, she had the drive, she just needed the confidence."

A major hurdle was passed the day Susan baked her first loaf of bread in class.

"It was awe-inspiring," says Kitterman. "It almost brought us all to tears. The fact that she was able to go through all this stuff, mix the bread, roll it out and get it done."

Susan is on the verge of earning her associate's degree in the hospitality and culinary arts program. And she started her business, Central Illinois Event Catering. She was a regular at the Farmer's Market at the Illinois State Fairgrounds this year.

Though her business has no other employees but her, she can count on friends to help her at jobs, such as at Tuesday's Illinois Department of Rehabilitation Services function at the fairgrounds.

It was there she was asked by a Sparc representative whether she would talk to its members about overcoming obstacles. Though she has overcome them, those obstacles are still there.

"Sometimes even my husband forgets," says Susan. "but, to me, it's always there. If I meet someone and they comment to me that they don't notice, I'm wondering 'How can you not notice?'"

Her customers don't care whether she has one finger or 11, as long as she can get the job done.

"When you have the drive to do so," says Kitterman, "you go through life and figure out how to compensate and achieve things ... We consider her a success."

Everybody has a story. The problem is that some of them are boring. If yours is not, contact Dave Bakke at 788-1541 or dave.bakke@sj-r.com. His column appears Wednesday, Friday and Sunday.

Copyright © 2009 [GateHouse Media, Inc.](#) Some Rights Reserved.

Original content available for non-commercial use under a [Creative Commons](#) license, [except where noted](#).

Kathryn Rem: A la carte - The Creek Pub & Grill opens in Chatham plaza

By
THE STATE JOURNAL-REGISTER

Posted Sep 21, 2008 @ 12:12 AM

THE CREEK PUB & GRILL, in Chatham's Foxx Creek Plaza, is open.

"We opened quietly so we could start slow and work out the kinks. We'll have a grand opening sometime in the future," said Pete Giacomini, who owns the new business with partners Mike Buscher, P.J. Giacomini, Todd Zellner and Kevin Daughtery.

Giacomini said the food is similar to another restaurant he's a partner in: **THE CORNER PUB & GRILL**, 3271 W. Iles Ave. Besides a full bar, there are burgers, horseshoes, sandwiches and other pub-type foods. Dinners include steaks and shrimp.

Hours are from 11 a.m. to midnight Sunday through Thursday (kitchen closes at 10 p.m.) and from 11 a.m. to 1 a.m. Friday and Saturday (meals until 10 p.m. and appetizers until midnight). Phone: 483-8282.

"We're hoping to attract families. We see our client base as mostly Chatham," Giacomini said. There is a game room with pinball machines and video games.

Foxx Creek Plaza is at Illinois 4 and Plummer Boulevard.

Susan Shaw of Elkhart quit her job six years ago after getting sick.

"I got tired of staying at home, and I've always been the family cook and baker," she said.

So she started cooking for others. That led to the creation of **CENTRAL ILLINOIS EVENT CATERING**, a full-service catering company at 6 Elizabeth Court in Elkhart.

"Everything is made from scratch. I don't use canned fruit in my pies," she said shortly after finishing nearly 60 pies.

Some of those pies were sold at the Illinois Products Farmers Market, where Shaw, 40, has been a vendor since late July. (It runs from 4 to 7 p.m. Thursdays at the Commodities Pavilion at the Illinois State Fairgrounds.) And some went to another seller of Shaw's pies, buttercakes and breads: Seaney's Farm Market in Sherman. (Seaney's, at Andrew Road and Sherman Boulevard, runs from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. seven days a week.)

Central Illinois Event Catering provides food for weddings, receptions, showers, luncheons and other events. Items include appetizer trays, salads, side dishes, desserts and entrees such as stuffed chicken breast, lasagna and beef Wellington. The phone number is 314-9125; the Web site is www.ciecatering.com.

Shaw, a grandmother of three, is planning to offer cooking classes — desserts, wine pairing and some for children — in Elkhart after Jan. 1.

WENDY'S and **ARBY'S** soon will be sisters.

Shareholders of Wendy's International and Triarc Cos. — which operates Arby's and is owned by billionaire investor Nelson Peltz — approved a \$2.34 billion deal on Monday that will create the third-largest fast-food chain.

Triarc said it will change its name to Wendy's/Arby's Group Inc. and will trade on the New York Stock Exchange under the WEN symbol. Triarc's chief executive, Roland Smith, will take over as CEO of Wendy's. Wendy's CEO Kerri Anderson will step down.

Wendy's/Arby's Group will have a consolidated support center in Atlanta to oversee all public company responsibilities and shared service functions. The headquarters of the Wendy's brand will remain in Dublin, Ohio, and the headquarters of the Arby's brand will remain in Atlanta.

There are 3,719 Arby's restaurants, including 1,169 company-owned and 2,550 franchised locations. Wendy's has 6,625 restaurants worldwide,

including 1,402 operated by Wendy's and 5,223 by Wendy's franchisees.

McDONALD'S is the largest fast-food chain, followed by **Yum Brands**, owner of **KFC**, **TACO BELL** and **PIZZA HUT**.

TEA-LICIOUS CAFE, 111 S. Sixth St., will change its hours next weekend because of the Route 66 Mother Road Festival and Car Show. The hours are: Friday, Sept. 26: 5-8 p.m.; Saturday, Sept. 27: 8 a.m.-4 p.m.; Sunday, Sept. 28: 8 a.m.-3 p.m. Breakfast will be served from 8 to 11 a.m. Saturday and all day Sunday.

HARRY'S ADULT DAY CARE, 320 W. Highland Ave., has free wings from **SHOW ME'S** every Monday night during football season.

The annual Great American Dine Out is today through Sept. 28, during which participating restaurants give a share of the week's proceeds to help fight childhood hunger.

Springfield participants are **DULCE VIDA BAKERY & CAFE**, 321 E. Monroe St.; **LONE STAR STEAKHOUSE**, 2881 S. Veterans Parkway; and **MONICAL'S PIZZA RESTAURANT**, 2640 Prairie Crossing Drive.

A la carte is looking for local restaurants that offer vegan dishes. If you know of restaurants that serve plant-based entrees (no meat, dairy or other animal products), please submit the information to one of the addresses below. A list of vegan-friendly restaurants will be published at a later date.

The A la carte column is written by Kathryn Rem, 788-1520. It highlights restaurant openings, closings, renovations and relocations, as well as personnel changes and business news. Menu items are listed for new restaurants. Send items to A la carte, The State Journal-Register, One Copley Plaza, Springfield, IL 62701; fax to 788-1551; or e-mail food@sj-r.com. The deadline for Sunday's column is 5 p.m. Wednesday. Please include your name and daytime phone number.

Copyright © 2009 [GateHouse Media, Inc.](#) Some Rights Reserved.

Original content available for non-commercial use under a [Creative Commons](#) license, except where noted.