

Profits & Passions

Kristen Stavisky

A doggy dog life

BY KEITH LORIA



When someone says the Matterhorn Nursery in Spring Valley is “going to the dogs,” it’s not an insult. In fact, to owners Matt and Ronnie Horn and their niece Kristen Stavisky, it’s a phrase that makes the family smile.

“Our family passion is golden retrievers and between us we have five, from 8 months to 9 years,” said Stavisky, Director of Marketing & Special Events at the garden. “Max, Marley, Montana, Jack, and Grady rule the business. Max is the star of our advertising and marketing materials and all the dogs have their own business cards. They act as greeters and have built up an impressive fan base.”

Getting to bring her two dogs to work with her each day is one of the things that Stavisky loves about her job, and since the dogs spend the majority of their time running around the garden center, they seem equally as happy. “For me it’s nice that I don’t have to have my dogs sitting at home in an empty house all day long,” she said. “And they have the life -- 38 acres, gardens, people adoring them, it couldn’t be better.”



Garden enthusiasts see the Matterhorn Gardens as an inspiring and educational destination. There you can see everything from a formal and fragrant English rose garden to the whimsy of a crumbling folly with a green monster. The Gardens, which include the David Austin Rose Garden, Fern Garden, Hosta Garden and Matt’s Folly Garden are a living example of Matterhorn’s vision to serve the public through excellence and diversity in all areas of outdoor living.

“We have a full garden center, a shopping village with different gifts, birds, 12 acres of gardens, it’s a perfect destination for a family to spend an afternoon,” she said. “Since my aunt and uncle own this, I have been here in various capacities since I was 13. I have done everything from potting plants to running the garden to helping out in retail.”

As a child Stavisky dreamed of getting married at the gardens and she lived out that fantasy in 2002 when she married her husband, Evan.

“When I was younger I always enjoyed working here and thought I wanted to be here forever,” she said. But her plans changed about the time she started college. Stavisky went to law school and then achieved a degree in higher-education administration, and worked at a local community college.

“I worked in education for six years, but then I came back here,” she said. “The business evolved and there was a spot perfect for me. The special events thing fit with my administration background and I could make use of the things I studied.”

Although she never practiced law, the 36-year-old Stavisky says she uses that education every day in her current job, along with her other degree. “It’s a way of thinking and writing and a style that’s really helpful,” she said. “I used to plan events for students and now I plan for weddings and showers and events.” One of those events is an annual Halloween festival that takes place in the gardens, where the dogs rival the plants as the stars of the show. “They dress up in costumes and romp around and people love playing with them,” she said. “We probably have about 15 dogs in the immediate family now. Golden retrievers love kids and love people and are always posing for pictures with our guests.”

Matt and Ronnie Horn have always had dogs running around the property, ever since they started the nursery in 1981. The college sweethearts used to fish in the ponds on the land when they were younger and bought the property years later with the intent to start the nursery. Since then the business has grown and most of their family--and their dogs--have had a hand in some part of the business.

Now that she’s back, don’t expect Stavisky to be leaving for another career anytime soon as she knows she’s home for good this time.

“I always seemed to gravitate back and I’m not leaving again,” she said. “I have a house in West Nyack, eight minutes from work, and it doesn’t get much better than this.”



© Copyright 2007
Westfair Business Publications

Westchester Business Journal
3 Gannett Drive
White Plains, NY 10604
Tel: (914) 694-3600
Fax: (914) 694-3699