

# Joey's story: A quarter century in the bar business

- [MICHAEL BURKE mburke@journaltimes.com](mailto:mburke@journaltimes.com)



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RACINE COUNTY — Joey LeGath is well known to many people from 26 years in the Racine-area tavern business. He has owned five taverns including, currently: Joey's on Taylor, 1863 Taylor Ave.; Joey's on Lathrop, 2054 Lathrop Ave.; and Joey's West, 9825 Kraut Road in the Franksville area of Caledonia.

Here are some of his thoughts about his quarter-century in that business.

## **How did you get into the tavern business?**

My father owed many businesses in Racine. Mostly restaurants, and one of the last places he had before he died was a bar on Taylor Avenue called Art's Office. I was 18 at the time and started bartending for him. He ended up getting too sick to run the bar, so I purchased it from him. That was my first bar: Joey's on Taylor. I have been there 26 years — altogether, with my dad, 32 years. I often say I owe everything I have to my dad.

## **What have been some of the highlights during your time in the tavern business?**

First and most important, I met my wife, Anna, at Joey's on Taylor. We have been happily married for 20 years. I also have enjoyed having some of my family work at the bars in various positions.

I never imagined expanding as I have. Over the years I have had five bars. The newest location, Joey's West, has food, which brings back great memories from my childhood and growing up in the restaurant business.

**What do you like about the tavern business?**

I like that I can employ people who are able to make a good income for themselves and families. I also like being a member of the Tavern League of Wisconsin. Bar owners that I have met through this organization are some of the most kind, thoughtful and generous people I know.

The relationships I have developed with my customers are extremely meaningful to me. My favorite example is a guy named Jim. When I started with my dad I saw him almost every day, and we became great friends. Jim died of cancer, and after he passed, his daughter called me; he had left me in his will. It wasn't a lot of money, but he was telling me how much our friendship meant to him. I knew then that many people I would meet at the bar were not just my customers but would become great friends.

Having wonderful employees cannot go unmentioned. I would not be successful without them. Most important is my general manager who started bartending for me 26 years ago before she had children. Now her children even help at the bar. They are like family to me.

**What is the most difficult aspect of the tavern businesses?**

thing I like most about being in business also ends up being the most difficult. I have made a lot of friends, and after 32 years many of them have passed away. So definitely all my friends that are no longer with us, that's tough.

**What contributions have you made to the community as a businessman?**

I try to stay actively involved in fundraising and donating to many great community events and organizations. I consider it an honor over my years in business to have contributed to many worthwhile causes such as Safe Haven, Women's Resource Center, Bethany Apartments, Wounded Warrior Project, Homeless Leadership Assistance Organization and Racine Zoo, to name a few.

**What business goals or retirement plans do you have?**

I am happy with where I am now in life. I love what I do and I have a passion for the bar business, so I don't see myself ever retiring.