



here's a magnetic allure to Southern hospitality that remains unrivaled in the world of hosting: to welcome a stranger into one's home is an accomplishment in itself, but to treat them as family is another feat entirely.

Layer on the nostalgic tastes of home cooking with a side of enriching conversation, and one might find they've been transported to the historic cobbled streets of Charleston with its stately houses and clinking and clanking of horse-drawn carriages.

You may be hard-pressed to discover a true form of this Southern hospitality beyond the Mason-Dixon Line, but tucked along a serene lakeside street in the Northwoods of Minnesota it's alive and flourishing albeit with a touch of local flavor.

Here, Southern charm meets Minnesota nice at the Lake Bemidji Bed and Breakfast.

It's this particular hospitality that Texas-native Jill Beardsley and her Minnesota-bleeding husband Dick Beardsley readily provide, which draws visitors in and keeps them returning despite conditions of any season.

During peak warm months, lake-hungry tourists set the inn in motion, but when the sweetness of summertime fades and bitter cold



arrives at their door, the Beardsleys recognize a wintertime respite is just what the doctor ordered for their guests.

From curling up with a book and sipping hot cocoa to playing a board game in front of the great room fire, the possibilities for relaxation at the inn are quaint yet satisfyingly effective. And it's these charming yet cozy details that make for an excellent way to combat harsh wintry weather and its accompanying winter blues, the Beardsleys say.

A "little oasis" is their go-to description for the inn, which also doubles as the couple's personal dwelling. However, the overly exhausted phrase 'home away from home' also seems fitting when describing the inn's comforting effect on guests — as does the warmth of the Beardsleys' presence adding significantly to the pleasure of one's stay.

And although it's this attention to guest contentment that the Beardsleys relish, it's their compassion and dedication to giving back to a community — one that welcomed them with open arms nearly four years ago — that incites admiration both throughout the year and during the holiday season.

While breakfasts are often held for law enforcement at their





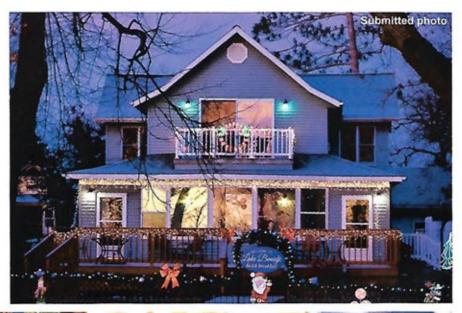
inn each month, the Beardsleys also open their home during major holidays, preparing and serving meals to on-duty police officers and first responders who are unable to spend the day with their families.

"Bemidji has been very kind to us," the Beardsleys say. "So anything to help people out, we're happy to do."

## A winter stay

Under the cozy roof of the Beardsleys' light teal two-story home - beautifully decorated with an assortment of festive snowmen, angelic figurines and bow-topped wreaths in anticipation for the nearing Christmas holiday - the delicious perfume of cinnamon spice greets my arrival along with Dick and Jill and their three adorable pups: Riley, Scarlet and Daisy.

It's a family affair of greetings and puppy kisses that are cheerful and familiar despite never meeting before, and there's no doubt other guests









experience the same accommodating reception from Jill - with her prompt offering of wine and cookies - as well as the jovial friendliness of Dick and his invitation to chat around the crackling fireplace in their great room.

The inn is simply bliss for animal lovers, and the Beardsleys' furrier family members happily cater added personality to the mix: quiet-natured Riley silently asks for pets, and energetic Scarlet proudly shows off toys while seeking a tug-of-war companion. The newest addition to the bunch, a tiny chihuahua-mix named Daisy, gives endless puppy love.

Once greetings conclude, a house tour is in order and it's immediately apparent that tasteful decorations and beautiful furnishings abound throughout the inn. Built in 1904 and restored nearly 95-years later, the historic Bemidji home

is candy to the appreciative eye.

And while Jill prides herself on genial hospitality, her polished sense of interior design is a talent that cannot be ignored. Stylish yet perfectly balanced and not too overstated, each room encourages guests to cozy up and enjoy ultimate relaxation while appreciating the humble plushness of the home.

Equipped with three guests rooms, the inn offers patrons their choice of stay ranging from romantic getaway to comfortable peace.





The suite called Lake Breeze is a personal favorite and furnishes a sprawling king-size bed and a private balcony overlooking Lake Bemidji. And if the gorgeous sunrise over the icy lake doesn't start your day off with a bang, the aroma of fresh coffee and Jill's mouth-watering gourmet breakfast will.

The morning is her time to shine with guests as earlyriser Dick is usually out lending his services as a fishing

Each evening, Jill plans a menu for the following day's two-course breakfast, taking care to feature only fresh, local ingredients. Her recipes are tested and approved by the many police officers coming to her home, and while the first course is meant to be light, the second course is typically heartier and more savory, Jill says.

On this occasion, she serves banana slices topped with peanut butter granola drizzled with chocolate syrup and honey for the first course. Her signature dish, Monte Cristo French toast laden with sliced strawberries and a side of maple sausage, soon follows.

Like my stay, Jill's breakfast is a guilty-pleasure-filled delight yet without the regret.

Synonymous with a sentimental trip to grandma's house, a sojourn at Lake Bemidji Bed and Breakfast stirs up and then delivers all those warm and cozy feelings so vital to our wellbeing - that winter tries so hard to chip away.





