



Hospitality Sector is a Lively Undertaking

By Meghan Haukaas

Denny Joyal, Managing Partner, Waterfront Beach Bar and Grill

Although he may have begun his career as a funeral director, Denny Joyal now spends his time managing lively businesses in the hospitality sector.

He's breathed new life into the Waterfront Beach Bar and Grill in Regina Beach and is part of management groups with interests in various Regina nightclubs as well as the Lumsden Hotel and Steak Pit. He joined the Hospitality Saskatchewan board of directors in 2016.

Despite his past career experience being in a very different kind of customer service, Joyal had plenty of exposure to hotel operations growing up. His uncle owned the Royal Hotel in Weyburn for 25 years and that helped lay the foundation for his career.

Being part of the Royal Hotel while growing up gave Joyal a certain knack for the industry that eventually led him back to the family business. "There was a point in my life where it made sense to explore the opportunity to work with my uncle and make that change," he said.

After moving to Weyburn, Joyal began helping his uncle with various ownership tasks. He said it was about five years later that they decided to sell the business and move on to their next venture. In 2009, Joyal and his wife moved out to the beachside community and took over operations of what is now known as The Waterfront Beach Bar and Grill.

"Our ownership group came in and spent a quarter of a million dollars renovating the building, gave it a new name, a huge facelift, and then rebranded and started from scratch," Joyal said, "So, the building has been here forever, but we really made it our own."

With years of combined experience, he and his uncle joined a managing group to expand their opportunities. Joyal took the responsibility of managing a few nightclubs in the city when the beach bar business started booming. When his wife became pregnant with their first child, Joyal decided to focus on the Regina Beach business fulltime.

Setting down roots did not mean Joyal would be stuck in one place. In 2014, he decided to join more managing partners in taking over the Lumsden Hotel and Steak Pit located in the scenic Qu'Appelle Valley near Regina. "They run independently so they have different ownership groups, but I help manage them both," he said.

His long-time entanglement with the hospitality industry eventually led him to the Hospitality Saskatchewan board of directors. When a board member retired and suggested Joyal take his place, he jumped at the opportunity. "The previous CEO, Tom Mullen, had just stepped down, so it was kind of a new beginning," he said

"I'm able to work with some amazing people and meet a lot of people who are new to the industry," he said, "So many people come to us with the same issues we are having, so it's kind of a shared experience."

Joyal said his experiences during the pandemic were surprisingly uplifting. Government was responsive and concerned with the problems business owners were facing. "I thought that was a real turning point for the board in the sense we had a real impact on the decisions the Provincial government was making, which was obviously beneficial to everyone in the industry," he said.

He noted that all members of the hospitality sector benefit from the association's work. Employment is a major factor in that work. With an influx of refugees and immigrants coming from other countries, Joyal said it is fulfilling to offer people jobs while simultaneously bulking up the service sector. "I think that has had a huge impact in helping businesses when dealing with such a massive labor shortage."

Although he takes pride in the work he does and the people he helps, Joyal said his board membership also helps his own business. "Being on the board, you not only have access to knowledge and resources but also certain benefits and programs," he said, "It's just a great opportunity overall."

These opportunities have only grown over the last six years,. "The organization has evolved so much since I started," Joyal said, "We are able to create these relationships between government and our lobby group because of all the hard work this board does."