

## Cafe

ists currently in Marion, and really provide a cool place to hang out.”

The Sender Café is a complement of Sender Wellness, which provides other services such as mental health counseling, yoga, yoga therapy, massage therapy, and acupuncture, giving Marion residents a place where they can focus on both their physical and mental well-being.

“We focus so hard on the physical aspect of COVID and people’s health, but the mental health aspect is huge,” Reece said. “We are addressing that through Sender Wellness, but people want a place that they can hang out. We just felt like it was time. Even though a lot of people think I am insane for opening a place like this in the middle of a pandemic, but it was time.”

Sender Café has enjoyed steady business in the last three weeks, and everything has gone smoothly, according to Reece.

“When I bought the building a few years ago, I knew we needed a coffee shop down-

town,” Reece said. “I’ve lived a lot of different places, and when you see communities and areas start to develop, coffee shops and bars are always the catalyst because they bring people in. It was just something, to me, that needed to be downtown.”

Along with selling a great experience, Sender Café sells a variety of goods, including a variety of coffee drinks and, soon, a robust vegan menu, providing food for gathering and for public health. Additionally, Sender Café provides a pleasing aesthetic, with murals and other forms of art placed throughout the space.

“I look at this as a community development project as much as a business,” Reece said. “Marion has some positive stuff happening. We have to keep that going and keep the momentum up.”

After a tumultuous year, Reece is pleased to have Sender Café open for business, and even happier that his 87-year-old mom, Joan, could be there for the ceremony.

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“My mom has always been so supportive,” Reece said. “I really wanted to have her be a part of that whole experience. It’s really good to have her be a part of it. It really means a lot to have my family involved and my friends involved.”

Going forward, as he has through all of his Sender Wellness ventures, Reece plans to continue enriching the lives of Marion’s citizens, as well as continue fostering economic growth in Marion’s downtown hub.

“There are three paths to [success,]” Reece said. “One is the economic side. We want to bring revenue, to downtown Marion. Then there is the public health side, which is really important to me. We want to see people leading healthier lives and living healthier lifestyles and provide options for them.

“Lastly, I think businesses need to step up and do the right thing. I really want to show that you can do the right thing for employees and for all the stakeholders in the city.”

## BBQ

cooking barbeque, began dabbling in the creation of his own rubs and sauces.

The Richardsons began selling their product at multiple events, starting with the Andrews Summer Festival, and right away, it became a hot commodity.

In their first three years, the Richardsons just set up tables and a big smoker under a tent, but once their barbecue’s popularity began to rise, they moved their operation into a food truck, where they continued to build their brand.

“It was a hit,” Jeff said. “We did it again the next year, and then after that, I bought a vending trailer, and we did several festivals in the area. It was a big hit.”

After a while, however,

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both Jeff and Michelle wanted to establish their business in a more of a brick-and-mortar type setting, and opportunity came knocking in 2019. In October, the Marion Economic Growth Council had its own “Shark Tank” event as part of Community Pitch Night – a competition in which applicants could compete for an all-inclusive “Business Start-Up Prize Package,” which included a one-year free lease in Marion’s Ridley Tower. Obi’s Barbeque ended up winning the contest, and the rest is history.

“It’s very surreal, and humbling,” Michelle added. “I’m just very thankful that he has this opportunity, and I hope we can make the best of it. We want to give back as much as they gave to

us.”

Obi’s Barbecue sells a variety of goods and products including briskets, sausage, chicken halves, pulled chicken, pulled pork, collard greens, smoked beans, and coleslaw, along with an assortment of wine, beer, sauces, and rubs. According to Jeff, their top sellers are the brisket, the dry rib rub, and pulled pork.

“It’s a good feeling to make a product that is good and that people enjoy,” Richardson said. “That’s why I do it.”

Going forward, Obi’s Barbeque will be open Tuesday-Thursday from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., Friday and Saturday from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m., and Sundays from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. For more information, visit their website at [www.obisbarbeque.org](http://www.obisbarbeque.org).

## Baby

was pregnant. She gave birth in April 1973 to Kelsey and abandoned her two hours later.

Years later, Kelsey learned that she was abandoned by her birth mother, and after seeing a “baby box” in operation at a church in Cape Town, South Africa, she has made it her personal mission to do whatever it takes to save the lives of those babies who are given up.

“My biological father is a convicted rapist, and I was abandoned at birth, but my life still has value,” Kelsey said. “I stand on the front lines of this movement today, making sure that every woman has a safe alternative to keep her child safe so that mothers like my birth mom didn’t have to make a horrible decision that could have

turned out very bad.”

Safe Haven Baby Boxes has referred over 500 women to crisis pregnancy centers, assisted in six adoption referrals, and witnessed at least 90 legal Safe Haven surrenders. Ten babies have been surrendered in one of our 52 baby boxes. Three babies were surrendered to firefighters at Safe Haven Baby Box locations. Since April 2016, when the first box was installed, there have been no dead abandoned infants in the state of Indiana, according to the Safe Haven Baby Boxes website.

“When we start contracting with a location, it’s not just cut a hole in a wall and slap a box in and we’re done, there is a lot that goes into this. This was no easy task here, but it did go

pretty flawlessly. I’m so grateful for the community that is just welcoming and giving this last resort option to women in this state and in this country.”

Dave Koontz, Executive Director of Right to Life of North Central Indiana, which has partnered with Safe Haven Baby Boxes over the past two-and-a-half years, echoed Kelsey’s sentiments. He stated that while he hopes that the box will never be used, and that mothers will get the care they need to continue their pregnancy or raise the child, baby boxes provide a safe and secure option for those who need it.

“It’s been a privilege for Right to Life of North Central Indiana to be a part of this Grant County Safe Haven Baby Box project,” Koontz said. “We never

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want to see a situation where a mother in crisis believes that her only option is to abandon their child. We are pleased that this is the fifth Baby Box that Right to Life has been able to be involved in. I’ve been encouraged by the number of individuals and organizations that have come together to raise the funds for Baby Boxes throughout north central Indiana.

“I want to thank Monica and the Safe Haven Baby Boxes team for all they do and their efforts to make sure that women in crisis have a safe and secure option for surrendering their children.”

For those in need of counseling and assistance, contact the Safe Haven Crisis Line at 1-866-99BABY1.

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John Anthony Guido, Jr.  
1943-2021

At Guido’s request, there will be no services and burial will be held at a later date.

Ernest “Le” Lerory  
Mahan  
1946-2021

Mahan’s services will be private.

will begin at 12 pm.

Diann K. Johnson  
1945-2021

Johnson’s services will be private.

## Deaths

Funeral services were held at New Hope Baptist Church, Gas City, on Saturday, Feb. 6 at 11 am.

Sondra Crouch  
1940-2021

Funeral services were held at Needham-Storey-Wampner, North Chapel, on Friday, Feb. 5 at 3 pm.

Larry G. Powell  
1951-2021

A memorial visitation for Powell will take place from 10 am to 12 pm on Saturday, Feb. 13, at Hillside Wesleyan Church, Marion. Immediately following the time of visitation, a memorial service to celebrate Powell’s life



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