



Recent Flagler grads have found followings after opening unique concept businesses on Anastasia Boulevard

By Colleen Jones
January 1, 2019

Former New Yorker Ryan Kunsch first discovered St. Augustine when he came to attend Flagler College. After graduating with a fine arts degree in 2013, he didn't want to leave.

But as an artist, Kunsch also wanted to see what he could add to the community.

"I definitely fell in love with the town, but I like to find things I don't like as much about places and then make them what I like," Kunsch said.

Enter Sarbez, a combination craft beer/gourmet grilled cheese/old-school arcade/live music venue that Kunsch launched in early 2014 at 115 Anastasia Blvd. Kunsch said that, initially, Sarbez (which spelled backwards is "Zebras," the name of a fledgling clothing company an entrepreneurial Kunsch started as a teen) confused people.

"Like, what is it? A bar? Milkshakes and coffee? A flea market selling clothes? An art gallery?" he said with a laugh.

And all of those labels could have fairly been placed at one time on the sprawling one-story brick building with the colorful mural adorning its side wall.

Kunsch said he learned eventually how to build a patronage beyond "the two people we played Yahtzee with all night on a Saturday." That meant boiling down his business concept to doing just a few things really well.

In terms of music, Kunsch — whose love for genres of all kinds can be seen in the wall of retro cassettes that make up the bar's backplash — wanted to attract unique artists who weren't getting play in more typical "college bars" around town.

A wide range of live entertainment and a game room in a funky atmosphere of mismatched stools and overstuffed chairs and moody lighting has proven to be a formula for success as Sarbez gets ready to celebrate its fifth anniversary.

“It was just kind of like creating a space where if you build it, they will come,” said Kunsch.

When Sarbez’s doors first opened, word got around at first that the venue was somehow just for high school or college students. While it does attract its share of millennials, Kunsch said the place offers something for everyone: from families with young children to couples in their 40s or older looking for a unique experience.

As an alumni of Flagler College, Kunsch said it definitely helped him to get a handle on the market and the kind of niche business that could fill a void.

Just down the block, at 106 Anastasia Blvd., another eclectic gathering spot, Hornski’s Vinyl Lounge, is also the brainchild of a Flagler College graduate. The record shop/bar/pool room was opened three years ago by Sarah Szymanski Horn (Class of 2011) and her husband, Andy Horn, and his brother, Rob Horn.

The idea for the name came from Sarah and Andy’s wedding party’s combined name of the “Hornskis” — which struck them as a funny mashup of their two last names. All three partners decided they wanted to bring “a different kind of place to hang out than what exists here, with a different offering in terms of music, drinks and atmosphere,” according to Andy Horn.

Nondescript on the outside, a first-time visitor might be surprised by what they step into at Hornskis. Dark-wood paneling with mid-century loungers and sofas surrounding a modest bar might make you feel a bit like you’re in your father’s basement.

But it’s the rows and rows of 78s set up in alphabetical order for browsing, like record stores of the past, that provides the offbeat backdrop here, as well as a fun way to take a trip down memory lane. If you’re lucky, the bartender may even let you play a side of an album you request. Tapped local microbrews and wine are available at the bar.

And the trend of Flagler grads opening up businesses in St. Augustine isn’t unique to Sarbez or Hornski’s, or even limited to Anastasia Boulevard. Flagler College recently undertook a study of the economic impact the institution and its graduates have on the local economy, calling it the #FlaglerEffect. Of the total economic impact of \$146.3 million Flagler College had on Northeast Florida in 2016-17, the accumulated contribution of former students currently employed in the regional workforce amounted to \$68.6 million in added income.

Just a few of the other businesses owned by Flagler alumni who are making a name for themselves in the local culinary/gastropub scene include The Ice Plant, The Honey Truck Co., Ancient City Brewing and Jim’s Place (Elkton).

While one might expect Hornskis to be in competition with its equally hip counterpart less than a quarter of a mile away, it's not the case. The owners of each establishment frequently stop in to each other's businesses.

Hornskis customers tend to skew a bit older than those at Sarbez, usually from their 30s to their 50s, Andy Horn said.

"We kind of work together," Kunsch said. "We're all friends."