



YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS Reinvigorate Legacy Barrington Businesses

STORY BY MARY KLEST

When asked why you like living in Barrington, a mental list of reasons may pop up: good schools, friendly people, a safe place, green spaces, easy train commute to the city. Businesses would unlikely be on the list. When several well-established businesses were recently changing hands, I reflected on how important they had become to me and the place I call home. My initial skepticism about a change in ownership changed upon meeting the bright young people taking over and learning how thoughtful the business founders had been in selecting these new owners. Here, meet some of the young entrepreneurs reinvigorating legacy businesses and forging their futures in Barrington. And, what I've learned is that you can count on local businesspeople to go the extra mile for you when you support them. It's another reason why I like living in Barrington.



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Master technician Gilbert Khoshaba is the new co-owner of Hollis Brothers.

Brothers SELL TO Brothers

“// WHERE’S DAVE?” I ask before barely saying hello to the young man behind the desk at Hollis Brothers on Main Street where I get my car repaired. “He sold the business to me. What can I help you with?”

“What? When?” It takes me a few minutes to process what he is saying.

My first encounter with Hollis Brothers was an incident involving my son’s car in a pre-SUV sized garage. They got me out of that jam. I became accustomed to their always-on-my-side-service. Within a few minutes Gilbert Khoshaba, the new co-owner along with his brother, won me over with his knowledge and courteous manner. He fixes an ongoing issue with my tires on the spot and days later, my headlights.

Curious to know more about Gilbert, I ask how he landed this business after it had been operated by Dave and Steve Hollis for 40 years. Gilbert grew up in Iraq with a goal of becoming a professional soccer player. He made it to the semi-pros, but realized he would need to pursue his other passion, cars. His family left Baghdad City in 2005 while the war was going on. In the U.S., he attended the Universal Technical Institute in Lisle to get certified. His knowledge of cars got him an apprenticeship at BMW in Chicago where he became a technician, received more technical training, and was certified as a master technician. But that position wasn’t enough for him. He wanted to own his own shop.

“I want to build a relational business, not just transactional,” he says. He learned of Hollis Brothers through a broker. “Dave [Hollis] is smart. He wanted to interview potential owners in-person to make sure his customers were taken care of properly.” That included leaving a history of all existing customers.

The best business advice Gilbert got was from his dad: “Be honest. Treat people well. Provide the best service. That’s what you can control.” Gilbert is 35 years old, married with three young children. He’s the customer-facing brother. His brother Allen is a behind-the-scenes guy. Of the future Gilbert says: “I want to take this to the next level offering an expanded warranty, new technology, and all that any dealer would offer, except the big lobby.”





Eden Duke, Ben Sigler, and Elise Sigler are the new owners at Ambrosia Euro American Patisserie.

Icing ON THE Cake

AMBROSIA PHOTOS BY LINDA M. BARRETT

FOR ME, Saturday mornings are always made special with a trip to Ambrosia Euro American Patisserie for a pecan roll and coffee. The taste and textures of these morsels were handcrafted with love I was certain. The smell of freshly baked pastries and a welcoming smile from the people behind the counter makes it a happy place. Could the new owners replicate the recipes, and the ambiance that was so carefully and intentionally crafted?

My first bite into a pecan roll soothed my uncertainty about product quality. It was delicious. My first conversation with the new owners delighted me even more. In fact, they are not new. Elise and Ben Sigler, both 28 years old and now married, started working at the patisserie when they were teenagers. Eden Duke started when she was 15 years old. They were all mentored by founders Debbie Rivera and her late husband Richard.

“When Debbie decided to retire, she approached us and asked if we would consider buying the place,” says Ben, who is head chef. Elise, the front manager, explains: “There were other potential buyers, but Debbie wanted someone who knew the business. She wanted to keep it in the ‘family.’ She knew we would honor their legacy.” Eden agrees. She acts as treasurer, planner, and marketer at Ambrosia. Also known as the gingerbread house queen, she says of the purchase process: “Debbie made the transition seamless for us.” They echo their mentors when defining success: “Provide a quality product, consistently,” Ben says. “Surround yourself with talented, good-hearted people, and take care of them,” says Elise. “Understand your brand. Be authentic and hire a good accountant,” says Eden.

Ambrosia will be celebrating 35 years in business this year. Since obtaining a liquor license,



they’ve added wine by the bottle, pairings, an assortment of cheeses, and jars of local honey to their existing product line. Ben serves up a specialty item every weekend that’s available only on that day. “We are dreamers,” says Elise. “We have lots of ideas. As we move forward, we will stay true to where we started.”

Dr. Russell Fitton IV (left) and Dr. Russell Fitton III (right) in front of a fish aquarium in their office. They share a passion for dentistry and deep-sea scuba diving.



All IN THE Family

SOME PARENTS want their children to follow in their footsteps. Some are proud to see their children find their own way. In the Fitton family, no pressure was applied or received to be a follower. Yet standing before me after a teeth cleaning was Dr. Russell Fitton IV (Rusty) filling in for his father, Dr. Russell Fitton III (Russ). After 42 years in practice, Russ has cut back on his hours and is planning to retire within the next few years.

Rusty was studying business in college when he accompanied his father on a mercy mission to offer dental care to people who had survived hurricane Katrina in New Orleans. “It was then when I switched my major,” Rusty says. “I wanted to do something that helps people.” He became a dentist. After working at another practice for a few years, he and his father joined forces.

“I saw that he had a passion for this work. That’s important because it’s too hard to succeed in this business without passion. It was his own decision,” Russ says.

What’s uncanny about this duo is how similar their mannerisms are—the same smile, the tone of their voices, the mutual respect they show to one another as we talk. That respect is shared with their patients and staff as well. Rusty has introduced some innovations in 3D printing, X-ray technology, and digital scanners, but he says: “My dad is a life-long learner and has kept

up with evolving needs. He will always be a resource for me to bounce ideas off. “He then laughs and says: “My dad also knows how to fix everything if something breaks.” Their camaraderie is palpable, their values shared. Rusty listens as his dad and I reminisce. “We treat people, not just teeth,” he says.

It gets confusing sometimes with them having the same name, but I know I can depend on either of them. Before leaving I had to ask Rusty: “Is there a Russell Fitton V?” Yes, there is! 

