



Jeffersonville Country Store

21 Mill St., Jeffersonville • (802) 644-6300 • Store manager: Martha Karpinski

Martha Karpinski may be the manager at the Jeffersonville Country Store, but her job title could easily be unofficial ambassador for northern Vermont.

The 55-year-old Fairfax resident was brought up in Newport, worked in the hospitality industry throughout the region for decades and is the first face customers often see when they walk into the 10-year-old shop.

"We're at the base of Smuggler's Notch, so it's a ski town," Karpinski says of the tiny village 45 minutes northeast of Burlington. "We get a lot of locals, but also people from all over the world – Africa, England, everywhere. They come up to the resorts so we're in a perfect location."

For these visitors, Karpinski can sometimes be the voice of Vermont. They'll find her behind the counter selling Vermont wares, works by Vermont artists, Green Mountain State gifts and providing helpful information to people enjoying the area.

"A lot of people come to Vermont to see

the covered bridges, and we're right in an area where there's quite a few of them," she says. "They're usually on a mission to find them."

Karpinski, who has been at "The Jeff" for five years, also provides visitors with some of the spirits the state has become known for.

"It's amazing how much they know about the local liquors," she says.

Visitors often arrive armed with knowledge of the region's well-known distillers, and the products that help bring out the essence of the state. It's there that Karpinski's longtime experience in the hospitality industry comes into play. She managed a large restaurant in South Burlington for years, providing her with extensive knowledge of the spirits side of tourism.

"I've been around it my whole life," she says. "I'm able to answer quite a few questions. They come hunting for things like Heady Topper, but the Smuggler's Notch spirits are big sellers. That distillery is literally a quarter of a mile down the road. Their vodka is a best seller, but I carry all their products."

Another top-seller is the Sapling Maple Liqueur, produced by the Saxtons River Distillery in Brattleboro – a selection that provides plenty of that Vermont feel to customers looking for a Northeast Kingdom sipper.

Five additional employees often take their spot behind the counter to help guide customers, but when she's not out gardening or four-wheeling around the Island Pond area, the unofficial ambassador for northern Vermont is ready to dispense the wisdom only a local can impart.

"I love dealing with the public," Karpinski says. "I'm definitely a people-person with the gift of gab, so to speak. I like to find out about other countries, so when someone comes in and they tell me they're from Africa, I ask about Africa."

"They were here last winter, bless their hearts," Karpinski continues, laughing. "There were five of them that came up to go skiing – and there was no snow. But to them, the man-made snow was real enough."