

Dwyer's State Line Beer & Wine



Store owner
Ron Dwyer

Step inside Dwyer's State Line Beer & Wine and you may encounter a few surprises.

Think Yeti coolers, gas grills and Dave Matthews Band tickets up for grabs, among them. Arrive at the right time of year, however, and discover what may be the most unexpected display in any store in the Green Mountain State: a fully assembled big block race car.

"We are a racing family," owner Ron Dwyer says. "Occasionally we'll disassemble and then reassemble the car in the store as a display — usually in February around the Daytona 500."

It's just one of the many unexpected elements at this Pownal destination.

"A 5,000-square-foot store is pretty big," Dwyer says. "People are used to little stores. I hope to get them in here, make sure they're impressed while they're here and then hope they'll return. My thoughts are this — and I'm going to brag a little — the reaction people have when they walk in the store is, 'wow, this place has changed a lot. I never realized this was here.'"

I think what makes this store special is that I'm very blessed with an amazing staff of people who are extremely friendly all the time. In this day and age, when people are so disconnected with cell phones and computers, it's refreshing to have people engage with eye contact and a smile.

Contests, giveaways and tastings may get them in, but once they're browsing the enormous beer, wine and spirits selection, it's up to Dwyer's team to keep them coming back. Luckily, this shop owner has a plan to do just that.

"I think what makes this store special is that I'm very blessed with an amazing staff of people who are extremely friendly all the time," Dwyer says. "In this day and age, when people are so disconnected with cell phones and computers, it's refreshing to have people engage with eye contact and a smile. I'm lucky to be surrounded by such great people. You may

hear people complain about their staff, but I'm the exact opposite. I'm a lucky guy."

Dwyer is quick to heap praise on that team of 10 employees, which includes his 24-year-old son, Olden; his wife, Sonja; his 82-year-old retired father, Bernie ("he works more hours than anyone") Shirley McClenathan ("the backbone of the office,") Mark Rosso, whom Dwyer credits with doing a "phenomenal job" in spearheading the store's new deli, and a secret weapon who helps keep the Vermont agency store humming.

"I worked for Anheuser Bush for a number of

years as a distributor, but I didn't really have a lot of experience in spirits," Dwyer says. "I lean on my son for that, but I also have an employee here that worked for the previous owners who does all of our ordering there."

That employee, Mary Campbell, has lent her expertise to the store — previously known as Next Door Beer and Wine — for nearly 30 years.

"You can't beat that kind of experience," Dwyer says.

Walk through the front door of the rustic-looking store — designed to emulate a Vermont barn look from the outside, Dwyer

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says — and the extensive craft beer selection unfolds to the left, while the state agency store stands to the right. Shelves of Vermont products line the section, including spirits produced by the best-known producers, as well as some of the smaller distillers in the state.

"We have just about every Vermont product available," Dwyer says. "Smugglers' spirits, Barr Hill — all of it."

The store's new deli offers visitors an array of sandwiches, salads and noodle dishes which are quickly becoming popular at dinner time as they are at lunch.

"We're doing fabulous at lunch, but it's actually been a surprise how things have been in the evening," Dwyer says. "We've been doing just as well when people stop on the way home for dinner. It really runs hand in hand with why people stop. They come in, pick up a six pack of beer or a bottle of liquor or wine and they can also bring home something to eat."

It's part of what Dwyer does to keep the store running well — fill it with great products and great people and throw in a few surprises.

"I have people who come in here from Burlington and say they've never seen a store with so much selection," Dwyer says. "But to me, it's a no-brainer." ☒

Dwyer's State Line Beer & Wine
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