

The Acorn Inn of Elon provides more than just a place to stay

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Reporter



It seems like many of Elon University's alumni cannot bear to leave their alma mater. Instead, several stay in the area and contribute something new to the community. In November 2001, Mike and Melissa Brown did just that when they opened their bed and breakfast, The Acorn Inn of Elon.

Mike Brown had been jogging when he noticed the vacant lot available where a house had burned down. He was struck with the idea of doing something with the space. After looking further into the options, he found it was large enough for a bed and breakfast. After applying and receiving a special-use permit, the Browns began breaking ground eight months later.

The Browns said they intended to try this project as an experiment for retirement.

"It only took two weeks to figure out there was no way. It's just took much work," Brown said.

Even though it came with a lot of work, Brown said it "would probably be a pretty safe risk" because they knew that the university has a high population of people from the Northeast, so there was a need for a place where visitors could stay.

The next important step for The Acorn Inn was deciding what facilities would be offered and at what cost.

The Acorn Inn has 12 suites, which includes a sitting room with a hallway to the bedroom. The Web site states the suites are luxurious. Brown said this is because "all suites have a king bed with a high residential quality mattress, a fireplace and a whirlpool tub." The suites also come with a refrigerator, microwave, two televisions with HBO, high-speed Internet and a bathrobe.

Brown said The Acorn Inn's facilities could be described as "polished" and a "level above" what is offered from the large hotels and motels in the area.

He added that local ownership is what makes The Acorn Inn most unique in comparison to other places.

"There's a level of service not achieved with a larger place," Brown said. "There's a comfort in corresponding by phone and e-mail and meeting them at breakfast. There's a relationship that's built that's not as likely at a larger place."

Another important aspect of The Acorn Inn is the rates in comparison to those offered at nearby



BRIAN ALLENBY | Staff Photographer
The Acorn Inn of Elon is located on Haggard Ave. and is owned by two Elon alumnus. Owners, Mike and Melissa Brown opened the Inn in November 2001. The bed and breakfast is frequently visited by parents, guest speakers and job candidates of Elon.

lodgings.

"We looked at the competition and essentially we tried to give as much as we possibly could for \$100," Brown said. "We took the attitude of a consumer because we stay in hotels ourselves. It's a pretty standard rate that delivers a more-than-average product."

Brown said a majority of the people who stay at The Acorn Inn is related to Elon University, whether they be parents, guest speakers or job candidates. This has been a challenge because most of the business happens during only eight months of the year.

As a result, they try to offer special events for customers by having a romantic getaway package and accommodating larger gatherings like family events, parties and conferences.

Most notably The Acorn Inn has developed an event that is open to the public called Front Porch Music, which features food, wine and live music. These events happen during the summer months when school is out and business is quieter.

"It gives us the opportunity to showcase what we're capable of," Brown said. "It's a change to shout out to the community, 'We're over here and we're pretty cool.'"

In the future, Brown said he hopes to continue to use the great space they have for events and to offer catering packages for parties.

Brown said he wants to dispel the rumor that it is difficult to obtain a reservation at The Acorn Inn and encourages people to keep trying. But, he admits it is slightly harder during the peak times of the year.

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