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Keowee Brewing Company owners Allison and Alex Butterbaugh sit at a table in the backyard of their brewery in Seneca.

‘It’s been a whirlwind’

Keowee Brewing Company celebrates 3rd anniversary

BY LAUREN PIERCE
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — Keowee Brewing Company will celebrate its third-year anniversary in style with a street party this Saturday.

Main Street from Walnut to Cherry streets will be closed off for the birthday blowout from 11 a.m.-9 p.m., featuring live music and a special beer release.

Owners Alex and Allison Butterbaugh recently reflected on their business’ success. “It’s been a whirlwind,

that’s for sure,” Alex said. “We never expected nine months after being open to go through the pandemic and having to shift our whole focus to more of an outdoor area, but it’s turned out really well. People really seem to enjoy the outdoor space. We just installed the new awning that is permanent, bigger and should be better in all ways, hopefully. We’re really excited about that and keeping the momentum going forward.”

Allison added operating the brewery has “been a really fun challenge.”

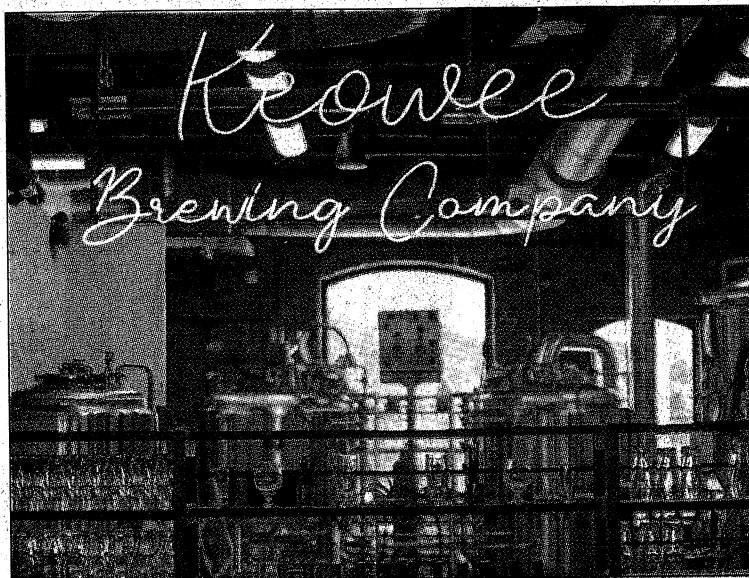
“I think he said it perfectly.

Every week you think you have a to-do list or checklist of things to do, and it all changes every day as soon as you walk in the door,” she said. “But it’s been a really fun challenge keeping up with the beer and keeping up with the customers, events and projects. It’s been a really fun three years of growth.”

The duo also took time to thank the community for support.

“More than anything, we just can’t be thankful and grateful enough for the community around Seneca for supporting us as much as they have,” Alex said. “We say it

all the time, but we’re just so fortunate to have such a great community around us. We thought we were taking a big leap of faith opening a brewery in a town that has 8,500 people in it, but we knew this is where we wanted to be with our family.”



A new neon sign hangs above the bar at Keowee Brewing Company.

ATURDAY STREET PARTY

Alex said the city of Seneca will be bringing out tents, tables and chairs for Saturday's activities.

"We'll actually have a misting tent on Saturday just to keep everyone cool and comfortable," he said. "We'll have an outdoor bar set up, too. It's kind of just a celebration all day. We'll have music from 1-8 p.m. We have three different bands playing — from 1-3 p.m., we have Cecil Tompkins. From 3:30-5:30 p.m. is Trey Stevens and then from 6-8 p.m. is actually going to be really neat.

"We've only said that it's going to be Heath Rankin, but his friend Brad who plays the organ is going to be with him and they're going to be bringing in a drummer. So 6-8 p.m. is going to be kind of the headliner, a real fun party band at the end. If anyone has ever seen Heath and Brad play, they tear it up on the guitar and the organ."

Party-goers will also get a taste of a beer released in honor of the anniversary.

"We're releasing a barrel-aged stout. Every October we put out a beer called Proof of Purchase," Alex said. "We put it out on Halloween day, but that's the day that we actually bought the building in 2017. ... Most of our stouts and our dark beers, we put in bourbon barrels to release later, like for a fun event, and we've had this Proof of Purchase actually in the barrel since 2020. We tasted through all the barrels last week, and this one kind of stood out as ready to go, and it's really

add some toasted coconut to it, so it'll be a coconut bourbon barrel-aged beer."

He added they might have another IPA available in time for Saturday and even some options for those who don't enjoy beer, like their blueberry mojito seltzer.

"We have been doing a lot of slushies lately," Alex said. "We have a house seltzer that we use in a lot of our slushies, and we can use wine in them as well. One of our bartenders, Dave, has really taken that by the horns and made some really fun concoctions. We always have seltzers and wine. Then Allison had the idea of actually putting those slushies in popsicle containers."

"We'll have those — for anyone who doesn't want a beer or a straight slushie, there'll be popsicles," Allison said. "It's going to be a hot day, so they're going to be really refreshing."

A DAY OF REST

Keowee Brewing will be closed down the day after the party as a thank you to the staff, Allison said.

"Every Sunday after our anniversary party, we always close down for the day because we always treat our employees to a year well done," she said of their three full-time and five part-time team members. "We always do a little trip or go sit on the lake. This year, we're going to go do a little brewery visit over in the mountains of Georgia. They work hard

all year long, and this is our day just kind of hanging out together without having to work."

EXPANSION

Almost two years ago, the Butterbaughs bought the old Bantam Chef adjacent to Keowee.

"We've been working toward a long-term goal of transforming that property into something really special. ... Now that the awning is completed, architects and engineers are working on all of the designs for the Bantam Chef property," Alex said. "We'll probably do that in two small phases that will happen pretty quickly back-to-back, but the No. 1 thing we want to do with that project is turn that into our kitchen. Blue Marble Deli will still operate the kitchen out of there, but, for once, they'll have a real kitchen.

"We have other plans beyond that with the kitchen," he continued. "All the green space behind Bantam Chef we own as well. We want to do a permanent outdoor stage and outdoor bar, more bathrooms, more seating, more everything. ... Outdoor space has been really essential for us and for our growth."

"It's going to be quite a big expansion, but we're looking forward to it," Allison said. "We can't wait to get started on it."