

A New Season Begins at The Greenhouse on Grand

When her aunt forwarded her a listing for what would become The Greenhouse on Grand last winter Bridget Schutz and her fiancé, Noah Smith, joked about it at first. What would it be like to own a greenhouse and flower shop? The more they talked, the less it sounded like a joke and the more it sounded like a door opening.

By March 23rd of this year, the keys were theirs. Their first season began the very next week.

Deep Roots in Greene County

Schutz has been a Greene County resident her whole life. She grew up in White Hall, graduated from North Greene High School in 2023, and now lives in Barrow while finishing her senior year at Western Illinois University, where she studies Business Management. Noah, a Winchester native and 2021 Winchester High School graduate, works as an operating engineer with his family's company, Smith Cold Milling Service.

The two met at sixteen and spent years imagining what their future together might look like. Today, that future includes wedding planning and a greenhouse.



Owners Noah Smith and Bridget Schutz at The Greenhouse on Grand

"I have always been grateful for the community that raised me, and dreamed of finding a way to invest back into my hometown area," Schutz says. "I just want to help make it a better place for the next generation."

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From Classroom to Ownership

For Schutz, the path to entrepreneurship began in high school, when she joined the Greene-Calhoun CEO (Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities) program during her senior year. The program gave her a firsthand look at business ownership, networking, and community involvement. The upclose look she says, fueled her passion to become an entrepreneur.

It also gave her a mentor: Shawn Rennecker, Director of Economic Development at Illinois Electric Cooperative. Through their pairing, Schutz learned how Rennecker's work brings businesses, opportunities, and growth into rural areas.

Three years later, that relationship came full circle. The same mentor and connections she was introduced to through the CEO program helped her and Noah take the leap into business ownership.

"Looking back, I truly believe it was part of the bigger plan all along," she says.

Making the Numbers Work

The couple reached out to longtime owners James and Kay Price around Christmas, and sat down with James shortly after the holidays to talk about the business, its history, and what it had meant to the community over the years. After that first conversation, they knew they wanted to pursue it seriously, even if the process ahead was unclear.

It was a daunting proposition. Schutz was a full-time college student on campus in Macomb; Noah was working full-time. Neither had ever purchased a property, let alone an existing business.

Help came through the Greene County Economic Development Group, of which Illinois Electric Cooperative is a member. The group provided a microloan that supported part of the purchase and gave

the couple confidence to keep moving forward.

"Their help came at exactly the right time and truly made a difference in turning this dream into something realistic," Schutz says.

While the deal came together, Schutz spent nearly every day at the greenhouse starting in January, learning from James and helping pot the plants that would be sold in the spring. An education in the work, knowledge, and care required to run a greenhouse.

Honoring a Legacy, Growing a Vision

The Greenhouse on Grand has been a community staple in Roodhouse for 50 years under the Prices, and Schutz says the



Owners Noah Smith and Bridget Schutz at The Greenhouse on Grand learning from the previous owner James Price.



Owner Bridget Schutz hosting the Lucky Clovers 4-H group for a visit at The Greenhouse on Grand.

couple's first goal is simple: continue that legacy of quality garden plants and personal service.

But the couple also have a vision of their own. They want the greenhouse to feel like more than a place to shop. They are focused on making it an experience and a destination, where visitors can wander among the flowers and leave feeling refreshed. They plan to bring back and expand the cut flower side of the business, including everyday vase arrangements and funeral work.

Looking further ahead, the couple hopes to explore local food production. With White Hall and Roodhouse having lost many of their grocery options, Schutz sees an opportunity to grow fresh produce during the greenhouse off-season and make it available to neighbors.

"Being able to provide locally grown, quality food to the people around us would be a meaningful way to use this space and serve our area," she says.

Growing Alongside the Community

More than anything, Schutz wants the community to know how grateful she and Noah are for the support they've received from the customers who have continued to show up, share memories, and offer encouragement as the young couple learns the business.

"Whether you are an experienced gardener, someone just getting started, or someone who enjoys walking through the flowers, we want you to feel at home here," she says. "We hope The Greenhouse on Grand can remain a place of beauty, connection, and joy for many years to come."



Darren Hayn with his wife Chris.

Employee Spotlight

Darren Hayn

Area Serviceman

About the Employee

Darren Hayn started working for Illinois Electric Cooperative in 1996. Today, Darren serves members as the Calhoun County Area Serviceman. He and his wife, Chris, have three children: Deann (husband Adam, children Hank and Caroline); Devin; and Dana (husband Joe Baalman, children Stella and Ruby, with another on the way).

When asked about his favorite part of his job, Darren says, "There's nothing better than getting the lights back on after an outage and hearing from the after hours call center that everyone's taken care of."

At home, Darren keeps busy with chores, and once those are wrapped up, the rest of the day belongs to the family.



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