



FEATURE

By Dianna Stampfler

Keeping Family Traditions & Memories Afloat

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY KENNY ANDERSON

Growing up in northern Michigan, surrounded by countless inland lakes and a stone's throw from Lake Michigan, Kenny Anderson was destined to make waves in the marine industry.

As a kid, his father took him and his siblings out on Lake Cadillac aboard a 20-foot maroon 1988 Supra Comp Ts6m, where they learned to waterski. Coincidentally, that classic boat is still owned and operated by his father, nearly four decades later. When Anderson was a toddler, his parents divorced, and his mother later married John Winn of Cadillac's Four Winns boat manufacturing company. Anderson's childhood summers were spent on or near the water, where a kayak, Zodiac and rowboat eventually led to pontoons and powerboats.

"I've been around boats my entire life," Anderson admits. "They've always just been my passion."

From pontoon to pilot

An entrepreneur at heart, Anderson, along with a high school classmate, Josh Saur, launched Two Guys and a Grill on Round Lake in Charlevoix in 2004. Using a transformed pontoon, they delivered burgers, hot dogs, brats and chicken sandwiches — along with fruit-flavored slushies churned out from an Island Oasis machine — to boaters for seven consecutive summers.

After graduating from Charlevoix High School, Anderson set a course for Kalamazoo College, where he earned a business degree in 2010. Not long after (while delivering burgers on Round Lake), he met Thomas "TJ" Moran, the first and largest Ruth's Chris Steak House franchisee, who floated an idea his way. Moran offered Anderson the position of first mate on his private 100-foot Broward yacht. After Anderson acquired his 100-ton captain's license, the two set sail from Charlevoix — passing through the Great Lakes and Erie Canal — arriving in Palm Beach, Florida, 40 days later. For the next two years, Anderson traveled the country by water, piloting toward his next venture.

"TJ was really good to me," notes Anderson. "He pointed me in the direction of LSU [Louisiana State University], where I earned my MBA. After that, I taught entrepreneurship for eight years at the college of business."

A new venture

Returning home to northern Michigan in May 2022, Anderson operated a seasonal marine survey business before purchasing Riverside Marina from Steve and Diana Tucker in June 2024. The 4.27-acre property features a 1,500-square-foot tackle shop with an adjoining home, 2,400-square feet of pole barn storage, and more than 400 feet of dock frontage on Intermediate River in downtown Bellaire.

This river is just one link in the 100-plus-mile Chain of Lakes, a water trail that spans four counties and includes a series of interconnected rivers and more than a dozen lakes like Ellsworth Lake, Intermediate Lake, Lake Skegemog and Elk Lake. A dam in downtown Bellaire restricts motorized traffic from navigating the entire route, but paddlers can







Kenny Anderson gets down to business along northern Michigan's Chain of Lakes.

easily portage to continue floating from beginning to end. Heading south out of Intermediate Lake, the route becomes Intermediate River, which empties into Lake Bellaire before connecting with the 2.3-mile-long Grass River, flowing then into Clam Lake and ultimately Torch Lake.

The Chain of Lakes winds through the Grass River Natural Area, a 1,500-acre protected wetland preserve full of flora and fauna like whitetail deer, trumpeter swans, osprey and bald eagles. It is this serene environment that draws boaters and paddlers to the waters and creates a one-of-a-kind experience.

"I grew up boating in the Great Lakes and Lake Charlevoix, but I really didn't know that the Grass River and the Chain of Lakes were such cool places down here," says Anderson of his new neighborhood.

Labor of love

The site where Riverside Marina sits has a deep-rooted history, as it was once a stop for steamer ferries like *Mable* and *Ruth*, which transported summer vacationers between area resorts and tourist towns throughout the late 1800s and early 1900s.

As individual boat traffic increased along the river, the city of Bellaire maintained and repaired the dock as needed. In 1950, the Redfern brothers of Redfern Marine Service expanded their Clam River business into Bellaire. They constructed a 30-by-48-foot marina building on the south side of Warner Bridge along Cayuga Road. Over the years, that business changed hands a few times — including a couple of name changes — with Anderson being the latest owner and operator.

Today, Riverside Marina is the northernmost stop for motorboats before the Bellaire dam and is the only stop for marine fuel north of the Dockside waterfront restaurant on Torch Lake. In addition to gas, Riverside offers boat rentals (half or full day), including five pontoons accommodating 10 to 15 passengers, and two fishing boats. Anderson dreams of someday adding a houseboat to his inventory.

There is limited dockage at Riverside for those wanting to tie up and take a quick walk into town to grab a bite to eat at places like the famed Short's Brewing, creating what Anderson calls an extension of the downtown area. In addition to tackle, rods and gear, Riverside sells fishing licenses and marine accessories. There is also ice, grab-and-go food, and beverages like pop and coffee, as well as a food truck offering burgers and sandwiches.

Anderson admits he hasn't been schooled in fishing or selling bait, but he is learning. Since taking over the business, he has increased the marine inventory to round out the retail space, while also adding a few antique pieces of boating décor to create a vintage vibe. It is that sense of nostalgia that he is going for. He hopes to cast attention to a slower-paced lifestyle, where being out in nature and on the water allows people to reset their internal compass and create lasting memories with family and friends.

"It's been a labor of love for sure," Anderson says. "I have really been taken aback by how many people have stopped by to say they had been in here as kids and are thankful it's staying open." ✦