



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

An undersea-themed row, designed by Lydia Sorenson, is on display at Hometown Quilts in Astoria. The theme of this year's Row by Row Experience is water.

Quilting: 'It's like a wine tour for quilters'

Continued from Page 1A

Thanks to word of mouth — the “power of the people,” she said — the idea snowballed very quickly, growing from 20 stores entirely in New York to 2,655 stores in all 50 states and several Canadian provinces. Oregon and Washington joined the movement last year and now, respectively, have 81 and 101 stores participating.

“People loved it,” Lutz said, adding she continues to be surprised by how popular Row by Row has become. “People plan their family vacations around Row by Row.”

One couple who recently visited her store had taken a “Row by Row vacation.” They had driven from Kentucky to Maine and were winding their way back, stopping at one quilt shop after another in state after state, Lutz said.

Some retailers compared Row by Row — now a trademarked business — to an old-fashioned shop hop writ large. Lutz prefers a different



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

Kites and sandy beaches adorn the quilt row at Boardwalk Quilts in Long Beach, Wash. The pattern was designed by last year's Row by Row prize winner, Evelyn Plamondon.

analogy:

“It’s like a wine tour for quilters, but instead of sampling wines, they’re getting patterns for a quilt,” she said. “The quilt becomes a memory of the trip they’ve taken.”

Travel is only half the story. The other is the sheer joy of collecting, a common characteristic of the consummate quilter.

And not just patterns; as

a side venture, many stores involved in Row by Row are selling quilted license plates as collectors’ items. Custom Threads’ plate reads, “RIVER CITY QLT’S”; Hometown Quilts, “QUILTER 4 LIFE.”

Julie Walker, the owner of Center Diamond Fabric Store in Cannon Beach, is selling a plate that reads, “SEW BEACHY.” Asked why a quilter would want to add yet



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

A stack of 25 fat quarters is the prize for the first person to bring in a finished quilt (defined as one having eight completed rows) to Boardwalk Quilts in Long Beach, Wash.. Each participating store has a prize for the first person who brings a completed quilt.

another collectible to the Row by Row Experience, Walker laughed. “Because we’re all crazy!”

Rabid quilters

Many people play, but few can win, so it’s almost better not to experience Row by Row solely in pursuit of fat quarters. Remember: Quilted art is functional art. Quilts can warm your body, festoon your

wall and get your Christmas shopping over with.

The beauty of a nationwide theme like water is that, though the quilts are fashioned in different locations, they are connected by their imagery. Row by Row participants collaborating on a quilt can do their work separately, and when they unite their handiwork, “all the pieces fit together,” Lutz said.

Walker’s Haystack Rock pattern — which, coincidentally, she commissioned before his year’s water theme had even been chosen — would pair nicely, for example, with the North Head Lighthouse pattern available at Boardwalk Quilts in Long Beach, Wash. How they would pair with the toilet patterns of two other Washington stores is anybody’s guess.

Quilting “speaks to the artistic part of all of us, but you don’t have to be an artist,” said Teri Keizur, owner of Boardwalk Quilts and the Row by Row coordinator for Washington state.

Though it isn’t likely that the Row by Row Experience will continue to grow in the U.S. — because, of course, there are only so many quilt shops around — “I don’t think it’ll get any smaller,” Keizur said. “People that are quilters get pretty rabid about quilting.”

For more information, visit www.rowbyrowexperience.com and www.rowbyrowexperience.com/oregon.

Inn: The hotel is still open, using the same employees

Continued from Page 1A

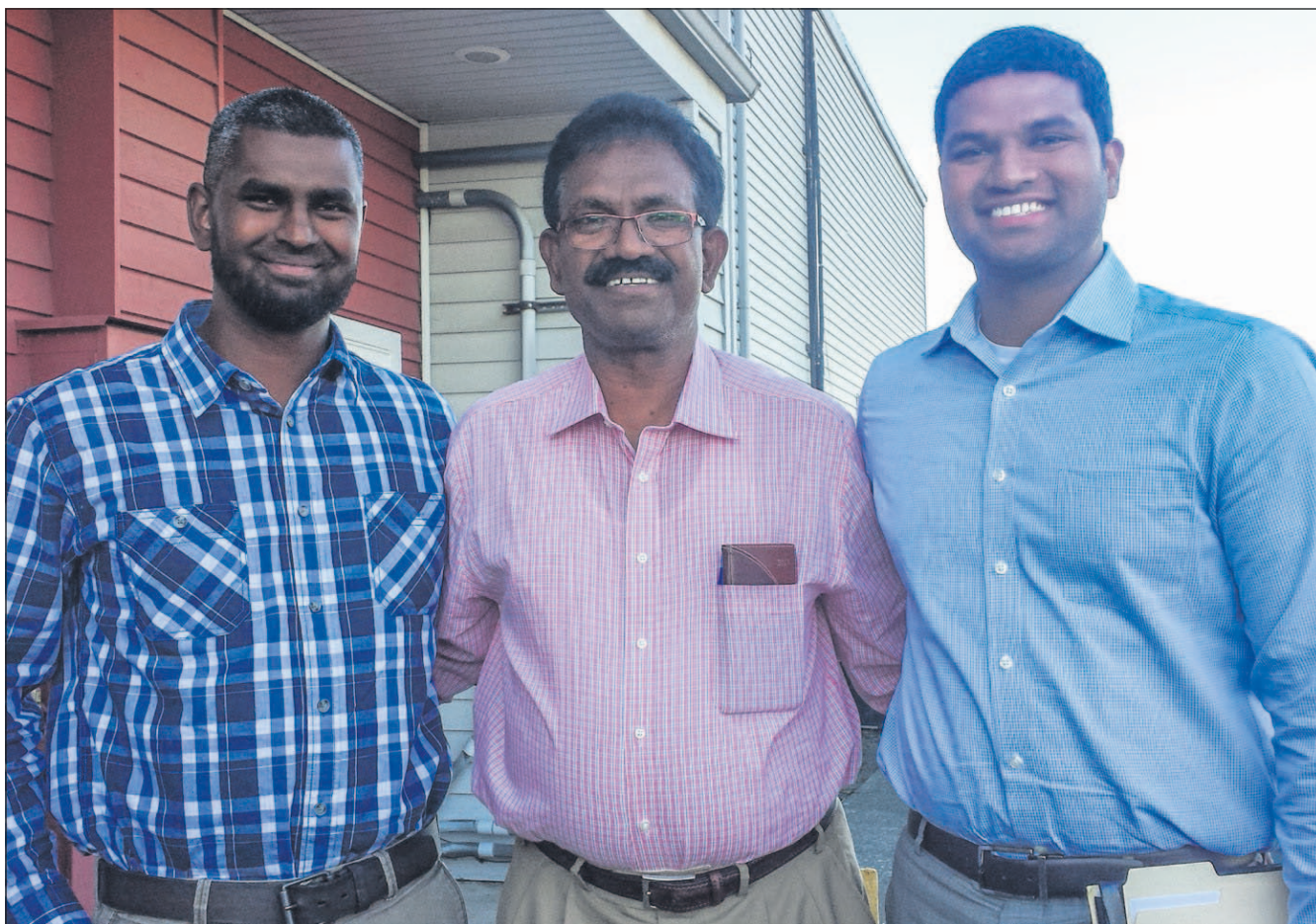
Knight said Smithart also has about \$150,000 in liens on his property. Records with the Oregon Secretary of State’s Office show Smithart is a debtor to World Global Financing Inc. and Corporation Service Co.

The hotel is still open, using the same employees. General Manager Lenney Cheyney was at the meeting to provide information on its current state.

Knight said Kancharla has acquired a 49 percent stake in Hospitality Masters, which will likely cease to exist, and 99 percent financial control. Kancharla has paid off Smithart’s debts to the county, Knight added, while making a \$25,000 down payment on his debts to the city and giving the Port a check for \$55,000, which the Port has waited to cash until the relationship is finalized.

But without a lease or a letter of intent, Kancharla said companies won’t offer his family insurance for operating the hotel. Knight said the next step is for the Port to develop a lease and have it approved by the Port Commission.

“I don’t think we should allow occupancy without a lease,” Port Commissioner Stephen Fulton said of the liability issues. Port commissioners said finding insurance for the hotel is the Port’s highest priority.



Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian

The Kancharla family is the new operator of the Astoria Riverwalk Inn, including, from left, son William, father Kruparao and son Joseph.

The Port has had to make quick decisions in light of its relationship with Smithart and Hospitality Masters, Knight said. His impression of the Kancharlas is a “family of honor” wanting to do right. The family has been in Astoria 22 years, Kancharla said. It owns and operates several adult foster care homes around Astoria,

a nonemergency medical transport company and Himani Indian Cuisine. But the Riverwalk Inn is their first foray into hotels.

“It is our goal to operate a hotel that members of the community are proud of,” Kancharla said, adding his family is searching for a hotel operation company to help for the first six months.

In the short-term, they are finding railing, painting, landscaping and other contractors to immediately improve the safety and outward appearance of the hotel.

“In the future, I’d like to have at least a three-star motel,” Kancharla said. He would like at least a 20-year lease in order to significant-

ly invest in the property.

Gretchen Mather, Kancharla’s accountant, said she has done some financial analysis of the Riverwalk Inn, but the group does not have a business plan. Kancharla said he is confident he understands the extent of Smithart’s debts.

“There is some fundamental long-term planning

work that needs to be done,” Knight said, adding the Port still needs to assess the condition of the hotel.

Other suitors

At a Port meeting in early June, the commission had approved transferring Smithart’s lease to Ganesh Sonpatki and Portland-based Param Hotel Group. Sonpatki had first approached the Port with his vision for the hotel in October and later claimed to have a signed contract with Smithart stipulating he hand over operation of the hotel by September.

But former Hotel Elliott and waterfront property owner Chester Trabucco and unnamed partners arose last month as a possible contender for the hotel. Trabucco bowed out earlier this month, saying it was his group’s impression that the hotel had already been sold. The first mention of the Kancharlas as possible replacements came last week.

Knight said he has encouraged the Kancharlas to speak with Sonpatki, adding his contact might not have been put together correctly.

Smithart has been repeatedly unresponsive to requests for comment. He has opened the Arc in downtown Astoria, starting with retro gaming machines and a cafe, then adding computer and gaming console rentals and a second room of billiards and arcade games.