

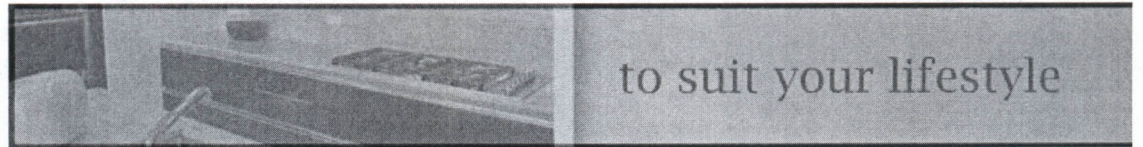
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Know Milwaukee: Brady Street a perennial favorite

May 22nd, 2012 | By Jennifer Kaufman
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Brady Street, nestled on Milwaukee's lower east side, bound by the shores of Lake Michigan and the Milwaukee River, is among Milwaukee's thriving cultural centers. The neighborhood continues to evolve. New businesses are breathing new life into the area. Longtime neighborhood staples are celebrating anniversaries and changing with the times.

Brady Street has a rich history. Initially settled by early German, Irish and Polish immigrants, Brady Street later became home to Milwaukee's Italian community. Some of the early Italian businesses still call Brady home. In the 1960s, Brady Street was the heart of Milwaukee's hippie community, but by the 1980s the street fell into disrepair.

Today, Brady Street is a thriving center of pubs, restaurants, coffee houses, boutiques, vintage stores and such festivals as Art Walk, Brady Street Fest and the Pet Parade. The street attracts visitors from all over the area. Many dedicated individuals drove the revival, which took years.

Julilly Kohler and the Brady Street revival

Julilly Kohler's name came up again and again in discussions about Brady Street. Kohler is the great-granddaughter of Kohler Company founder John Michael Kohler, and a local activist. Some looked at the Brady Street and saw ruin. Kohler saw possibility.

"I just loved the history of Brady Street," she says. She knew she could make a difference.

Kohler and Brady Street faced absentee landlords, low-income housing and abandoned buildings. Though many enjoyed coming down for a meal at **Mimma's Café**, they quickly retreated to their cars and headed home. Kohler and others wanted Brady Street to get back to its roots of being a pedestrian-friendly, urban neighborhood.



Looking west down the main stretch of Brady Street. (Photos by Benjamin Wick.)





Kohler initially opened an art gallery in the building that now houses the **Rochambo Coffee and Tea Shop**. She also purchased several properties in the 1300 block; they became the Passeggio retail and dining area. She later opened Brewed Awakenings coffee shop, which became the meeting ground for Brady Street boosters and activists.

From the start, Kohler sought to make the street. She didn't merely buy a few buildings and



procure a few artistic gems. She became actively involved with local business leaders, area residents, activists and local and federal government officials. She counts former mayor John Norquist as a major player in Brady Street's revival. Today, outdoor art, including sidewalk carvings, helps to make it pedestrian friendly.

Key organizations, including the **Brady Street Business Improvement District**, the Brady Street Area Organization and Brady Area Foundation for Arts and Education, are instrumental in maintaining a vital community. Steph Salvia is the director of the Brady Street Business Improvement District. Salvia acts as marketing manager, event coordinator and social media maven when it comes to promoting the business district.

The work took many years, but payoff has been huge. Residents and business proprietors are proud to be connected Brady Street.

"That's what a community does," beamed Kohler. "Brady Street has become a poster child for other neighborhoods."

Meet some Brady Street businesses

BVEN

Proprietor Heidi Calaway moved **BVEN**, originally Boutique Vieux et Nouveaux, to Brady Street from Franklin Place in 2009. It was a short move around the corner, but better profile for the business. She carries items by local designers, including beaded jewelry that she designs, and leather belts and handbags by local artisan Nailah.



The boutique's merchandise, as well as its strong focus on customer service, attracts clients, including tourists. Calaway claims that customers from New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and Atlanta rave about the store and Brady Street.

One such customer, Claudia Johnson, became a BVEN employee. A native New Yorker, Johnson was thrilled to find Brady Street. Stepping into BVEN, Johnson thought, "This feels really comfortable."

"We're all local," says Calaway. "We hope Brady Street will remain predominantly locally owned."

Dryhootch

Hootch is slang for both a hut that houses deployed soldiers and alcohol. Intentionally, Brady Street's **Dryhootch** is a non-alcoholic social gathering place. Established in 2010, it is a safe community where veterans can connect and support one another. Dryhootch provides some important services for returning soldiers, including peer mentoring and support groups.



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According to Dryhootch Vice-President Tom Voss, Brady Street was chosen because it is close to colleges and universities, as many returning soldiers are going to college on the GI Bill. Some, however, are suffering from PTSD, and some have issues with substance abuse.

"These issues need to be addressed as soon as possible," says Voss, who served in Iraq from 2004 through 2005.

In Dryhootch support groups, veterans find peers who are going through similar issues.

They can talk without judgment. A majority of those involved are male veterans over the age of 60, but Dryhootch is also attracting those who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. Voss hopes to attract more female veterans.

Dryhootch welcomes the general public, too. The coffee house connects with the neighborhood by hosting free concerts by local bands during the summer. Voss wants the Brady Street community to know what our veterans went through. "We're here to educate the community," said Voss.

Dragonfly

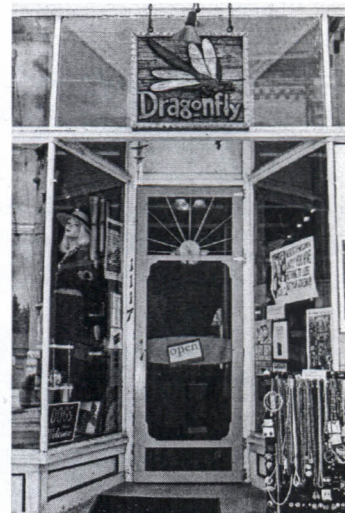
Dragonfly, originally established in Cambridge, Mass., Dragonfly made Brady Street home in 2000. Owner Annette French was inspired by her sister and niece, who live in the area, to open a location on Brady Street.

"They knew it was where I belonged, and they were right!" she says.

Dragonfly carries vintage clothing, housewares, accessories, and treasures not often found at average retailers. Local crafters and artisans make some of the items.

French has always loved the history, quality and character of vintage items and shares this with her customers. She has placed a drinking station for dogs at the shop's entrance. She expresses her political views in her storefront windows. She admits this may put off some more conservative potential customers.

"I feel fortunate every single day when I flip open the open sign," French enthuses.



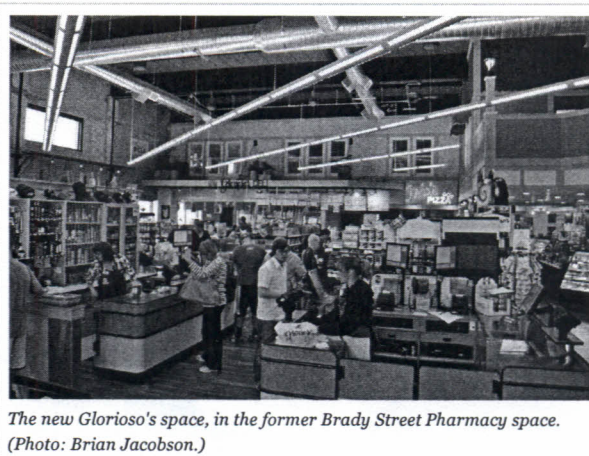
Glorioso's Italian Market

Glorioso's Italian Market opened Feb. 14, 1946, and has been a labor of love for the Glorioso family ever since. In December of 2010, Glorioso's moved across the street to its new location on the corner of Brady and Astor.

General manager Michael Glorioso says the old location will become a culinary center, offering wine and beer tasting, cooking classes for adults and children, demonstrations by guest chefs and catering.

The gourmet market attracts a wide variety of customers, many of whom have shopped there for generations. Thanks to a strong

foodie culture, Glorioso's is attracting young professionals, students and families. Glorioso says that customers who shopped here with their grandfathers now bring their own kids to the store.



*The new Glorioso's space, in the former Brady Street Pharmacy space.
(Photo: Brian Jacobson.)*

Zoom Room

Zoom Room opened in July of 2011 and is one of the newest businesses on Brady Street. After 20 years in corporate America, owner Gretchen Kabler quit to open this one-stop shop for canine agility training, behavior classes and socialization.



Kabler says Zoom Room is for customers who want to enjoy positive bonding time with their dogs. They can even throw birthday parties for their furry friends. Besides offering great services to pamper one's pooch, Zoom Room also sells dog-related retail items.

For Kabler, Brady Street was the ideal location because it's so dog-friendly, and she felt that Brady was an untapped market. Zoom Room attracts many customers from the neighborhood, but Kabler says she also sees people from Bay View, the North Shore and even as far as Racine and the Wisconsin Dells area.

Over the next five years, Kabler hopes to expand beyond her Brady Street location, but she can't imagine leaving the community.

"I couldn't be happier with my decision to open on Brady Street!"

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