

REAL ESTATE

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Buffalo Point Retreat & Event Center, 525 W King Ave., in Waukomis. SARAH PHIPPS/ THE OKLAHOMAN

Luxury in Waukomis?

Keller Williams' Anderson and husband open retreat



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Waukomis – A luxury retreat? In Waukomis? Buffalo Point Retreat & Event Center is open for business in Waukomis, population 1,400, about 80 miles north and west of Oklahoma City. It's no longer just for the Anderson family. It's an upscale bed-and-breakfast, and a lovely, picturesque venue for weddings, meetings, other private gatherings and retreats. Lovely is one thing, but will luxury fly in Waukomis? Ask real estate mogul Mo Anderson — former CEO, minority co-owner and vice chairman of the board of Keller Williams Realty Inc. — and her husband, Richard, an entrepreneur, developer and owner of Stonebridge Village in Enid, among other interests. Buffalo Point is theirs. It has rustic chic lodging for a dozen people or so, a comparably designed barn-with-loft event center for up to 80 guests with chef on staff, a 1,500-bottle-a-year vineyard, lush landscaping and a big water feature complete with a big bison statue.

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Richard and Mo Anderson, in their home in Oklahoma City, talk about their roots around Waukomis and Buffalo Point Retreat & Event Center. RICHARD MIZE/THE OKLAHOMAN

Closing tech gap for older adults matters

StatePoint

The COVID-19 pandemic brought with it a rapid acceleration of telehealth as people looked for ways to access care safely. While technology kept many in the United States connected to care and loved ones, many low-income older adults were left behind by the sudden need to understand and access technology and internet services. However, among those who could stand to benefit the most from these services are 22 million older adults (age 65 and above) in the United States who don't have broadband access at home.

What's more, older adults (ages 62 and above) with an income below \$25,000 are 10 times more likely to be offline at home. Many older adults lack the technological literacy needed to leverage digital resources for health and social support. New efforts are helping to address these inequities. CITRIS Health, an organization dedicated to advancing the well-being of older adults and family caregivers with enabling technology, recently launched "Lighthouse for Older Adults." This project is offering one-on-one training, in-language support and peer-based technical support to equip older

adult residents of affordable housing communities with high-speed broadband access, user-friendly devices and digital literacy training. After an initial pilot, participants reported both an increase in device usage, as well as confidence in using their devices. Technology helped to connect them to loved ones they were isolated from, and improved their overall health and well-being by reducing social isolation and loneliness. When asked about their favorite part of using a Google device, one participant stated, "Being able to connect visually with family and friends. And visually means a lot."

Those at the helm of the project say they hope its success will serve as a model for other such programs. "Older adults have so much to gain from the connections and health care opportunities available with internet access and a basic understanding of technology," says David Lindeman, CITRIS Health director and Lighthouse project lead. "We're eager to see this program replicated to improve equity in telehealth." For resources that can help other organizations implement similar programs, go to the Lighthouse project page on the CITRIS Health website, citris-uc.org.

Mize

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“The target market would be the upper end. We’re positioning it as a luxury property,” Mo said.

In Waukomis.

It’s a nice little town. It’s just five miles or so north on U.S. 81 to Enid, a city of about 50,000, and about the same distance to Vance Air Force Base.

But it probably doesn’t come to mind when someone asks where to find a fancy bed-and-breakfast.

Mo admitted that was a concern: “Would there be enough tourist things to do?” she wondered, in the middle of ... Garfield County?

The Andersons have roots here and around here. Their palatial home is in Oklahoma City — “the house that Keller Williams built,” she said of the nearly 10,000-square-foot mansion — but they know Waukomis and love it.

They’ve worked to improve it, tearing down a dilapidated quarter of downtown, rebuilding, branding it as Buffalo Junction, and starting businesses, including Mo’s Place cafe, Painted Buffalo Trading Co. boutique gift shop and the Chapel of Joy venue for weddings. Apartments, a mural and sculpture park add to the new life on Main Street.

It was a generous move, but it also improved the view on the short drive to Buffalo Point, which, like all of Waukomis, is just a few blocks from downtown.

But tourists?

“We learned from the consultant that many people who go to a B&Bs aren’t interested in the tourist things,” Mo said. “They just want to chill out and hang out and rest and relax and read and be with each other, and she felt that it was so contained it would work for that.”

Guests have exclusive access to all of the 7.5-acre property’s facilities including The Barn (event center), a custom-designed pool, vineyard, greenhouse and gardens, chicken coop, and seven rooms of lodging. Managers Doug and Gwen Pethoud are hosts on site to aid and abet chilling and hanging out.

But just in case anyone wants to see the sights: “I believe we do have enough for those who are interested in that,” Mo said.

Things to do

A Waukomis rancher raises bison and longhorn cattle, which are always interesting living links to the 19th-century Plains. Vance Air Force Base might have someone to work with Buffalo Point Retreat on tours, she said.

Also in Enid, the Cherokee Strip Regional Heritage Center “is of great value,” Mo said. It documents and commemorates the Land Run of 1893 on the Cherokee Outlet, the Cherokee Strip Live Stock Association, the Chisholm Trail cattle drives and other local history tied to the sagas of Western expansion.

In Ponca City, 75 miles to the northeast, is the 43,561-square-foot E.W. Marland Mansion, the oil baron’s Palace on the Prairie, a shrine to the art and luxury of the 1920s oil boom.

In Pawhuska, 45 miles east of Ponca City, is the Pioneer Woman Mercantile and nearby Tallgrass Prairie Preserve.

Oklahoma City and all of its attractions, 90 minutes away, is close enough for a day trip, for that matter.

In addition to tourism, Buffalo Point is aiming for a specific niche for corporate retreats and conference: Keller Williams executives, franchisees and agents, said Gene Anderson, a cousin of Richard’s, general manager of the property and Richard and Mo’s other businesses.

“There are now Keller Williams agencies in every state in the Union, plus some 35 foreign countries. There are about 150,000 or more agents,” he said. Mo “is kind of the matriarch of Keller Williams, being a co-owner and co-chair, so she has a tremendous relationship with all of those people, so that will be a target audience. Also, because those people love her. We’re just starting out with the bed-and-breakfast. We’ve already got some Keller Williams regional offices booked to come have meetings and retreats.”

Back to roots

Buffalo Point Retreat started with nostalgia, said Richard, whose grandfather, Frederick Anderson, a Swedish immigrant with 50 cents to his name, made the Land Run of 1889 south of here in what is now Kingfisher County.

The 89er moved north in the 1890s, started buying farms, built a house and at age 40 took a mail-order bride from Kentucky who was 30, and they raised six children. He eventually owned 12 farms and died land rich, leaving each child a quarter section, or 240 acres. Richard grew up on one of them close enough to go to Waukomis to school.

Mo (short for Mozelle), 84, grew up



A view of part of Buffalo Point Retreat & Event Center, 525 W King Ave., in Waukomis.



Event space in The Barn, seen from the loft.



A view of the Land Run Suite at Buffalo Point Retreat & Event Center.



View of the Pioneer Room at Richard and Mo Anderson’s Buffalo Point Retreat & Event Center in Waukomis. PHOTOS BY SARAH PHIPPS/THE OKLAHOMAN

on a rented farm, making her a farmer’s daughter turned real estate tycoon — whose father never owned his own land. John Gregg was a tenant farmer.

Mo and Richard were high school sweethearts in the 1950s. She was a cheerleader. He was a basketball standout who soon played for the University of Oklahoma on a scholarship.

“Probably when we were about in our 60s, I kind of wanted to go back to my roots, so I started buying some farms. But I wanted a place that maybe we could stay all night when we came to Waukomis,” Richard said at their home

in Oklahoma City. “We didn’t have a place. We live down here.

“I had the idea of creating a little farm environment. It would have a little house, a barn and a shop, a vineyard, just a modest little thing. That’s how it started. Then I hired an architect (Stan Jacobson in Oklahoma City) and got a decorator (Betty Shaw in Austin, Texas), and it just kind of mushroomed into a two-to-three-year project. We always had to do the most inspirational thing. So we ended up with Buffalo Point, a much bigger project.”



Event space in The Barn at Buffalo Point Retreat & Event Center in Waukomis.

‘Labor of love’

But Buffalo Point, developed from 2011 to 2014, wasn’t meant for public lodging, luxurious or otherwise.

“We intended it to be a family retreat, and we used it some. But as the grandchildren grew older, they weren’t interested in going to Waukomis,” Mo said with a grandmother’s knowing chuckle. “When it was designed, Richard kind of leaned toward it being a B&B, so if we passed, or if we needed to change its purpose, it would become that.

“So it was actually designed with a little bit of B&B in mind. But I loved it so much, I didn’t ever want it to be a B&B. Then we finally realized, no more than we were using it, we probably needed to turn it into a B&B.”

They hired a consultant.

“She was wonderful,” Mo said. “She helped us realize what all we would need to do to convert it. We still have some things we need to do, but they’re minor. It’s just wonderful.”

Buffalo Point has three bookable guest lodging units with seven guest rooms, all named in honor of local people, events and culture.

The Pioneer House is the largest lodging unit with two floors and four guest rooms: The Frederick Anderson Room, Cecil Cornish Room, Pistol Pete Room and “Happy” Camp Room, plus a large great room, fully outfitted kitchen and dining room, and a spare room named Longhorn Room on the second floor overlooking The Courtyard.

The Land Run Suite has two guest rooms: Boomer Room and Sooner Room, along with a living room, full kitchen with state-of-the-art appliances, and dining area.

The Chisolm Trail Room is a single guest room with a kitchenette and cozy seating area for two.

Each comes with luxury amenities including Matouk Hotel Collection towels and linens, as well as Natura Bissé bath amenities. Buffalo Point is the first and only lodging property in Oklahoma within the Matouk Hotel Collection.

“Watching our dream of relaunching Buffalo Point become a reality has been nothing short of amazing and a true labor of love,” Mo Anderson said. “After years of enjoying this special place with our loved ones, Richard and I wanted to share it with others and offer a beautiful retreat for people to celebrate life’s special moments and milestones. After a year like 2020, there is a renewed appreciation for opportunities to come together with family, friends and colleagues, and it is our hope that Buffalo Point will be a place where lasting memories are made.”

Real Estate Editor Richard Mize edits The Oklahoman’s Real Estate section, and covers housing, construction, commercial real estate, and related topics for the newspaper and Oklahoman.com. Contact him at rmize@oklahoman.com. Please support his work and that of other Oklahoman journalists by purchasing a subscription at <http://subscribe.oklahoman.com>.