

## Food and entertainment remain hallmarks at Top of the Town

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Written by Tom Caldwell

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By THOMAS P. CALDWELL

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BELMONT — The Top of the Town Restaurant on Ladd Hill Road, famous for the musical entertainment by its late owner, Joseph "Joe Holiday" Polovick, is now operating under new ownership, but it continues the tradition of combining good food with weekly entertainment.

Athena Gray and Donald Lavalley purchased the restaurant on May 31 and brought along musician Carroll Brown, who had been performing on Friday nights and occasionally adds a Saturday-night show. DJ 603 provides Thursday-night entertainment.

Gray said they knew Joe and his wife, Kathy, from prior visits to the restaurant, and when they saw the business offered on a buyer's website, they contacted Kathy about taking over.

The new owners have kept much the same menu, but added some new appetizers, such as nachos, quesadillas, and chicken wings. Soup specials may include seafood chowder, Philly chicken or steak, and French onion soup.

Gray said prime rib remains one of the most popular items on the menu.

The restaurant offers pasta dishes ranging from fettuccine Alfredo to chicken Parmigiana and chicken cacciatore, with several poultry and beef offerings. Seafood includes haddock, mussels, sea scallops, shrimp and swordfish.

Top of the Town also offers special-event bookings for company or holiday parties, reunions, and rehearsal dinners, and even funeral receptions — "whatever anybody wants," Gray said. "If we can fit you in, we'll do it."

Lavalley has his own HVAC business, which keeps him occupied during the day, but he pitches in at night, Gray said.

Karen Bishop and Kim Aubut serve as the cooks, and Betsy Doubleday helps at the bar.

"It's a lot of work, and a lot of hours," Gray said, "but it's fun. Every day is something new, and we've been building every week."

Having been closed for 10 weeks when they took over, and with highway work on Ladd Hill Road detouring traffic this fall, there have been challenges, but Gray said they are weathering those issues.

She is looking to book additional entertainment for Saturday nights.

The restaurant, which is open year-round, operates from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. on Tuesdays through Saturdays. Friday entertainment begins at 7 p.m., with Thursday entertainment at 5.



Athena Gray, left, owner of Top of the Town Restaurant, shares a laugh with Betsy Doubleday and Karen Bishop. (Tom Caldwell/Laconia Daily Sun)



Top of the Town owner Athena Gray and chef Karen Bishop stand in the restaurant's dining room. A stage area at the rear of the dining room provides space for weekend entertainment. (Tom Caldwell/Laconia Daily Sun)