

Soleil's Salt Cave to 'relax' in downtown Exeter

February 9, 2017

EXETER — Set to open in May, an innovative spa concept will take over the former Orange Leaf location in downtown Exeter.

Soleil's Salt Cave will be a "destination for relaxation and wellness," said co-owner Daryl Browne. Salt caves offer a modern variation of healing treatment, taking advantage of natural salt benefits. Recently, they've become a growing trend nationwide as a natural treatment for common ailments, including skin and respiratory issues, according to CBS News.

Named after their young daughter, co-owners Browne and Nastia Vanyukevych are Exeter residents. The new business was inspired in part by their daughter's battle with infant eczema. Vanyukevych, a native of Ukraine, has been long familiar with salt caves from her own time as a child in her local hospital's salt cellar. Eastern Europe has boasted the benefits of salt therapy to treat illnesses and boost the immune system.

"At first we thought about doing a salt cave in the basement to help our daughter and to maybe practice yoga also," Vanyukevych said. "But once we talked to friends, we realized we could make a difference in other people's lives by building one for everyone."

Browne grew up in New Hampshire and has lived throughout the state. He said he wanted to add something special to downtown Exeter. Currently, there is only one other salt cave in the Granite State.

"We walked by the space so many times and just kept daydreaming about it and finally just figured that if we could use it, other people could too," he said. "The expert (building it) is in Vermont, she is from Poland. She is the one who is specializing in this as a subcontractor. She'll come in and build this for us."

The business plans to offer two caves, one specifically built for children and a larger one for all ages that will host yoga classes. A therapy room will provide other wellness services including massage and reiki.

Browne and Vanyukevych plan to offer drop-in rates, memberships and gift certificates.

"My department worked closely with the property owner and brokerage firm to help secure an end-user that was compatible with Exeter's downtown business mix," said Economic Development Director Darren Winham. "It's very appreciated when entities such as these solicit assistance and opinion from locals to find such compatibility, especially in more dense, high-traffic business districts. I believe we have that with Soleil's Salt Cave as it's next door to an art gallery and across Water Street from quality local retail shops. The concept was foreign to me but after some research into the health benefits, I'm confident Soleil's will knock it out of the park at that location."

Browne and Vanyukevych plan to model their caves off of existing ones in Santa Barbara, California and Montauk, New York. For reference, visit www.saltcavesb.com or www.montauksaltcave.com.