

Social Club manager: 'We did our homework'

JOSH O'KANE
THE BRUNSWICKAN

It's been a while since Matt Harris was a student, but he still knows how to do his homework.

The manager of the Social Club, in his 20th year with the student-owned facility, says that he's faithfully invested in the suggestions of the members who filled out a survey last winter term about the future direction of the club.

While managed by Harris, the club is owned by an annual membership of UNB and STU students. The survey was sent out to all of the 2007-08 members, with over 200 responses.

The result, weighing in at \$80,000, sees a whole new layout of the club, complimented by an all-new kitchen and a stage for entertainment.

The last major renovation, says Harris, occurred in the mid-1990s.

The walls have been repainted, the floors are all new, and the front bar has been entirely rebuilt with taps for as many as six different selections of draught beer.

The dance floor and pool table areas have also been switched, and a lounge area with leather couches has also been installed.

A sit-down area will be at the front entrance, and Harris says there will be servers available for sit-down service to avoid lines at the bar.

"We've been planning over five years, putting money away to do some sort of renovation, but not knowing exactly what we would do," says Harris.

After the member survey, he says that "students put forth some suggestions that they thought would make the club more popular. The people who responded were all very proactive and they offered up

things that they liked."

The kitchen menu, says Harris, will consist of mostly pub-style foods, including fried foods, nachos, flatbread pizzas and panini.

Though he says the pricing of the new food will be "competitive," Harris states that he in no way is in competition with The Cellar, the other Student Union Building Bar, which brands itself as a pub and grill. The real problem, he explains, is with students not taking advantage of student-owned and student-operated services.

"I think there's a problem on campus of kids going off campus. The more the three campus bars can offer in their entirety, the more we can keep students on campus, and looking at campus venues as a more viable option for their social needs than going downtown.

"I am of the belief that the better one of us does, the better we all will have the chance of doing, and if there's more options on campus then the kids will be more apt to stay on campus."

Harris says the changes to the Social Club did not go over budget, and that \$80,000 was the initial price that was targeted for renovations.

The money also went to purchasing sound equipment to support live entertainment at the venue, as opposed to regularly renting it. This, he says, will avoid the cost of having to rent equipment with act that comes in.

Live entertainment will become a regular staple at the Social Club, Harris also notes, with acts lined up for the Sept. 4 opening as well as for the following Thursday, Sept. 11. Thursday nights are member appreciation nights at the facility.

He hopes to minimize cover charges to the venue, but says that if a promising enough live act comes his way, there may be a small \$2 to \$5 charge to pay the difference for the act. In the



The newly renovated Social Club sees the dance floor and pool areas switched from the previous design. Memberships to the club are available as of Sept. 4, the first day of classes.

membership survey, says Harris, members stated they wouldn't mind a small charge for a good enough musical performance.

Satisfying the members is what

Harris says he is aiming for.

"We did our homework. We asked our membership, 'what do you want?' and our membership answered with what they wanted.

We have addressed the issues that they wanted, and we believe we've given them exactly what they wanted."

The manager is certainly

confident in the end product.

"I believe the club is more functional now, and is the nicest I've seen it, in my 20 years here."

Taking my chances

My name is Sarah Ratchford. I came across the Bruns, and journalism as a whole for that matter, completely by chance. You could even say I quite literally stumbled across it.

One weekend at the end of last semester, I was home in Saint John for a couple of days. It was a Friday or Saturday night (or maybe not) and I was getting ready to out for drinks with some friends I hadn't seen in a while.

I'd had a glass of wine or two already, was feeling quite giddy, and sat down to my computer to double check my plans on Facebook – an ordinary sort of night.

Not paying attention to what I was doing, I went to UNB's website instead... because I'm just that cool. It was a habit; not going to lie. "Not a problem," I thought. "I can just check Facebook from my inbox."

Lo and behold, once I arrived in the inbox the night became magical. I found an e-news letter from Student Services.

For some crazy and as yet undiscovered reason, I opened it. And there it was: an ad from the Bruns saying they needed a news editor!

Since I'm doing an Honors degree in English, I figured it made sense to apply, so I applied,



Andrew Meade / The Brunswickan

and here I am.

The universe works in mysterious ways!

Readers of the Bruns, I am telling you that things work out when you least expect them to. Good things sneak up on us all the time. Take chances, and maybe you'll wind up doing something you love.

Some things about me: I enjoy the finer things in life. You know, hookah pipes, sugar-free Redbull, people who walk like Egyptians, and just good times in general. I'll meet quite a few of you this year, as I will be freewheeling about harassing people for interviews. So be prepared!

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