

Michigan

from page 7A

"We're especially trying to highlight a lot of smaller, more unconventional independent companies," said Bryan Bandyk, marketing director for Westborn. "Many of them are manufacturers from Up North who have never had any widespread exposure down here. We've always been supportive and passionate about Michigan farmers and Michigan products, and we just wanted to take that to the next level."

Added assistant store manager Rob Henry, "We hope we can attract some new customers and educate our existing customers. We think this can become a flagship in the area."

Right now, Cherished carries products from about 25 different Michigan companies. Westborn is hoping to expand the store to include an even larger food selection, its own cash register and counter for easier checkout, and regular product samples and demonstrations. The market also plans to use its Berkley store as the model for future incarnations of Cherished at the other Westborn locations in Dearborn and Livonia.

Henry especially likes how Cherished focuses on companies whose products feature signature state foods like cherries, fudge and mints. "That was a big part of it," he said. "We wanted to shine a spotlight on Michigan and all the great products you can get here. We've got a lot of unique products that you don't see very often."

Lisa Howard, 32, of Berkley is a cookbook author, food coach and regular customer at Westborn. She believes that Westborn's new endeavor is a step in the right direction toward long-term sustainability in Michigan.

"I think it's a great idea," she said. "If we want our local communities to survive, then we need to support them economically. This will be very good for our local farmers and very convenient for consumers, too. It seems like we're finally starting to get away from that corporate mentality."

Howard pointed out that the average product in a supermarket is transported about 1,500 miles before being placed on shelves, while locally produced foods typically travel a little more than 50 miles.

"As a cook, you want the freshest food you can get, so purchasing food that's grown locally is always a win-win," she said. "Michigan often

that and being so responsive to what the community wants."

Bandyk said with Cherished, the market is also hoping to inform uninitiated customers about the vast array of Michigan-made foods at their fingertips.

"A lot of people might be familiar with a product, but maybe they don't realize that it came from a Michigan company," he said. "There is always a local brand available for any product. ... With where the economy is going, we're very fortunate to still be successful. Now we want to help extend some of that success to these smaller companies."

Westborn Market is located in Berkley at 27659 Woodward Ave., about a quarter-mile north of 11 Mile Road. For more information on the Cherished store, call (248) 547-1000 or visit www.westbornmarket.com.

You can reach Staff Writer Jeremy Selweski at jselweski@candgnews.com or at (586) 218-5004.



The 900-square-foot store features products ranging from wine and tortilla chips to barbecue sauce and Mackinac Island fudge, seen here.

Photo by Deb Jacques

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