

PORCH opens in downtown Beloit, offers gifts and more

By **HILLARY GAVAN** Senior staff writer | **Posted: Saturday, July 23, 2016 10:00 am**

BELOIT — Debbie Mongan hadn't been to downtown Beloit for years, but after strolling through its Beloit Farmers Market last fall, she decided to open a business in the city's downtown.

"I was impressed with how big the market was, but then I became more interested in what was going on in the storefronts," she said.

Joe and Debbie Mongan opened PORCH at the former home of Flying Pig on Friday. The store is located at 430 E. Grand Ave., Suite 104, and hours are 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday and 11 a.m. - 4 p.m. on Sunday.

In addition to Joe's metal garden art, the store offers clothing, gifts, garden items, jewelry and baby items.

The Mongans might be new to Beloit's downtown, but they aren't new to retail.

Debbie had been working as giftware sales representative in 2003 when she met her husband, Joe, in Bangkok, Thailand, while building a playground for the non-profit Kids Around the World. Joe, a heavy equipment welder, was creating metal garden art and the couple decided to showcase his work in a storefront after his success at art shows.

They opened PORCH at 3065 N. Perryville Road, Rockford, nine years ago. She said the business became a big success.

While walking down Beloit's streets this fall, the couple became impressed with so much entrepreneurial activity in the downtown.

"We wanted to get in when it's really starting to take off," she said.

Debbie said she also was pleased with the Greater Beloit Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Beloit Association's support in helping her set up shop, as well as the kindness of those in the community.

"Everybody's so friendly up here, I feel like I'm on vacation," she said.

Mongan said she was very interested in the Phoenix Building and its tenants, which include Lucy's #7 Burger Bar, Zen Sushi & Grill, and Smyth Grey Advertising. She said her store will be a perfect addition to the building and complement neighboring businesses.



Unique finds at PORCH

Joe and Debbie Mongan are opening PORCH, 430 E. Grand Ave., Suite 104, in the Phoenix Building. The shop offers clothing, gifts, garden items, jewelry and baby items.

Debbie explained PORCH as not a place, but a state of mind. The shop has a boutique feel with pleasing music and scents in the air. She said it will be an ideal place for people to drop in while they are waiting for a table at some of the nearby restaurants.

Those at PORCH pride themselves on their customer service as well as free and elegant gift wrap. Trendy clothing for women age 30 to 60 is the store's number one seller, followed by Nora Fleming serving dishes with attachable holiday decorations.

The store manager is Cindy Giardini. Debbie said Friday was a bit of a soft opening as the store is between seasons, but fall and Halloween items will be arriving soon with Christmas merchandise to follow.