

Discarded wine and liquor bottles get a new life through the handiwork of Jason and Shelby Scarlatta (facing page) who recently founded a candle company, Whiskey Bottom.



Scent of a Candle

Couple Gives Second Life (and Light) to Empty Wine and Liquor Bottles

★
BY GINA GALLUCCI-WHITE
PHOTOGRAPHY BY TURNER PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO



SOME PEOPLE CARE ONLY FOR WHAT'S POURED FROM A LIQUOR OR WINE BOTTLE, BUT JASON AND SHELBY SCARLATTI ENJOY LOOKING AT THE CRAFTSMANSHIP OF THE VESSELS. "These are like little pieces of art," Shelby says, holding up an empty liquor bottle molded with a garden design. "Do you know what I mean?"

"We will go to a liquor store and be there for two hours," Jason adds, laughing. "It's like an art gallery."

"[Jason] will look at some of the bottles and say, 'I can't believe someone would throw these away,'" Shelby says. So the

Frederick couple have set out to change that. They have been collecting disposed spirit bottles and repurposing them into unique containers to house their homemade, hand-poured soy candles. Whiskey Bottom Candles features a variety of traditional and

unique scents to perfume the air and brighten a room. "We make sure we have something for everyone," Shelby says.

The business was born in the fall of 2012 after a back injury prevented Jason from returning to a 20-year career in the pipe-fitting



Jason Scarlatta is surrounded by a kaleidoscope of bottles that will eventually become containers for Whiskey Bottom's hand-poured, soy-based candles available in a variety of fragrances.

industry. "We had talked about doing an online business and we went through a bunch of different ideas," says Shelby, who works for a local biotech company. "He called me [one day] and he said, 'I want to have candles as a part of our business.'" Jason chose to use soy instead of paraffin because they would be able to support U.S. farmers. They also cite environmental factors such as a cleaner burn and an easier cleanup if the wax is spilled. "And, as far as making it, I don't have to wear a bio suit," Jason adds.

But trying to figure out how to actually make the candles proved tricky. "If you were to Google how to make soy candles ..." Jason says. "It's all lies," Shelby adds, laughing.

"If you can find anything at all, it's [not true]," Jason says. "We had to learn everything."

They tested many fragrance oils from different manufactures. Some had a good smell when the candle was unlit but they were not fragrant when lit. Some oils are not manufactured to work with soy and the aromas were too light. Different types of wicks were also tried. "It's a science," Jason says, "especially with soy wax" to get the perfect combination. The couple estimates they made 1,000 test candles.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

When it came time to think of a name for the company, the couple went through several ideas while

looking at a Maryland map. Chesapeake? Clover Hill? Sugarloaf? All were vetoed. The pair sat in silence for 10 minutes.

"Then he's like 'What about Whiskey Bottom?'" Shelby recalls. Jason had done construction jobs around the historic road in Laurel and says the name always stuck out to him. She loved the name and thought the candles could be poured into the bottom of recycled wine and whiskey bottles.

Wanting to stay local, the Scarlattas contacted local businesses asking if they could have their empty liquor and wine bottles. The Wine Kitchen in Downtown Frederick provides the majority of the bottles recycled by Whiskey Bottom. "Our

Life's Too Short To Clean Your Own Home!



The Cleaning Authority gives you a top quality clean at an affordable price. Our attention to your needs will allow you extra time to focus on your family, your career and your lifestyle. Giving you time to do the things that matter most in life!

- ✓ Your satisfaction is always guaranteed!
- ✓ We are reliable, thorough & affordable.
- ✓ We offer FREE estimates at convenient hours.
- ✓ We are bonded and insured.
- ✓ We offer weekly, bi-weekly, every four weeks and one-time-only cleanings.
- ✓ Our cleaner training is comprehensive and we inspect our crews routinely.
- ✓ We clean with Green Seal Certified® products; safe for you and the environment.
- ✓ We are locally owned and operated and have been doing business in Frederick County for over eight years.

Mention this ad and receive
\$25 OFF YOUR 1ST, 3RD AND 5TH CLEANING!*

*Offer good on new weekly and bi-weekly customers only. Ad must be mentioned at initial contact.

CONTACT US TODAY AND EXPERIENCE THE CLEANING AUTHORITY DIFFERENCE!

301-663-9370

Visit us online at www.TheCleaningAuthority.com

**Available at the Mt Airy and Frederick, MD offices of The Cleaning Authority. Not all franchised locations will use Green Seal Certified® or EPA® registered cleaning products. Contact your local franchised office to determine what types of products and services are offered in your area.



Above, left: The Scarlattas wanted to stay local as much as possible and contacted area businesses to collect their discarded spirits bottles. **Above, right:** The couple tried different types of wicks, along with testing out blends of aromas with soy. They estimate they went through 1,000 test candles.

whole concept is driven from sustainability,” says John McCain, the restaurant’s general manager. The Scarlattas take the bottles, McCain recycles the restaurant’s paper and the kitchen staff transport scraps to a local farm for compost.

But making the bottles ready for candles is an involved process. Jason hand washes every bottle five times in a process that includes soaking, scraping the labels off and fighting with the remaining glue. He started in the family’s standard

The candle labels and website (www.whiskeybottomcandles.com) were created by the Frederick-based Octavo Designs. Jason told Octavo owner Sue Hough he wanted the labels to give the feel of an old whiskey bottle sticker. Hough says the company was able to come up with a unique custom label. “We believe in [the product],” Hough says.

Picking names for the 30-plus candles they create has been fun. “Sweet Dreams” features a lavender and sweet orange aroma. “We wanted [a name] that was cute so ‘sweet’ from the sweet orange and ‘dreams’ because lavender is supposed to relax you and help you sleep and wind down,” Shelby says. After being asked to create a leather fragrance, the couple could not come up with an

“WE GET SUCH A NICE VARIETY OF BOTTLES,” ANYTHING WE DON’T USE, WE RECYCLE.” —Shelby Scarlatta

“We get such a nice variety of bottles,” Shelby says. Anything they don’t use, they recycle. Picking up bottles from the businesses every day, Jason estimates they are taking between 500 and 1,000 pounds of glass to be recycled.

size kitchen sink but decided to upgrade to an 8-foot-long, three-bin restaurant sink. Their Spring Ridge home’s unfinished basement serves as his office space where the storing, washing and bottle cutting and grinding take place.

Your Future is a Short Drive Away at the University System of Maryland at Hagerstown.



Coppin State University (CSU)
Curtis Hoover
240-527-2770 | choover@coppin.edu



Frostburg State University (FSU)
Education: Dr. Jamey Tobery-Nystrom
240-527-2735 | jctoberynystrom@frostburg.edu
Business: Dr. Marty Mattare
240-527-2747 | mmattare@frostburg.edu
Liberal Studies and Sociology: Gary Austin
240-527-2708 | gaustin@frostburg.edu
Psychology: Dr. Christopher Masciocchi
240-527-2746 | cmmasciocchi@frostburg.edu



Salisbury University (SU) HAGERSTOWN
Heidi Moore
240-527-2751 | hmoore@salisbury.edu



Towson University (TU)
Judy Breitenbach
240-527-2726 | jbreitenbach@towson.edu



University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP)
Erin Harman
240-527-2728 | eharman@hagerstown.usmd.edu



University of Maryland University College (UMUC)
Jana Gordon
240-527-2711 | jgordon@umuc.edu

Complete your bachelor’s degree or earn a master’s degree. USMH offers premiere programs from Maryland system universities in state-of-the-art facilities in Hagerstown. Easily accessible from Interstates 70 and 81. Convenient parking available.

www.hagerstown.usmd.edu
240.527.2060

University System of Maryland at Hagerstown
32 W. Washington St. | Hagerstown, MD 21740
Voice TDD: (240) 527-2064

Offerings at USMH include:

Doctorate Program in Education

Graduate Programs in
Business
Education
Engineering
Nursing
Social Work

Undergraduate Programs in
Business
Information Systems
Education
Health Information Management
Nursing
Criminal Justice
Investigative Forensics
Psychology
Social Science
Sociology
Social Work
Sport Management
Liberal Studies

Certificate Programs in
Engineering
Nursing

BAKER TREE SERVICES, INC.

Tree & Stump Removal • Clearing
Row Maintenance • Pruning

Locally Owned and Operated

1-800-383-4595
www.bakertreeservices.com

Licensed & Insured • MD Tree Expert Lic# 904 • ISA Cert. # MA-4258A

C. Richard Dewees Oil Company

24 Hr. Emergency Service
Budget Plans
Automatic Delivery
Annual Burner Contracts

301-271-7303
Thurmont, MD

Proudly Serving Frederick County Since 1970



When the Scarlattas were trying to come up with a name for their company they sat down with a map and played with different place names, finally deciding on Whiskey Bottom, an historic road in Laurel.

accompanying name until one day Shelby suggested “50 Shades” as a wink to the best-selling book series.

The couple created their own recipes to make candles named after drinks, including “Spiced Rum,” “Mango Tango,” and “Mulled Wine” by playing around with different amounts of fragrance oils.

“I get [Jason] to smell because he’s always like, ‘Oh that’s terrible’ or ‘Oh, that’s good,’” she says. “So if he likes it, it’s usually good.”

STARTING A BUSINESS

Having never previously owned a business, everything is new for the couple. They not only had to learn about candle making, but updating the website, shipping and even understanding different taxes.

“It’s been fun,” Shelby says. “We’ve met some really cool people.”

The website officially went live in July and features a variety of standard and seasonal 12-ounce candle selections, tarts that are chunks of soy wax mixed with fragrances to be placed in a warmer and 14- to 24-ounce special reserve candles that are made to order with customers picking the bottle and scent. Standard candles are \$28 each, tarts are \$7 and \$14, depending on size, and special reserves go for \$48 each.

A day after the website launched, Hallie Burrier, owner of Relish Decor in Downtown Frederick, asked to carry their candles. “Given that we are a kitchen and table-top hostess gift store, I thought they were a perfect fit for us,” Burrier

says. “I love the fact that they use repurposed bottles from local restaurants and that they are made here locally. I try to support as many small businesses and local artists as possible in my store.”

In November, Tickled Maroon in Parkton asked to carry the candles as well. Whiskey Bottom was also a vendor at the Maryland Christmas Show at the Frederick Fairgrounds and they have also done several tent shows and fundraisers.

When asked their favorite scents, Jason immediately says “Vanilla Berry” but Shelby is more torn. “Summer Love,” “Mango Tango” and “Honey Suckle” are among her favorites. “I like them all,” she decides. “There is not one that I don’t like.” **FM**

DREAM HOME



This magnificent Franklin Lloyd Wright inspired home sits atop of the Catoclin Mountains with breathtaking views of the Valley and Harpers Ferry Gap. The organic architecture shows inside and outside of this contemporary estate. Extra-large deck and pool for entertaining. Approx. 32 acres with 12 acres fenced, so bring your horses!

(Three car detached garage also has a 2 Br. and full bath apt.)



RE/MAX
Results



CONTACT GARY PRESTON

cell: 301-639-3119 • Office: 301-698-5005 • email: preston.gary@gmail.com