

Motel: The new owners say they want to improve the inn's reputation

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The rooms have been remodeled, exterminated and cleaned, Kevin said. New flooring, furniture, air conditioning and flat-screen televisions were put into each room. Private bathrooms have been renovated with new showers and sinks, he said.

An addition was built behind the motel building with larger rooms for guests requesting longer stays, which includes an extended kitchen. A picnic area was added.

The motel offers modern amenities, such as wireless Internet, a laundry room and a Starbucks coffee machine, Kevin said. Now, contractors are busy renovating the exterior of the building.

The couple has received positive feedback from contractors working at the La Salle Generating Station and others staying overnight during winter storms. The lone review on the motel's Facebook page, which hosts cannot edit, is positive.

"We want people to stay here and spread the word," Kevin said. "Word of mouth is the best business. When people tell others in the community that we have a good place, it will spread and bring more business."

Additionally, criminal activity has died down. Security cameras monitor the exterior around the clock from within the Shahs' room. As a result, the La Salle County Sheriff's Office has received only two police reports since the Shahs took over, noting the decline from hundreds of calls since 2000 under previous ownership.

"Pizza places wouldn't come out here (under previous ownership), because they weren't getting their money," Reshma said. "They are now coming back out here, and I told them if they have someone who doesn't pay, to let us know, because we don't want those people here."

Streator city officials have been trying to recruit a hotel developer; according to the city's comprehensive plan. A feasibility study a couple years ago showed the city could support another 60-room facility.

The Streator area has two other hotels, but a number of businesses have told the City Council and Streator Area Chamber of Commerce and Industry they recommend out-of-town hotels.

The city will not collect hotel tax for the Relax Inn because it is outside the city limits, but there still will be a positive economic impact if the motel is successful.

"There is potential for a positive impact," said City Manager Paul Nicholson.

'We want to bring people to Streator, to stay here.'

KEYURKUMAR 'KEVIN' SHAH
Relax Inn owner

"We are very candidly so challenged for quality hotel space. If they were able to be successful, it will offer a legitimate option for persons needing to stay overnight."

When improvements are completed, Kevin said he will invite city officials for a ribbon-cutting and join the Streator Area Chamber of Commerce and Industry. As first-time business

owners, the Shahs say they understand the challenge ahead, but they are committed to succeeding. They want to buy other hotels and grow their business once the Streator motel is established.

"Everyone in the community has been friendly and welcoming," Kevin said. "We want to bring people to Streator, to stay here." Go to relaxinnstreator.com, search "Relax Inn Streator" on Facebook, email info@relax-



The Times | Tom Siskak

A peak into a remodeled room with double beds at the Relax Inn. New ownership installed new flooring, new furniture and flatscreen televisions in each room.

innstreator.com or call 815-672-3168 for more information on the motel.

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VINE & Spirits

by Jim Ferrero

BETTER WITH BITTERS
As drinkers show renewed interest in classic cocktails, the ingredient that was once considered to be essential to a cocktail is also making a comeback. "Bitters," as they are known, were once sold by snake-oil salesmen as medicinal tonics that were purported to cure a variety of ills. These claims were based on the healing properties of the herbs, spices, and fruits that were infused in a high-proof alcohol base. In time, bitters came to be valued for the flavors that they brought to drinks, as a splash of bitters adds considerable complexity. Perhaps the most famous brand of bitters is Angostura, a blend of tropical herbs and plants first concocted by a German doctor in Angostura, Venezuela, in 1824.
At HERMAN'S PACKAGE STORE, we offer fine spirits, and wines from all over the world, and are the place for good deals, and knowledgeable, friendly help. Have you been out to dinner recently and discovered a beverage that had bitters as part of the drink? Let us know about it and we'll try to get it for you to drink at home too. We have years of experience, and would be happy to share our knowledge with you. Come to 504 West Main St., and browse our vast selection. Call us at today with any questions! We carry a full selection of name brands, reserve wines, and hard to get allocated wines. We have gift baskets available. Open: Mon-Thur 9am-9:30pm, Fri & Sat 9am-10pm, Sun 10am-8pm. We've been "Keeping the Area in Friendly Spirits Since 1944."
HINT: Angostura bitters feature prominently in rum-based cocktails such as Daiquiris, Mojitos, and rum sours.

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