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Straight Up with Peggy Ciepiela: 'It's the greatest job I've ever had'

**Rusty Anchor Marina & Pub Club, where bartender knows all the
members' names**

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Peggy Ciepiela has been bartending at the Rusty Anchor Marina & Pub Club for two years, ever since she fell in love with the club's relaxed vibe and great views.

STEPHANIE ZOLLSHAN - THE BERKSHIRE EAGLE

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By Nicolas Davidoff, The Berkshire Eagle

PITTSFIELD — Peggy Ciepiela has two jobs: During the day she's an office manager at a funeral home; at night, she's the bartender at the Rusty Anchor Marina & Pub Club. But Ciepiela doesn't necessarily think of her time pouring drinks behind the bar as a job, instead she looks at it as a time to unwind and spend time with people who have become some of her closest friends.

"My mornings are stressful," she said "so it is a wonderful change to go to the Anchor. I always look forward to happy people."

Ciepiela works Thursday through Sunday at the spot, a members-only club that sits on Pontoosuc Lake. Ciepiela was introduced to the marina — where members can dock boats, kayak or sit on its 40 by 40 foot deck — when she was invited to go on a boat belonging to one of the members. She quickly fell in love with the scenery and the relaxed ambiance, deciding to become a member herself shortly thereafter. Then, an opportunity came up for her to help out with one of the events hosted by the club, which has banquet rooms overlooking the lake that members and the public can rent for private parties.

That event was two years ago, and Ciepiela — a natural behind the bar, she was told — has kept at it ever since, pouring wine and beer during the long and lazy afternoons of the summer season. Her favorite shifts are Friday and Saturday night, she said, when the Rusty Anchor hosts weekly live concerts.

"That's when I get to meet new people," she said. "Anyone can come in and enjoy the show for \$5."

A North Adams native, Ciepiela's warm and welcoming nature quickly earned her a new group of friends among the loyal members of the club. This is her first time working as a bartender, but she said that as long as you keep a smile on your face and the drinks cold, everyone will be happy.

"I just love this place. It's the greatest job I've ever had," she said. "I have fun while I work! Not many people can say that. I get to socialize with customers who have become some of my best friends. Pittsfield has become my family."

BARKEEP!

Q: What is the most popular beer or wine here?

A: By and large, this is a Miller Lite bar. We even have a whole family that will only drink Miller Lite. We also have four beers on tap, though, that we change regularly and some people always get the Chardonnay.

Q: What do you like most about your job as a bartender?

A: The people — because it's a club I really get to know them. I know their names, their drink, and when they walk through the door I already have it ready for them.

Q: What is your favorite drink that you serve here?

A: The Sangria is fun to make and tastes great. I normally make a big pitcher of it and pour it out throughout the night. Today, I'm making a Lemon Berry Sangria (Lemonade, "Truly" Seltzer, Moscato wine). It's a really nice summer drink.

Q: What is in your fridge at home?

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A: I really like Grape Smirnoff. I'm a grape girl. I don't drink beer, even though I serve it here every day.

Q: What do people come in here and talk to you about the most?

A: They talk to me about their family life a lot, some of them even bring their kids. People come here to relax, mostly. They want a place that isn't loud, where they can sit and enjoy the summer by the lake.

Q: What do you wish people talked to you about or asked you about more?

A: We have fun, easy-going talks. That's what I want. I don't like politics, it's the only thing I really don't want to talk about but it seems to be all anyone cares about these days. They rarely bring that in here, but when they do, it makes me uncomfortable.

Q: What was your hardest day at work here?

A: We once hosted a 420 party. We're never doing that again. There's a space upstairs for events and we thought we'd give this kind of thing a try. It started at around 10 p.m., which is when we are usually closing up for the night. I think the customers had been partying in a lot of different places before they came here. We were basically all in tears at the end of it. So, we're keeping it to bridal and baby showers now.

Q: What do you like to do when you are off the clock?

A: I have a regular job, which I work at five days a week, and then in the little free time that I do have I babysit my granddaughter. I like to spend as much time with her as I can. But I can honestly say that this job doesn't feel like work to me. I always look forward to coming here.

Q: What are some of your favorite bars and restaurants in the area other than the Rusty Anchor?

A: I like the Water Street Grill in Williamstown. They are good people there. They make really good drinks and I like to sit in their outdoor patio.

Q: What should people know about bartending that, if they've never been a bartender, they might not know?

A: I encourage people who are thinking of becoming a bartender to take the TIPS course. You won't learn how to make drinks, but you'll learn a lot about the law and how alcohol affects your body. The first thing a bartender always has to be aware of is that at the end of the night, the last drink served (and the person who served it) is responsible for the customer when they walk out the door.

Q: Have you ever wanted to own your own bar?

A: No, and especially not with hard liquor. The owners have had the opportunity to get a liquor license and I've been in their ears the whole time saying "Don't do it!"

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