



This is God's Country

Wisteria Ridge is a can't-miss venue

By David B. Campbell



There's an old Franklin County saying that Callaway is God's Country. It's also said the reason is because so many Angels live out there.

Irrespective of the reason, it's hard to deny the first part when standing at Wisteria Ridge, looking out over the landscape. The view from the pond near the arbor nothing short of breathtaking, where the landscape merges with the sky, rolling hills rise in the background and wisps of mist sit between each one.

A person could be almost anywhere. Japan, Ireland, New Zealand, the Smokey Mountains, the Ozarks.

But it's Franklin County. Callaway to be exact. At 765 Algoma Rd. to be even more exact. Right in the proverbial backyard.

When turning into the driveway, people are immediately engulfed by the open, manicured spaces, the rustic charm of the buildings, and the sheer beauty of the sights surrounding them.

On all sides, Wisteria Ridge offers a 360-degree view of the Blue Ridge, with the deep green and blue hues providing a feeling of being in the middle of nowhere while also

enjoying the latest comforts.

Coming up the driveway, the pristine white, elegant, 4000 square-foot tent comes into view, as well as Mary Wray.

Wray, the proprietor, welcomes folks interested in booking the venue.

"We have been able to share our area's beauty with guests from other counties, states and several other countries," Wray says enthusiastically.

Now finishing up her fourth wedding season, Wray talks about the venue's beginnings and amenities.

Wray and her husband, Jim, moved back to the county from San Diego in 1998. There, Jim had served 20 years of active military service in the United States Navy, but had always dreamed of coming back to Franklin County upon retirement. Shortly after moving, the Wrays' daughter was searching for venues in which to get married.

"We realized that there were not many to choose from, at least not many that would accommodate a large number of people," she says. "We opened Wisteria Ridge with the hopes of filling a need but also because it was the type of business that allows us to serve people during a happy time in their lives."



There was another reason, too.

"I really love weddings. Each one is so different," she says. So she began searching.

Wray found the Wisteria Ridge location when an acquaintance mentioned she was selling her 28-acre property in Callaway.

"(She) asked if I knew of anyone that might be interested. I asked a friend of mine to accompany me to view the place and knew right away that this would be the perfect place to have weddings," Wray says.

She and her husband spent a full year readying the venue to host gatherings.

"We consider our facility to be a work in progress," she says. "We are continually adding features to enhance the beauty."

Currently, in addition to the elegant tent and heart-shaped pond, a patio area has been added where guests may gather.

"We renovated a building that hosts a catering kitchen, indoor bathrooms, a lobby and bridal suite," she says.

They also renovated an existing building into groom's quarters as well as a barn where several events have already taken place.

"The grounds have undergone lots of landscaping changes with all of the plants, flower beds and of course the planting of Wisteria," Wray says.

She didn't plant all the wisteria, however. In fact, the first time Wray drove onto the property, one of the first sights that caught her attention was a large tree filled with wisteria. Wisteria is a romantic and beautiful plant, perfect for weddings.

And Wray aims to make the weddings perfect, and fully customizable.

"We allow each wedding party the choice of using their own outside caterers, DJs/bands, photographers and vendors," Wray says.

In that regard, every couple's story will be unique and different.

And the venue does not lack for much - there are multiple sites on the property to choose from to host your event, with a space next to the pond with views of the Blue Ridge Mountains, a rustic barn, a cozy fire pit and an elegant 4,000 square foot tent complete with string lights, ceiling fans, a bar area, dance floor, and sound system. That space can accommodate up to 300 guests.

Wisteria Ridge hosts 20 weddings per year, May through October. There are still a few spots left for 2018 and reservations are being accepted for 2019. Interested parties may call 540-483-8368 to set up a tour and receive additional information. Owner Mary Wray or Event Manager Whitney Pugh will be happy to help create the wedding of your dreams!