

Hans Weissgerber

Managing Director, HB Milwaukee Inc.
Member from 1995–2005, 2022–today

For Rotarian Hans Weissgerber, community is everything. Through his business HB Milwaukee, Inc, which owns and operates the Old German Beer Hall and the Estabrook Park Beer Garden among other ventures, Hans cultivates community by creating welcoming spaces where people from all walks of life can sit down together.

“I like to say that a beer garden doesn’t cater to the 1 percent or the 99 percent. It caters to 100 percent. We’re all equal, sharing a table, sharing a beer.”



For a people person like Hans, work is pleasure. Hospitality comes naturally to him, thanks to his upbringing on Lake Okauchee, where his father, a German immigrant, and his mother, the daughter of German immigrants, ran the Golden Mast, a lively, venerable lakeside restaurant renowned for its German food and welcoming atmosphere.

Hans and his sister, who now owns the Golden Mast, witnessed firsthand the determination, skill and hard work required to run a successful business. Hans’s father eventually expanded his business holdings to include the Edelweiss Cruise Lines and Third Street Pier restaurant.

“My father was extremely entrepreneurial and I inherited his work ethic, and my mother inspired me to do my own thing. She went back to school and reinvented herself. She became a horticulturalist. Everyone expected me to work in the family business, but I was more independent.”



Hans opened the Old German Beer Hall in December 2005 with the goal of connecting patrons with the spirit and traditions of Munich’s legendary Hofbräuhaus, the most famous beer hall in the world. He is a proud partner with Hofbräuhaus of America, which brews all its beer in Munich according to the “Reinheitsgebot” or Purity Act of 1516, which dictates that beer can only be brewed using water, malted barley, hops and yeast.

The Estabrook Beer Garden opened in 2012 and quickly became part of the fabric of family life in Milwaukee. Hans had a two-pronged motivation in opening the Beer Garden: 1. to bring back a genuine Munich style beer garden to a public park in America, and 2. to develop public/private partnerships that activated disused parks and park buildings at no cost to the taxpayer.

“The concept of Estabrook is that a private operator renovates and maintains the facilities on public land in exchange for a healthy percentage of gross revenue going to the Milwaukee County budget.”

When Hans created the Estabrook Park Beer Garden, he launched a nationwide movement. With its permanent and traveling beer gardens drawing enthusiastic crowds during the summer months, Milwaukee County Parks is now a model for municipal parks and entrepreneurs across the country.

“It’s probably the best thing I’ve done from a business standpoint,” Hans said. “We provided something that wasn’t there, filled a need that was there and created revenue for the parks. The beer garden brings people to the parks and when they get there they often discover something new.”

Hans currently serves on the Wisconsin Restaurant Association Board of Directors. He is also active in several German cultural groups. The United German Societies of Wisconsin has just selected Hans as its “German American Person of the Year” for his efforts to sustain and celebrate German culture.

Hans leads multiple travel groups to Munich annually to celebrate Oktoberfest, which sounds like a rip-roaring vacation until one considers the stamina required to attend one of the world’s biggest celebrations every day for a week or longer.

Hans resides in River Hills with his wife Kimberly, a neuropsychologist, and 15-year-old son Hans IV (“I had to pass along the family curse.”) An avid skier, Hans finds it immensely rewarding to see his son develop his own passion for the sport. The two Hanses look forward to experiencing Oktoberfest in Munich together when Hans IV is a little older.

Hans’s adventurous spirit energizes his work life as well.

“I’m always looking for the next challenge, the next project. I’m not afraid to try things and find out they don’t work. I look for ventures that align with the Four Way Test. Will it be good for all involved?”

Hans initially joined Rotary in the mid-90s, but left the club when work took him out of state to open restaurants in Texas and Florida. He rejoined Rotary in 2022 after his family resettled in Milwaukee. Hans’s personal values align well with Rotary’s.

“I like people. And community. I think we all need to be keenly focused on finding common ground. What works for everybody. Our state used to be so much more unified. It pains me to see how divided our society has become. I carry that around every day. We could do so much better.”

From welcoming patrons and pouring drafts to seeking new opportunities to bring Milwaukeeans together, Hans is out serving the community every day. Prost!



Editor’s Note: *Rotary People of Action* is a bi-monthly series written by a group of Rotarians. This feature was written by Elizabeth Evans Draper.