



ENC-Chelsea | David Lewinski

FEATURED STORY

- 2010 >
- February >
- January >
- 2009 >
- 2008 >
- 2007 >

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MASTERMIND: Todd and Janice Ortbring

BY: AMY WHITESALL, 2/3/2010



Todd Ortbring found the rosebush when he was clearing old wood chips from the narrow bed between his family's Chelsea home and their neighbors' house. The neighbor showed the nubby remnants to her mother, who grew up in what's now the Ortbrings' house. Her mother, it turned out, planted the rosebush more than 70 years ago.

◆It's come back to life,◆ says Janice Ortbring. ◆We're not exactly rosebush people, so we're giving it our all. I mean, we love them, but we don't have any sun. There's just no place to baby a rosebush. When it's strong enough we'll move it somewhere sunny.◆

This is how the Ortbrings operate. Find something worth saving, doing, starting or improving. Give it your all. Nudge it along as it grows, get it to a place where it can thrive, then enjoy what it becomes.

Janice and Todd Ortbring run [Edgar Norman Creative](#), a full-service advertising and marketing firm with offices in Chelsea and Windsor, Ontario. While they'll put their work up against that of any firm, their portfolio hints at a passion for local and Michigan companies. Clients include [Paesano's Restaurant](#), [Bearclaw Coffee Company](#), The Common Grill, [The Corner Brewery](#) and [Chelsea Community Hospital](#).

That passion extends into a lot of donated work for community causes, which is why you'll also find ENC expertise woven into efforts that benefit free clinics, summer outdoor movies, fundraising events and a regional food business incubator.

Janice handles design and creative direction, Todd manages accounts and works with clients. A cast of contractors helps them handle projects of any size. On any given day at ENC you may also find clients using the meeting room, a high school student learning how to make a TV commercial, Ozzie the Boston Terrier snoring under a table, and his companion Linus, the 44-pound puppy who was supposed to be tiny, chewing on your foot.



◆We know it's really serious to help somebody with their brand and brand identity, but we don't take it too seriously; we really enjoy it and have a good time,◆ Janice says. ◆The things we are really serious about and inflexible about are budgets and deadlines. That is our guarantee: That we don't miss them. Other than that, it can be a zoo here at times.◆

Todd, 52, grew up in Chelsea; his local roots go back for generations on both sides. Janice, 40, grew up in Livonia, in a brick ranch house in a subdivision full of other brick ranch houses that looked just like it. They met at work, at a small ad agency in Ann Arbor where Todd was the vice president and Janice was a [Center for Creative Studies](#) student picking up extra graphic design work on weekends. They married in 1992, and after their sons were born they started looking for a place to raise their family. They wanted good schools, a downtown, older homes with lots of character. They chose Chelsea from a short list that included Plymouth and Northville, and wasted no time settling in.

◆They're things we're involved in because we believe in them,◆ Todd says. ◆I guess it's just the desire to give back to the community we live in and support the programs that are important to us. It's important to set an example for our kids that, hopefully, they'll carry on to their kids.◆

SRSLY, a community anti-drug coalition (the name is text shorthand for [seriously](#)), hired ENC to do its marketing and branding campaign back in 2008. But the Ortbrings didn't stop there. With two teenage sons, they understand the delicate balance between activities that are safe and fun, yet non-lame. That's why they created SRSLY Cinema.

Todd had been pushing the Sounds and Sights committee to add outdoor movies for three years, but hadn't found the right group to make it happen. He and Janice pitched the idea to the SRSLY steering committee last year, and within a couple of months they'd organized an all-volunteer effort that hosted 11 outdoor movies last summer. The films, shown on a screen made from donated billboards hung on the side of a building, were edgy enough (*The Dark Knight*, *Jaws*) to interest teens but light enough (*Hotel for Dogs*) for families.

◆I've never met two people who make the ideas really happen like that,◆ says Angie O'Neill, president of O'Neill Consulting, which evaluates programs for schools and community groups. She and her husband, Jim O'Neill, are members of the SRSLY steering committee. ◆I've never seen people bring ideas to life so quickly and so creatively.◆



The Ortbrings' front door is yellow, so Chelsea's Thursday-morning [breakfast salon](#)◆ became [Yellow Door](#). Makes it easy to find, too.

Visitors donate a suggested \$10-\$15 for breakfast prepared by a local chef, from local ingredients, and since August, Yellow Door has raised nearly \$1,500 for the [Chelsea Community Kitchen](#), an incubator for local food-based businesses. The food is always good, and sometimes spectacular. Guest chefs have included [Common Grill](#) owner Craig Common and Richard Andres of [Tantre Farm](#).

◆Yellow Door is about people getting together, cooking together, supporting their local economy with food purchasing and supporting the local business economy by donating all the money to helping people start food-based businesses,◆ Janice says. ◆I see it as one of those things that's doing the right thing for the right reason.◆



**Amy Whitesall is a Chelsea-based freelance writer. Her work has appeared in the Ann Arbor News, Crain's Detroit Business and Michigan Today, and you can find her online at [www.activevoicemedia.com](#). Amy's also a regular contributor to Concentrate and Metromode. Her most recent story was [MASTERMIND: Linda Meloche](#).**

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Photos:

[The ENC office in Chelsea](#)

[The ENC Family Portrait](#)

[Very Woodsy](#)

[This Little Guy is Available for Adoption](#)

[Todd's Got His Thinking Face On](#)

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