

## Guest Column: The Faces of Hospitality

Most of us who live here start as visitors but then are captivated by the Islands' magic, inspired to create an island life. This series of columns will help put faces to small businesses – restaurateurs, innkeepers, shopkeepers, artists, tour captains, and other entrepreneurs who make our communities so unique and vibrant.

Throughout her life, Sarah Bernstein has been living with, on, and among the dynamic systems of the sea. She worked as an expedition leader for years in Alaska, Antarctica, and Central America and still leads one or two trips a year to get her travel bug fix and connect with unique artisans and healers. She loves living in the San Juans because she likes the access to beautiful places - all the trails and forests, the water access and magical sunsets. And she loves her community - always seeing friendly faces and friends.

It was the COVID-19 pandemic that inspired her to open the Salty at Heart Apothecary. As Sarah says, “I started my business in the islands because I wanted to create a place where people could find the tools they needed for rituals and magic—like sage or candles or special herbs. I also wanted to create a space that highlighted all the amazing makers we have in the islands, especially the small ones that are harder to find. I wanted to create a space for community to gather for classes on herbalism, nature and connecting with the beautiful elements that drew me to this magical place.”

Since opening Salty at Heart, Sarah loves all the interesting people that she meets—so many cool stories or reasons they are visiting or love the islands. It is always great to connect them to cool places, experiences, and products made on the island. She has started making products with the plants that she wild harvests and grows so that people can take the island magic home with them or incorporate it into their daily lives.

### *How does tourism benefit the Islands?*

Sarah says, “[Almost] everyone that lives on the island started as a visitor. We live in a very unique and beautiful place and all people deserve to see and experience these magical islands.” She joined the Visitors Bureau because “they are great at connecting all the magical things happening throughout the islands.”

Learning how to run and operate a small business and keeping it going year-round while supporting herself has been Sarah's biggest challenge, but she draws inspiration from nature and her community. Nature and community are, after all, what make island life so special.