



North Idaho

# Northside School B&B

2022



## Northside School B&B

Frank and Jerri Duarte,  
Owners

Bonnors Ferry, ID

Started: 2019

[northsideschoolbandb.com](http://northsideschoolbandb.com)



It sounds a bit crazy for someone who has neither owned a business nor stayed at a Bed and Breakfast before to purchase one, but that's what Frank and Jerri Duarte decided to do when they purchased the Northside School B&B in 2019. The previous owners ran the B&B more as a hobby than a business, so that made it difficult for the Duartes to obtain a loan on the property. The Duartes knew there would be much to learn in that first year, and were not afraid to ask for help. During the purchase, their banker had referred them to North Idaho College's Small Business Development Center for business coaching. Their coach, Dennis Weed, helped them prepare their business plan and make projections to get qualified for their loan. He also helped navigate taxes, licensing, and with "all the other vast paperwork involved in business operations," says Jerri. "He even came over and helped me set up my QuickBooks accounts."

Although the first year was challenging, the Duartes saw great success. Their practice of treating every guest like family earned them a reputation as a place to gather – that, along with having the only heated pool in the area. One of their first guests came from Louisiana to experience the place he had seen only in pictures. To this day, he returns every year to his 'North Idaho Family.'

The Duartes have since renovated each of the guest rooms into classroom subjects such as astronomy and paleontology, adding to its charm. Some rooms include chalkboards or original artifacts from the school era days. You can even spend time in the Principal's office. Many guests that have visited are related to former students and teachers, all with a story to tell.

Nearly to the day of their first anniversary in business, the pandemic struck. Prior to Covid, more than 50% of their guests were Canadian, so the border closure brought a lot of uncertainty about how they would survive. As they met with their coach regularly, the SBDC became instrumental in assisting them with sound financial advice to weather the storm. They kept the Duartes apprised of SBA emergency funding options and news pertaining to the travel industry. "[The SBDC] continues to be our biggest supporter and we still meet with [them] monthly," said Jerri.

They've also had great support from the local community and throughout the Pacific Northwest. Word continues to spread about the area's waterfall strolls and scenic drives all within minutes of historical downtown Bonnors Ferry. Northside School B&B has become well known for its hospitality. It's no wonder that they welcome guests from around the world that regularly return to what feels like home to them.



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