

By Symone C. Skrzycki

Hotel Tango has approximately 15 full-time and 20-part time employees. Co-owners Hilary and Travis Barnes met while attending law school.



# Hotel Tango Artisan Distillery

## PROUD TO SERVE

### 'First' impression:

- Established in 2014
- Indianapolis' first artisan distillery since Prohibition
- First combat-disabled, veteran-owned distillery in the United States

### Operations (all in Indianapolis):

- Tasting Room (flagship site)
- The Foxhole (new event venue)
- Hotel Tango Farms (five-acre, sustainable growth model; farmhouse Airbnb)
- Where spirits are made: At the Tasting Room and in the historic, downtown Tinker House building (sole site of production for distribution)

### Places, products:

- Distributed in Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, Texas, Washington D.C., Hawaii and military bases across the United States
- Portfolio includes bourbon, whiskey, gin, rum, moonshine, limoncello, orangecello and vodka

### Tasting Room:

- Seasonal cocktail menus (e.g., Woodstock theme: Flower Power, Acid Drop)
- Décor: Casual, rustic, industrial
- Hotel Tango Farms yields edible flowers, tomatoes, cucumbers, jalapeños, lavender, basil and rosemary-incorporated Tasting Room drinks

"Other people are doing the farm-to-table (concept) with food," Hilary divulges. "We're doing it with cocktails."

### Craving craftiness:

- Monthly cocktail classes
- Do-it-yourself series led by fellow artisans such as leather makers, florists and photographers



Indianapolis-based social media influencers take part in a monthly event, dubbed Tango University, at the Tasting Room. On top: a mixology class.

## Military Minded

Travis Barnes served in the United States Marine Corps for four-and-a-half years – including three tours in Iraq. His experiences have shaped all aspects of Hotel Tango (HT).

What’s in a name? HT originates from NATO’s phonetic alphabet using Hilary and Travis’ first names.

How does the organization support veterans? One example is Operation Alpha. The annual event, typically held on or near Veterans Day, attracts approximately 200 people. Proceeds benefit the Hoosier Veterans Assistance Foundation (HVAF), which works to improve the lives of homeless veterans by providing supportive housing and services.

“We’ll be hosting the event at The Foxhole this year,” Hilary comments. “We have three or four different food vendors. Cocktails obviously by Hotel Tango. It’s an event to celebrate veterans.”

What makes HT unique? Barnes says it boils down to quality.

“We take a lot of the military experiences in the way we craft our product. We distill discipline and we’re proud to serve for all. We’re a very inclusive brand company.”

There’s also the pair’s legal expertise. Each earned a law degree. Hilary is a practicing attorney, while Travis decided to



“Travis’ military background really influences the organization. He’s taken what he’s learned in the military and that discipline and applied it to this corporate environment ... but also with a lot of fun and inclusiveness.”

– Hilary Barnes, founder and chief legal counsel, describing husband Travis Barnes (founder and CEO)  
[www.hoteltangowhiskey.com](http://www.hoteltangowhiskey.com)

apply his knowledge elsewhere.

“We’re a heavily regulated industry,” Travis reflects. “Staying compliant – I would say the law degree really helps with that.”

In addition to military pride, the Barnes’ – both Indiana natives – find it gratifying to support Hoosier agriculture. HT’s Vodka is

made with 100% Indiana corn.

“We source that corn from Indiana farmers,” Hilary emphasizes. “Since Indiana is obviously our home and we have a lot of pride for how we started and our beginnings, that’s how we like to tie Indiana back into our product.”

Among the highlights at the annual Operation Alpha is a Grog Bowl Ceremony (HVAF photo).

