

SUCCESS 2015 STORIES

WEDA'S MISSION IS TO PROVIDE LEADERSHIP AND SUPPORT TO FOSTER ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN WYOMING.

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SPECulative infrastructure investment! See write up on page 7.

As mineral revenues decrease, talk of economic diversification increases. Economic development agencies across the state have been working on building their communities for years. The Wyoming Business Council helps to focus public and private efforts to build a strong job creation base in the new economy. Manufacturing and technology are core competencies. The council also works to strengthen existing business and industry groups.

A thousand small steps are part of our journey to a successful and stable Wyoming economy.

Investment in infrastructure, such as rehabilitated buildings or business park development, take a one-time grant and turn it into a long-lasting opportunity. It is easy to recognize that present and future businesses and residents benefit from improved roads, water and sewer systems, robust electrical substations, lots in business parks that are ready for development, and buildings that act as business incubators. In 2015,

Wyoming reaped the benefit of this type of preparation with several companies moving in and bringing quality jobs with them.

With quality jobs comes spending power. Further development comes in the form of a stronger local retail market with more restaurants, hotels and services. An increased tax base plus recaptured revenue from the investments in infrastructure, helps a community become more self-sufficient.

Being ready for businesses to come to Wyoming is only part of the battle. Wyoming Business Council is also an active marketer for the state, helping private companies and our communities advertise their strengths to the outside world.

The power of partnerships—between government agencies, local economic development groups and private efforts—is proven. While mineral revenues continue to fluctuate, our potential only goes up.

Wyoming knows no boundaries. 

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BUILDING BLOCKS



WEDA'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

WEDA believes that legislative, local and state economic development efforts should provide a consistent strategy to encourage private sector development of companies that provide higher than average wages, create primary jobs, diversify the economy and generate tax revenue.

Legislative and economic development policy and efforts should meet one or more of these criteria:

- Diversifies Wyoming's economy
- Builds on Wyoming's existing strengths
- Increases private investment in Wyoming
- Expands the tax base for state or local government
- Creates new, quality jobs
- Improves Wyoming's competitiveness
- Creates or expands public and/or private infrastructure
- Expands or diversifies the workforce
- Generates funds for state and local governments
- Moves toward more efficient and/or business-friendly government

I. LEADERSHIP

The foundation of all economic development is leadership. Leaders provide vision, planning, communication, and the ability to bring a community together to think creatively about its future. Partnerships between elected officials, civic organizations, chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, individual business leaders and community members are essential for a thriving economy.

2. INFRASTRUCTURE, WORKFORCE & QUALITY OF LIFE

Wyoming's quality of life is unique: wide-open spaces, small rural communities and low population are just some of its characteristics. For economic development, important components also include good health care and high-quality schools, police and fire protection, affordable housing, cultural and recreational opportunities, and an attractive environment. Infrastructure like available land and buildings, water, sewer, gas, electricity, telecommunication services and transportation are all critical to successful businesses.

3. EXISTING BUSINESS & ENTREPRENEUR DEVELOPMENT

New jobs usually come from expansion of existing businesses. Likewise, local entrepreneurs are usually the best at identifying new product ideas and business opportunities appropriate for their community. Many success stories reflect the power of creativity to improve existing services and facilities as a way to invest in the community and enhance its economic potential.

4. RECRUITING NEW BUSINESS

When the other building blocks are in place, a community is prepared to recruit new businesses. We've all seen signs of failed economic development efforts—abandoned shopping centers or empty shops along Main Street. To avoid such mistakes it's critical that all the pieces of the puzzle are in place. Building from the bottom up allows communities to attract new businesses and residents with confidence that they can provide critical support so all business endeavors are successful.

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GREEN RIVER

➤ **Green River Urban Renewal/Main Street Agency** opened the **CLOCK TOWER PLAZA** in June. The City of Green River received a \$162,500 Business Ready Community enhancement grant from the **Wyoming Business Council** to redesign and construct the plaza. The improvements included the redesign of the main entrance, the addition of water features and a performance area. The Clock Tower Plaza is located in front of city hall on Flaming Gorge Way and is the site for many community activities in downtown Green River.

SARATOGA

➤ **Todd Hughes** started his business 30 years ago making high end floor medallions that install in hardwood floors. His work is in the houses of all living presidents, the White House and buildings around the world. In 2015, **HUGHES MANUFACTURING** caught fire, leaving only a partial skeletal structure. Hughes has rebuilt and is taking the opportunity to build a new addition to make his facilities bigger and better than ever before.



SHOSHONI

➤ **WASATCH RAILCAR REPAIR CONTRACTORS, INC.** provides railcar repair, railroad equipment restoration, and locomotive steam system construction and repair services. WRRRC is a Cheyenne business started in 2005. In 2015, WRRRC began managing a freight car repair facility in Shoshoni. The 22,500 square foot shop

expansion offers services from car cleaning to Rule 88 rebuilding. WRRRC understands that freight cars are not making money sitting at a repair shop, so WRRRC's focus on customer service, exceptional quality, and timely turnaround defines WRRRC's business values.

John E. Rimmasch, owner and founder of WRRRC always quotes "relationships mean more than money". This quote has been a guiding principle for WRRRC's growth and success. The relationship with SBDC has been powerful. The **SBDC Regional Director John Privette**, in Cheyenne, assisted with business planning which included financial projections to support funding for the Shoshoni facility. The assistance provided by SBDC also saved WRRRC valuable time and money which helped expedite the acquisition of the Shoshoni facility.

THERMOPOLIS

➤ Owners **Damien and Tanya Oliver** opened **ONE EYED BUFFALO BREWING COMPANY** on May 1 of 2015 after more than a year of planning. **SBDC Regional Director Bruce Morse** assisted them with fine tuning their business plan and ordered additional research on the community and industry from the **Wyoming Entrepreneur Market Research Center**. The Oliver's made an offer on a building in downtown Thermopolis and the plan was set in motion. Local lenders liked the concept and felt this would be a nice compliment to the local food and beverage scene, but they were not anxious to lend money for the start-up. The Olivers have funded the business entirely with their own resources.

Due to the explosion in the microbrewery industry, the manufacture and delivery of their brewing equipment was delayed. The Olivers again had to get creative and made arrangements with a facility in a neighboring community to brew a batch of their beer in order to have one of their own on tap for the grand opening. With the support of their industry and community, the restaurant and brewery has done well and continues to grow.

RAWLINS

➤ With sponsorship by the **City of Rawlins** and grant writing assistance by **Carbon County Economic Development Corporation**, the City was awarded a BRC Community Readiness Grant for \$468,000. It was used to construct a new roadway with curb and gutter, water lines, lighting, fire hydrants and landscaping to connect Airport Road to the Comfort Inn entrance off of Cedar Street on the east entrance to Rawlins for **Rawlins Hotel, LLC**, owners of a new three story, \$7.4 million, 77- room **FAIRFIELD INN AND SUITES** by Marriott. This roadway also provided access to other landlocked properties so they can become available for future development as well.

The roadway is now complete and the Fairfield Inn and Suites open. The same developers are planning a Candlewood Suites on another parcel behind the Fairfield Inn. Construction of that hotel will begin in late spring of 2016.

➤ After serving as a Deputy Sheriff, **Ray Mathill** and his colleague, **Jerry Black** took their retirement savings to open up a new **SPORTING GOODS STORE** in downtown Rawlins. They sell and service bows and cross bows with a 20 yard indoor archery range, and guns – both new and high-end consignments. They offer fishing gear and a variety of clothing and accessories. **SBDC Regional Director James Drever** assisted with planning and marketing. Just over a year since opening, the store is performing well and offering a valuable product to the Rawlins area.

CHEYENNE

➤ One in four Americans between the ages 44 and 70 are interested in starting their own businesses or nonprofit ventures in the next five to ten years. These “encore entrepreneurs” have an average of thirty-one years of work experience and twelve years of community involvement. Lee and Nani Goepfert fulfilled their

dreams of business ownership and maintained Wyoming jobs with their purchase of **ABSOLUTE FLOORING** in Cheyenne. When they decided to do so, the Goepferts contacted the **Wyoming Entrepreneur Small Business Development Center** in Cheyenne and participated in SBDC webinars and workshops. The SBDC assisted them with their business plan and helped with their web site. With SBDC assistance they also devised a realistic advertising budget.

With their completed business plan in hand, the Goepferts applied for an SBA 7(a) loan through First Interstate Bank in Cheyenne. The loan helped revitalize the business with innovative products and working capital. They also have a line of credit with their local bank and accounts with all of their suppliers. When asked about the future of the business, the Goepferts said they hoped to build the business by maintaining profitability, so when the time comes for them to retire, they can sell their business and it can remain an asset to the local community.

➤ **MICROSOFT** continues to invest in Cheyenne. The latest is a planned \$274 million dollar and 120 acre data center expansion in the North Range Business Park. This is the third land expansion since Microsoft announced in 2012 it would be building a data center in Wyoming, bringing their total investment in Cheyenne to roughly \$750 million.

➤ Niobrara Industrial Park, southeast of Cheyenne is filling quickly. The 75 acre park with 21 industrial lots is over one third full.

➤ **Stephen and Jo Underwood** formed **MIGHTY DUCTS, LLC**, put together a business plan, and secured a loan for their first truck in 1999. Committed to quality service and high standards, they voluntarily earned certification through the National Air Duct Cleaners Association in 2000. The business grew quickly and they now have six employees and they’re able to run two crews with two trucks. They continue to remain certified through NADCA, with two full-time employees certified as Air System Cleaning Specialists, which requires

earning continuing education credits each year to maintain. Mighty Ducts has a wide variety of clientele ranging from renters to home owners to the federal government, having done work at FE Warren Air Force Base and with the Veterans Administration in Cheyenne. They work with **Andrea Lewis, Procurement Specialist with the Wyoming Entrepreneur Procurement Technical Assistance Center**, to maintain their federal System for Award Management registration and in submitting invoices through the federal payment system.

➤ **SIERRA TRADING POST** is currently working on an expansion that will increase its footprint by 350,000 feet, basically doubling the capacity of the current warehouse. Sierra Trading Post was the first occupant in the Cheyenne Business Parkway, a **Cheyenne LEADS** owned park. They employ more than 700 people and more than 1,200 during their peak season. Sierra Trading Post plans to hire an additional 200 employees when the expansion is complete.



➤ **Alan Jones** used the guidance and assistance from the SBDC to build his own business instead of purchasing an existing business. **SBDC Regional Director John Privette** helped prepare a business plan using information from the Market Research Center. Financing was obtained through a local bank, cleaning equipment was purchased, and **COWBOY JONES CARPET CLEANING, LLC**, was born. Success soon followed. The business was originally operated part-time alongside a full-time job. Jones now operates Cowboy Jones full-time and has expanded his business with more advanced equipment and services. His success comes from identifying a competitive gap, attention to detail,

target marketing, and excellent customer service. Alan says, "The market research provided by the SBDC continues to provide gold nuggets of business opportunity."

➤ The Childcare Loan Program was a result of a Community Development Block Grant through the **Wyoming Business Council** to increase the availability of licensed childcare facilities in the state. The **Wyoming Women's Business Center** was awarded the contract. The program is intended for non-profit and for-profit child care operators to improve their facilities, increase their capacities and create jobs. **PEAS IN A POD CHILD CARE** is a for-profit child care center in Cheyenne that wished to physically expand their care center facility in order to serve more families in the community.

Peas In a Pod received a loan of \$13,000 through the Wyoming Women's Business Center Childcare Loan Program with a low interest rate and payable over six years. Peas In a Pod was required to maintain and/or create jobs, make timely payments, and provide the WWBC with annual financial information. They successfully met all requirements at the end of three years and half of the original loan amount was forgiven as a grant.

The loan was used for a facility expansion from 4,000 square feet to 8,000 square feet, and provided new flooring installation, electrical work required to meet rules and licensing standards, and a pull fire alarm system. The expansion allowed Peas In a Pod to serve an additional 30 families in the Cheyenne area, with the potential to increase the care center to a larger capacity if needed at a later date. The expansion required the addition of three full time employees.

➤ **Jamey Fifield and Trent Keller** started **WYOMING BEARING & SUPPLY** in April of 2010. WBS is a wholesale distributor of high pressure hoses, custom hose crimping and cutting, belts, gears and valves to a wide variety of industrial and manufacturing operations throughout the region. The company provides 24-hour technical support and emergency parts delivery to facilities and

remote field operation sites. In just two years, WBS had outgrown their existing facility. To meet their current and future facility requirements, they purchased a two acre commercial site with three existing industrial buildings. The largest building is used as the WBS retail store, inventory warehouse and administrative offices. A second building provides additional inventory storage. The third building was remodeled into a repair shop for trucks and large equipment. Funding for the purchase and remodel of this WBS commercial complex was provided through the SBA 504 Loan Program administered by WIDC-Frontier CDC, in participation with Tri-County Bank.

MOORCROFT

➤ In an effort to bring added service to the community, the **Moorcroft Field Lighting Project Committee** partnered with **Northeast Wyoming Economic Development Coalition (NEWEDC)** to add lighting to the youth sports complex. NEWEDC helped the committee make the application and solicit a grant for \$47,000 from the Daniels Fund for the completion of the project. The committee raised an additional \$126,000 through various fund raising projects, donations, and in-kind labor to make the project possible. The new lights allow area youth to have night games that parents and family members – both local and from other areas – can attend. They also allow other night time community activities and opportunities for parents and youth alike to walk the track for physical exercise and share time together.

RANCHESTER

➤ **Tom and Lynda Jolly** have owned and operated the **RANCHESTER WESTERN MOTEL** since 2010. The motel features 17 units, guest laundry facilities, and lobby breakfast area. The property is conveniently located off U.S. Interstate 90 on U.S. Highway 14 (Dayton Street). This main street through downtown Ranchester is highly traveled by

local residents, tourists and hunters traveling into the Big Horn Mountains, and energy industry personnel working in pipeline construction and the nearby coal mines. When the Jollys purchased the property, financing interest rates were high. Now, with funding through the SBA 504 Loan Program administered by WIDC-Frontier CDC, in participation with First Interstate Bank, the Jollys have restructured the property financing. Their 504 Loan provides long-term, fixed rate financing that reduces debt service and increases operating funds.

CODY

➤ The **CODY COFFEE** story began as a hobby for the stay-at-home dad of two young boys and quickly grew into a thriving business. **Jesse Renfors** roasted small batches of coffee for friends and family, but requests and word-of-mouth spawned the idea of making it more of a full-time venture. Renfors met with the **SBDC Regional Director, Bruce Morse**, to make sure he was getting established properly, and also kicked around marketing ideas. Recently, the SBDC team evaluated his website and provided a thorough analysis and report. Given that Cody Coffee's online business is its primary means of sales, the feedback from SBDC was invaluable. "The detailed report provided suggestions for better organization, SEO, and all things in between. Since changes suggested by SBDC have been implemented on Cody Coffee's website, we have seen the website improve to have a major presence in the online small batch coffee world."



CASPER

➤ Recognizing that public gathering places are a key element of downtown revitalization, **Casper Downtown Development Authority** has been working on a downtown plaza slated to open by summer 2017. The plaza, will offer free and low-cost events throughout the year and will feature a splash pad, ice skating rink and band shelter.

This project is made possible by private contributions of over \$1.7 million, \$3 million allocated from the City of Casper's 2014 excess One Cent funds, and \$500,000 from the state. The total cost of the project is expected to be around \$8.5 million. "The idea of an events driven public plaza would not be possible without the support and encouragement from our community. The partnerships that have been formed during this project make us proud to live, work and play in Casper," says **Lindsey Pariscoff, Project Coordinator at Casper DDA**.

➤ **Jane Mohr** is the veterinarian and owner of **ROCKY MOUNTAIN ANIMAL HOSPITAL (RMAH)** which opened in December 2010 in a leased building. As a new small business owner, Mohr started small. She managed to run the business with three employees, one of which was herself. Business grew fast and Jane knew she needed to expand out of her current location into a larger facility. When Jane felt ready, she began working with Hilltop banker, Ryan Klinger. With the help of an SBA 7(a) loan, RMAH moved into their current larger building. Jane Mohr proudly boasts "The loan guarantee from SBA made this possible."

➤ **Cheryl Pesicka** purchased **ONCE UPON A CHILD IN CASPER** because she was retiring from government employment but wasn't ready to stop working. She entered a U.S. Small Business Administration mentoring program for "encore entrepreneurs" and started to think about her next steps.

Leonard Holler, SBDC Regional Director, gave advice on the purchase of the existing business franchise. He prepared a business valuation for the current

operations based on the seller's financial information and reviewed the franchise terms and real property lease terms with Pesicka. He also provided advice on business planning, purchase price negotiations, entity selection, state licensing and business registration questions. Pesicka was able to purchase the franchise with private financing. The business continues to do well.

➤ After working in the sporting goods industry for over 17 years, **Shawn Wagner** has realized his dream to own his own business. With some inheritance money, he was able to purchase the old Timberline Sporting Goods, located on CY Avenue in Paradise Valley. Shawn worked with **Cindy Unger at the SBDC** to complete his business plan, which helped him get the financing to purchase his inventory. She also helped him with all the legal registrations necessary to organize the business, collect sales tax, and hire employees.

From the beautiful red sign on the outside of the building to the clothing racks, **WAGNER'S OUTDOOR OUTFITTERS** has introduced a new brand to Casper. Wagner's, which opened November 1, carries middle to high quality lines of hunting, camping and fishing equipment. This fills a niche that is not currently being served by any of the local retailers.



➤ **Jake Snow** opened **FIT 24**, a state of the art exercise facility, in 2008. In 2010, Snow added a new fitness alternative with the opening of **PRANA FITNESS & YOGA**. The two

businesses were located in adjacent suites in a busy shopping center on Casper's west side. As memberships in both fitness centers expanded, he recognized that the lack of available space was limiting growth. With funding through the SBA 504 Loan Program administered by WIDC-Frontier CDC, in participation with Jonah Bank of Wyoming, Snow purchased land adjacent to the shopping center and built an 8,000 square foot building to meet the current and future needs of the dual enterprises. Now, as the businesses continue to grow, Snow is building equity in the land and building well positioned in one of Casper's fastest growing commercial areas.

➤ **Satwant Sran**, the majority owner of the Douglas Inn and Conference Center, has purchased the **RAMADA PLAZA** in Casper. This hotel and conference center property was built in 1964 and is an integral component of the Casper's downtown hospitality scene. The hotel features 200 guest rooms, indoor pool, business and fitness centers, and lobby gift shop. In addition to the guest services, the property is a popular venue for local and regional meetings, conferences and special events. Duke's Eatery restaurant and Duke's Saloon are often frequented by local residents, hotel guests and travelers. With financing through the SBA 504 Loan Program administered by WIDC-Frontier CDC, in participation with Avana Capital, Sran purchased the hotel property and initiated multiple mechanical and guest room upgrades.

➤ The Child Care Loan Program was a result of a Community Development Block Grant through the **Wyoming Business Council**. The program is intended for non-profit and for-profit child care operators to improve their facilities, increase their capacities and create jobs. **MONTESSORI SCHOOL OF CASPER** is a Preschool through Kindergarten 501 (c)(3) non-profit corporation, and a private, parent cooperative in Casper. The school was originally located in a less desirable section of Casper, and MSC wished to move their location while also increasing space, and improving the facility and quality of the education experience.

During the construction of the new facility, MSC faced some cash flow challenges. MSC received a \$50,000 loan through the Wyoming Women's Business Center Childcare Loan Program with a low interest rate payable over six years. The loan was interest-only for 6 months during the school's construction period, allowing the remodel to continue while waiting for other committed funds to be received. MSC was required to maintain and/or create jobs, make timely payments, and provide the WWBC with annual financial information. Requirements were met at the end of three years, and half of the original loan amount was forgiven as a grant.

The loan was used to complete the new school remodel project that allowed them to move from the old school to the expanded facility, a rehabilitated warehouse in the Old Yellowstone District of downtown Casper. The school was able to improve facilities, double the number of children that receive a high-quality educational experience in the Casper community, and revitalize its Old Yellowstone District. MSC has received five Certification of Recognition awards from the Old Yellowstone District, City of Casper, and South Poplar Street Advisory Committee for the revitalization work to the Downtown Casper Community, and an award from the Wyoming Chapter of the American Institute of Architecture for the design of the facility. The expansion resulted in three additional full time positions.

➤ As **HILLTOP FAMILY DENTAL, LLC**, grew, the space the clinic occupied was no longer suitable to accommodate patient volume, additional staff, new technology and additional services. With long-term, fixed rate financing through the SBA 504 Loan Program administered by WIDC-Frontier CDC, in participation with ANB Bank, **Doctors Doing and Gallup** purchased commercial land and built a 7,800 square foot dental clinic on Casper's west side. The new clinic features a large reception area and waiting area, 14 treatment rooms, private consulting rooms, administrative offices, staff lounge and lockers, and space for future expansion.

Now as the practice continues to grow, the doctors also build equity in their facilities.

➤ **Casper Area Economic Development Alliance** completed the construction of a 30,000 square feet (expandable up to 60,000 square feet) speculative building in October. It is located in the Bar Nunn Industrial Center IV on a five acre lot. This project was funded with a WBC Community Readiness Grant submitted by the **Economic Development Joint Powers Board (EDJPB)**. Partners for this project include The Wyoming Business Council, EDJPB, CAEDA, and Granite Peak Development.

WRIGHT

➤ Energy is still big business in northeast Wyoming. Business partners **Travis Starks** from Wright and **Tony Lenardson** from Newcastle, started **WYOMING CRANE AND RIGGING, LLC** to add more crane resources to the local industry. They obtained an SBA loan to purchase a crane and have begun work in the field. Based in Wright, Wyoming Crane and Rigging, LLC is developing a business that will grow to be a leader in the crane service industry of Wyoming in the next few years.

SHERIDAN

➤ Sheridan has secured commercial air service with **Denver Air Connection**, a 30 passenger jet service, with flights to Denver twice a day. Commercial air service is a vital element of our business sustainability and growth efforts. Commercial service opens the door for many businesses that provide goods and services around the county. **L&H, VACUTECH, EMIT**, and **KENNON** are four growing and strong businesses that carry a client base way beyond Sheridan's driving radius. The health care industry also benefits. Reliable air service enables patient transfer, CEU Training, and recruitment options for local hospitals and clinics. The **City of Sheridan** and **Wyoming Business Council**

have invested a great deal in the development and documentation of a "shovel ready" building site located at the tech park on the north side of Sheridan. Site Selectors often ask about access to commercial air service.

➤ **Vickie Andrews** opened **307 AUTO GLASS** in Sheridan in January of 2015. She has a large shop with an overhead door to accommodate bigger vehicles and trucks and can repair or replace auto glass, replace door window regulators and switches, as well as window motors. Andrews worked with **Susan Jerke**, regional director of the **Wyoming Small Business Development Center**. The business was funded with personal investment and was able to attain a loan from a local commercial lender.

➤ As store manager of Starbucks Coffee in Sheridan which is located in a busy commercial center on Coffeen Avenue, **Patrick Akers** saw the possibilities for a **QDOBA MEXICAN GRILL** franchise near this same location. Akers attended Qdoba's six week training program and purchased a 31,632 square foot lot at to build the restaurant. The site offers good visibility from the busy Coffeen and Brundage intersection just two blocks from U.S. Interstate 90. With long-term fixed rate financing through the SBA 504 Loan Program administered by WIDC-Frontier CDC, in participation with First Federal Savings Bank, Akers financed the land, building construction, furniture and fixtures. The restaurant has thrived since opening.

➤ **HERITAGE WOODWORKS, INC.** is a licensed general contractor offering custom residential construction, ranch development, log and timber detailing, reclaimed lumber, handcrafted furnishings, and custom milling. Owners **Matt and Kristin Hill** relocated from Bozeman. Their style is unique to the area as they utilize reclaimed wood, hand-hewn timbers, hand-scribed logs, recycled metal, and natural stone to create distinctive projects ranging from refined rustic to modern. The Hills worked with **Susan Jerke**, regional director of the **Wyoming Entrepreneur SBDC** and

Market Research Center. Initial funding was provided through a Wyoming lender. The business currently has four employees with expansion expected in early 2016.

LANDER

➤ In September 2014, **Jared and Annie Scott** were approached about purchasing **FREMONT FRAMEWORKS**, the local frame shop. They spent time with the previous owner and felt that it was a viable business and one they would be excited to take over. With some business plan and projections assistance from **Sarah Hamlin, Business Advisor at Wyoming Entrepreneur Small Business Development Center**, they were able to finalize the business purchase.

By implementing some strategic changes—consistent business hours, free-consultations, quick-project turn around, and updated frame inventory—they have been able to grow the business in their first year of ownership. Additionally, they have started to offer a few new services, like a bargain frame bin, which has allowed them to reach a local market that was not previously using their services. The frame shop, once a one-person operation, employs the couple full time.



➤ **Dwayne and Denise Oldham** have been in the agricultural industry for over 40 years. The family established the **DOUBLE D RANCH** in 2005. Their enterprises consist of horse training and sales, prospect show lambs and cattle, custom fed beef and hay production. In addition, Dwayne is also a former Wyoming state veterinarian. The Double D is a ranching operation located

seven miles north of Lander, Wyoming on the Wind River Indian Reservation with approximately 900 acres. The Oldham family leases and owns portions of the land and as of the spring 2015, uses some of this land as an ecosanctuary for 56 Wyoming wild horses and burros through a program with the BLM.

Oldham was referred to **Alyssa Lozier, Procurement Specialist at the Wyoming Entrepreneur Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC)** by the BLM for assistance in getting government registrations activated for the ranch to pursue a project the BLM had set-aside to pasture wild horses. He stayed on top of keeping his registrations current and active, while conferring with the PTAC about BLM and government related questions, ensuring he was meeting all government requirements. This all assisted and prepared him in reaching for his end goal, which was and is to assist the BLM in controlling wild horse numbers on Western rangelands.

The BLM entered into a partnership agreement with Dwayne to reimburse him at a funding level comparable to what the agency pays ranchers to care for wild horses on long-term pastures in the Midwest. To date, he has received over \$200,000 in federal assistance from the BLM to cover feeding and care expenses.

Currently the Double D is one of only three wild horse sanctuaries in Wyoming with horses from overpopulated herds in Wyoming. Dwayne's facility currently has 56 horses but will be increasing that number to 100 horses before winter. A long-term plan under the BLM-Double D Ranch partnership will additionally include establishing a learning and visitor center, tours and gift shop. The Double D operation is also planning on involving the Eastern Shoshone Tribe and Northern Arapaho Tribe of the Wind River Reservation to assist in running the learning center to interpret the historic role of the horse in the Native American culture. With support from local and county entities, he hopes this sanctuary can provide ecotourism to the area as well.

The Double D operation has three full time employees and two seasonal employees. From the partnership Dwayne has with the

BLM, he will be able to retain the ranch's seasonal employees into the winter to assist with feeding and care. Dwayne expects to have a new employee in the future to oversee the visitors' center and horse tours.

NEWCASTLE

➤ **Susan Love** is a seasoned business owner and the executive director of the Newcastle Area Chamber of Commerce. In her quest to bring people together to create a more dynamic downtown area and to share her love of art, she decided to open an evening studio and offer canvas painting, draft classes, and art gallery and "ZenPen" - a relaxing and fun way to create beautiful images by drawing structured patterns. She also offers a space for local and regional artists to consign their work and has an online store to sell items. Susan leased a space on Main Street, remodeled the interior, and opened for business in September 2015. She worked with **Susan Jerke** and **Jim Drever, regional directors of the Wyoming Entrepreneur SBDC and Market Research Center** for assistance with her website. The business was funded with personal investment.

GILLETTE

➤ After a year of hands on training in the framing industry, **Allison Kalpin and her husband, Dustin**, purchased an existing Gillette business, **WYOMING ART & FRAME**. They took the reins in February 2015 and the business has exceeded their wildest dreams. "Upholding a reputation of quality custom framing for over 30 years, Wyoming Art & Frame is dedicated to providing state of the art design, friendly customer service, cutting edge technology and equipment," Kalpin says. "Our philosophy is simple: we help you create an aesthetically pleasing design that will accent and preserve your treasured items." The gallery stays current with accepted preservation practices according to the Library of Congress and continuous

education. Kalpin worked with **Susan Jerke and Leonard Holler**, regional directors of the Wyoming Entrepreneur SBDC and Market Research Center. It was funded with personal investment and a commercial loan from a local lender.

➤ **The Khan brothers** have more than 15 years of experience in the hospitality industry, owning and operating multiple properties in Wyoming and adjacent states. The Khans utilized the long-term fixed rate financing available through the SBA 504 Loan Program, administered by WIDC-Frontier CDC, in participation with First National Bank, for purchase of their **GILLETTE BUDGET INN** property. The Gillette Budget Inn is a 49 unit, three story property conveniently located close to restaurants, shopping, the CamPlex, and has easy access to U.S. Interstate 90. The property offers spacious single and double units, complimentary breakfast, laundry facilities, indoor pool, in-room amenities, and pet friendly rooms.

BAGGS

➤ **BAGGS TESTING AND RENTAL** provides drilling, exploration and production rental equipment and personnel to the oil and gas industry throughout Wyoming, Colorado and Utah. The business facility is located on a 35.4 acre site on Highway 789. The well maintained campus has equipment storage, maintenance and administration buildings, and temporary crew housing. **Eli Allen** started working for the company when he was in high school and became general manager in 2009. In 2013, with funding through the SBA 504 Loan program, administered by Wyoming Industrial Development Corporation and Frontier Certified Development Company (WIDC-Frontier CDC), in participation with Yampa Valley Bank, Allen purchased the commercial property site. Allen secured a SBA 7a Loan for the purchase of the remaining business assets. Now, as the business continues to grow, Allen is creating personal equity in his business and commercial property.

DOUGLAS

➤ Seeing a need for early childhood education, as well as more child care options, in the Douglas area **NANA'S LEARNING CENTER, LLC** opened in September of 2015. SBDC Regional Director **Leonard Holler** assisted the owner, **Ariana Avila**, with business planning, cash flow projections, determining the financial feasibility of her business idea, financing options, LLC registration, federal EIN application and registration questions. With a strong plan, Avila was able to open the center with private financing. Her classes have filled quickly.

WORLAND

➤ The **WASHAKIE MEDICAL CENTER** broke ground on a \$23.4 million dollar renovation project in June of 2015. The facility is owned by **Washakie County** and managed by **Banner Health**. The renovation will include a new ER with added privacy, two operating suites large enough for today's necessary equipment, two procedure rooms and private ambulatory bays. The project consolidates the lab and pharmacy areas for functionality and a new patient wing with ADA front entrance will provide a more comfortable, healing space for patients.

Washakie County Commissioners worked with Banner Health to creatively put together the financial pieces of the project. The Washakie County Hospital Board provided \$250,000 and Washakie County added \$265,000 to make up the match for a \$840,000 Mineral Royalty Grant from the State Loan and Investment Board. The remainder was covered by revenue bonds handled by ANB Bank, to be paid over time with the funds generated by the lease of the county owned hospital to Banner Health. "ANB Bank was excited to be a part of this historic project here in Washakie County. It was great to see private and public entities work together to truly enhance our community with a newly remodeled hospital," says ANB's Community Bank President, Duane Whitlock.

Washakie County Commissioner Aaron Anderson led a team including representatives from Banner Health, the Washakie County Hospital Board, legal teams and financial experts through several years of planning, negotiating, consulting and contracting. Washakie Development Association was pleased to assist with the Mineral Royalty Grant application. Medical care is an important element of a community seeking economic development; this project used a creative combination of public and private funds to provide a state of the art facility.



EVANSVILLE

➤ **Doug and Hiedi Nicol** of **HQ SOUTHERN BBQ** chose to partner with the SBA and Jonah Bank of Wyoming to finance their restaurant. "We worked with Dustin Porter for a guaranteed small business loan," Nicol says. "It was really important to my wife and me that we work with a lender that wouldn't pull the rug out from under us at the first sign of trouble. I literally had nightmares that it would be all over at the first red dollar." When construction took longer than expected and cost more than estimated, Jonah Bank stayed on board and provided the funding needed to stay the course. "We really have to credit Jonah Bank for standing with us," Doug says. "They believed in me and my product and they stuck with us when we needed them the most. We were both committed and we are here to stay." With such a strong start, HQ Southern BBQ continued to thrive as competition increased and the business is planning expansion in the near future.

WHEATLAND

➤ **Dan Brecht** opened **THE WANDERING HERMIT BOOKS AND GIFTS, LLC** in late 2014. The store brings much needed retail items and enthusiasm to downtown Wheatland. **Leonard Holler, SBDC Regional Director**, helped Brecht prepare for this business with advice on the development of a business plan, finding suppliers, the federal EIN application, LLC registration, state taxes and registration questions.

BUFFALO

➤ **Laura Harmon and her husband Chris** purchased a building on Main Street in Buffalo and opened **IN COLOR GALLERY AND DESIGN**, an art gallery and color design studio. She displays her own work, which includes painted floor cloths and repurposed furniture. Harmon also offers interior design services to residential and commercial clients. She has created space for local and regional artists to consign their work, with reduced commissions for volunteers. The gallery opened in early July, prior to the huge Longmire Days event. She worked with **Susan Jerke and Rob Condie, regional directors of the Wyoming Entrepreneur Small Business Development Center**. The business was funded with personal investment.

LARAMIE

➤ **Dylan Handrich**, owner and president of **PRAIRIE MONARCH BISON** is a University of Wyoming graduate in engineering. The ranch was founded in 1992 by Handrich's parents. Over 22 years, the family focused on producing a sustainable and eco-friendly bison product. The ranch has grown to a thriving business, providing premium grass-fed buffalo. Earlier this year, Handrich purchased a processing facility near Wheatland to process the buffalo and other animals and game. **James Drever, SBDC Regional Director** has been working with

Handrich for marketing and product quality for five years. Prairie Monarch earned its official organic certification this year.

➤ **Shawn Faxon**, 28-year-old owner of **WOLF CREEK RADIO BROADCASTING** and the man behind Hits 106 was born, raised and educated in Wyoming. He saw an opportunity to own his own radio station and jumped in. "I started with the terrible approach of using credit cards," Faxon says. "Then I realized that wasn't working so I got with **Jim Drever of the Wyoming Entrepreneur Small Business Development Center** in Laramie." Faxon and Drever went back to the business plan and created a strategy to work with the SBA, refinancing his credit card debt into one fixed term loan. He followed that up with another SBA loan to refinance the seller financing. "Working with the SBDC was a very valuable working process because Jim was able to provide feedback and insight that I never would have thought of and he helped me take it to a level that it needed to be," Faxon said. With his finances in order, Faxon has been able to grow the station into a successful business and a valuable community service.

➤ After moving to Laramie, **Scott Tafel** taught himself to make a faster, more reliable computer which could support multiple monitors (up to six or more monitors on one computer) and a business was born. **TRADING COMPUTERS** is a specialty manufacturer serving the needs of the financial industry. The business grew fast and hard, into a 25 employee business that has been featured on the Economic Report, has an excellent Dun and Bradstreet credit rating and has sold computers in countries such as Thailand, Australia and Western Europe. However, problems arose with the growth. The profits weren't where Tafel wanted or expected them to be. One of the first things he did was to secure an SBA Patriot Express loan to buy the building they were using. This gave Tafel the peace of mind he needed as one defined payment

which wouldn't change via a landlord and assured him a stable place to do business.

"It helped improve his cash flow and cut his payment significantly," said Mike Peck, commercial lender at First Interstate Bank in Laramie. With a stable payment plan, Tafel turned his attention to his work structure and downsized in order to be closer to his product and customers. The result is a strong, stable business that he and junior partner Joshua Heien are proud of.

➤ **Zarif Khan** has extensive experience in the Wyoming hospitality industry as the owner of multiple properties throughout the state, including the **QUALITY INN & SUITES** on Centennial Drive. The property is a three story, 72 unit property with easy access from U.S. Interstate 80, and easy access to the University of Wyoming, Wyoming Technical Institute and Albany County Fairgrounds. Hotel amenities include an indoor heated pool, separate hot tub, fitness center, meeting room, breakfast dining area and guest laundry. Funding for the purchase of this Quality Inn & Suites was provided through the SBA 504 Loan Program administered by WIDC-Frontier CDC, in participation with First Interstate Bank.

JACKSON

➤ The **Jackson Hole Chamber of Commerce** earned a five-star accreditation from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in 2015. Of nearly 7,000 chambers in the country, just 102 have earned the honor. Chamber CEO says the accreditation is about following the industry's best practices. The application process includes essays and supporting data for multiple categories including technology, program development, human resources, government affairs, governance, finance, facilities, communications and benchmarking. Four years ago the chamber earned four stars.

HULETT

➤ After working at the **CORNER MARKET** for many years, **Sarah Newell** had the opportunity to purchase the local grocery store. The grand re-opening was held July 1, 2015. Currently, the store employs 11 people, including Sarah and her husband. They carry a wide array of produce and grocery items, a necessity for the livelihood of the local residents of this rural community. Newell worked with **Susan Jerke**, regional director of the Wyoming Entrepreneur Small Business Development Center.

HANNA

➤ After the grocery store in Hanna closed several years ago, residents were forced to drive to Rawlins for food. **Kyle and Amelia Young** opened the **HANNA HOMETOWN MARKET** in July of 2015. Combined with affordable housing costs, Young felt a grocery store would help to revitalize the town and open it up for economic development. The effort was supported by **Jim Drever**, regional director of the Wyoming Entrepreneur Small Business Development Center, which provided business plan advising that led to private investment. Local volunteers have also helped to bring this important feature back to the community; volunteers cleaned the building, painted, installed shelving and helped unload the first shipments.



EVANSTON

➤ The **City of Evanston** has developed events to support businesses and industries. These include a “Build Your Business Forum” designed for local entrepreneurs and retailers. **Robert Condie** from the **SBDC** in Rock Springs spoke to attendees, followed by a local panel of experts. The City also hosts a Business to Business reception geared more toward larger industries. In 2015, the keynote speaker was Donald Collins, the CEO of the Western Research Institute.

The City of Evanston, the **Evanston Chamber of Commerce** and the **Uinta County Economic Development Commission** partnered to apply for a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for Technical Assistance. The funds will help create the “Tools for Business Success” web program. The business toolkit will be housed on the Chamber website, but with links to both the City and the County. The program features a variety of tools for both new and experienced business owners. The program will provide information on how to write a business plan, hire employees, comply with various tax regulations, and find vital local, state and federal resources for operating a successful business.

➤ **AHHHSOME RELAXATION** is a private business that offers a safe, secure, stress-relief environment. It builds on the health spa concept to provide customers a retreat where they can immerse in a series of private stations, accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to members who pay a monthly membership. Equipment is self-guided, including high-end massage chairs and other stress-relief equipment. The first facility was opened in Evanston in 2014 with other franchises currently under development. Owner **Shawn Tolman** had difficulty finding lenders who would support the startup. A first SBA micro-loan was obtained through the **Wyoming Women’s Business Center** for \$50,000 to open the pilot

business in Evanston. The loan processed in March of 2014, and by August of 2014, the membership had grown so substantially that it was necessary to take out a second loan through the WWBC for additional equipment. By May 2015, the concept had been proven to work so Tolman began to sell franchises. Monthly payments were made on the WWBC loan from cash flow, and Ahhhsome Relaxation was able obtain financing from a new larger bank loan in order to expedite paying off the WWBC loans.

RIVERTON

➤ In August, the first students began vocational training at the new **WIND RIVER JOB CORPS CENTER**. “This first of its kind in Wyoming, the Wind River Job Corps Center is a fantastic program to ensure that the citizens of Wyoming have the skills and training they need to be leaders in tomorrow’s workforce,” Senator Mike Enzi said. “A project like this is not any one person’s doing, but a team effort from a lot of folks who did the ground work so this project could move forward. The work done by the city, county, tribal and state governments, and federal agencies to bring this Job Corps Center to the Wind River area will help support Wyoming’s communities and economy for decades to come.”

The Wind River Job Corps center boasts a first-of-its-kind petroleum technician training program, designed in consultation with the local business community, to prepare students for careers in Wyoming’s energy industry. The center also offers training in accounting, building and construction technology, carpentry, electrical, heavy construction equipment mechanics, equipment operations, heavy truck driving, office administration and welding. When at full capacity, the center will house and train 300 students and employ more than 100 staff. 🐾

READ ABOUT WYOMING’S GROWING INDUSTRIES



MANUFACTURING CONTINUES GROWTH

If you build it, they will come. This hopeful phrase has been part of the driving force behind manufacturing, technology and business parks around the state. These properties, often built on spec with local and state development dollars, have paid off when it comes to attracting major players in weapons manufacturing.

In 2013, Colorado proposed sweeping changes to gun control laws. **MAGPUL INDUSTRIES** officials decided it was time to move. The company left its Erie, Colorado, operations and moved to Cheyenne. It relocated its administrative offices to Austin. The manufacturing facility, located in the Cheyenne Business Park, was able to move in relatively quickly and resume production on January 12, 2015.

Magpul makes accessories for firearms like ammunition magazines, butt stocks, hand guards, grips and light mounts. It also makes wrenches, field cases for cell phones, ball caps and shirts.

Originally operating in almost 90,000 square feet of the building that used to house window manufacturer Jeld Wen, Magpul plans to expand into the remainder of the building, bringing its total space to 185,000 square feet. The company has also exceeded employment expectations with over 180 employees now working there. About 25 of these employees came from Colorado; the rest of the positions have been filled by the local labor force. The company chose Cheyenne as its new home because it fit their needs from a manufacturing standpoint, but the cultural environment also suited their products.



The building is owned by Laramie County and managed by Cheyenne LEADS, the local nonprofit economic development agency. As an incentive, Magpul will pay only operating costs and taxes on the building for the first four years. Payments from the 15-year lease will go back to Cheyenne LEADS and the Wyoming Business Council to reinvest in other economic development projects.

Meanwhile, the City of Laramie used a \$2.4 million grant and \$520,000 loan to build a 20,000 square foot manufacturing facility in Laramie River Business Park II for **HIVIZ**, a manufacturer of fiber-optic gun sights, recoil pads and other shooting accessories. The company's operations from Arizona, Utah and Colorado were consolidated in Laramie. Manufacturing began in June of 2015.



HiViz came to Wyoming with around 20 employees but was planning to expand before the move was announced. Now that the move is completed, more employees are expected to be needed within a year. An additional facility in the near future is also a possibility.

Laramie Economic Development Corporation, the local economic and business development organization that merged with the local chamber of commerce in 2014 to become Laramie Chamber Business Alliance, followed up the HiViz win with the relocation of **MAVERICK AMMUNITION** which is part of the **AMMO KAN** family. Maverick Ammunition manufactures target-grade ammunition and ammunition

for hunting. It also manufactures tactical-grade ammunition for use in law enforcement.

An estimated 50 employees were hired from the local workforce for a range of jobs from entry-level warehouse positions to distribution managers. Wyoming Department of Workforce Services' training grants were an attractive benefit to the company when the move was being considered.

Ammo Kan remodeled an existing building west of downtown Laramie with good access for trucks. Product expansion in Wyoming, including producing firearm components, is part of future plans. A local showroom is also a possibility.

"Laramie has been focused on recruiting technology companies and successful in doing so. We now need to continue to diversify our economy further and lately have been working on trying to attract manufacturing companies," says Dan Furphy, president and CEO of Laramie Chamber Business Alliance.



In August, **TUNGSTEN HEAVY POWDER & PARTS** also announced intentions to move to Laramie River Business Park II. The company is a supplier of tungsten components for military, industrial engineering and medical markets worldwide. It is moving its China-based production operation to Laramie. The plant will produce tungsten fragments and penetrators to be sold globally to military weapons and armament manufacturers.

"The expansion to a new facility in Wyoming is evidence of Wyoming's ability to be a competitive place in the nation for manufacturing,"

– Ben Avery

Director of the Wyoming Business Council's Business and Industry Division

continued

WEDA SUCCESS STORIES 2015

MANUFACTURING CONTINUES GROWTH *continued*

The state-of-the-art operation will use both automation and about 25 employees. The plant will run 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Higher employment numbers are expected as the facility is established and contracts increase.

"The expansion to a new facility in Wyoming is evidence of Wyoming's ability to be a competitive place in the nation for manufacturing," said Ben Avery, director of the Wyoming Business Council's Business and Industry Division. Wyoming was one of five states considered for the plant's relocation. Owner Joe Sery credits a visit to San Diego by Avery and Brandon Marshall, manager of business recruitment and development, for making Wyoming his top choice.

"When they got on the plane and came to see me, I was really impressed," Sery

says. "That showed that they took it very seriously." State and local economic development officials took Sery on tours of 13 proposed sites in Wyoming this summer. The university town appealed to the manufacturer.

Tungsten Heavy Powder and Parts will work with the Business Council and Laramie Chamber Business Alliance as the company considers its options for building an approximately 10,000 square foot office and manufacturing facility.

The culture that attracted these new facilities is part of Wyoming's heritage. A state with a Cowboy Code and a mostly hands-off approach to legislating industry seems like a safe place for arms manufacturers to move when they find their industry under fire. But not

everyone in the industry is a transplant.

Wayne Baker and Dick Casull founded **FREEDOM ARMS** in 1978. In part, they wanted to give the youth of Star Valley an alternative to agricultural work. The firearm manufacturer is known across the country for high quality, hand crafted revolvers. Now run by Bob Baker, Freedom Arms keeps around 15 employees and sells handguns around the world.

Large and small companies, making large and small arms, are a growing part of Wyoming's economy. The private investment, paired with preparation of manufacturing sites by the public sector, have resulted in quality partnerships that benefit the communities and companies. It's an economic development strategy that is proving to be right on target. 

SOMETHING'S BREWING IN WYOMING

Across the United States, people are raising their glasses and building an industry based on quality craft beverages. Wyoming is no exception. The number of breweries grows each year. Wyoming's distilleries are also growing. And, where there is demand, supply will follow. The economic development value is twofold. Beer and alcohol tourism is a growing part of the travel market and Wyoming offers over two dozen destinations. The actual process of brewing craft beverages and distributing it on a larger scale provides quality jobs, often

in smaller communities looking for growth.

In just a few short years, Sheridan's **BLACK TOOTH BREWING COMPANY** has grown to the largest brewery in Wyoming with around 10,000 barrels of beer produced in 2015. The brewery has plans to reach 50,000 barrels a year with distribution across Wyoming and into seven surrounding states. The fast expansion is made possible by truly fantastic beer and aggressive marketing to new areas. Construction of an 8,500 square foot microbrewery was completed last June, and their sales were up 40 percent year-to-date for the first half of 2015.

CHEYENNE & LARAMIE BEVERAGE, which expanded to its own 51,000 square foot distribution center in Cheyenne's Niobrara

The business of happy hour is proving to be a big opportunity for Wyoming entrepreneurs.

Industrial Park this year, has partnered with Black Tooth to deliver the microbrewery's beer to southeast Wyoming.

One of Wyoming's earliest brewers, **SNAKE RIVER BREWING**, is also expanding its distribution. It has partnered with Utah Craft Beverages, LLC, to move its brews in the Beehive State. Readily available around Wyoming, beers including Pako's IPA, Zonker Stout, Snake River Pale Ale, Jenny Lake Lager and Monarch Pilsner will be available in restaurants and bars in Salt Lake and Ogden area. Liquor stores could be a next step.

The Town of Alpine applied for and received a \$2,949,425 Business Committed grant from Wyoming Business *continued*

SOMETHING'S BREWING IN WYOMING *continued*

Council to install infrastructure for the expansion of **MELVIN BREWING**. Melvin Brewing's beers, currently available at Thai Me Up Restaurant and Brewery in Jackson, have earned a long list of awards including the industry's top honor this year: Small Brewpub and Small Brewpub of the Year from the Great American Beer Festival.

The grant is paying for construction of a 20,000 square-foot building and utility extensions to the site. Alpine will own the land, building and infrastructure, and develop access to the site. The town will lease the facility to Melvin Brewing. The brewery will increase production with a custom made brewing system. The partnership is expected to work well for both sides. Up to 30 quality jobs and added tax base will strengthen existing community infrastructure, and support future economic development projects.

GRAND TETON DISTILLERY is considering moving its headquarters—currently in Driggs, Idaho—and a production facility to Alpine as well.

Late in 2015, Laramie County received a \$2,859,784 Business Committed grant and a \$557,935 Business Ready Community loan to construct a 20,000 square-foot building for **WYOMING MALTING COMPANY**. The building will include a manufacturing and warehouse facility with business offices. The building will be constructed on a 10-acre parcel in the Pine Bluffs business park located north of town. Cheyenne LEADS will own the facility and lease it to Wyoming Malting Company and **PINE BLUFFS DISTILLING**.

Wyoming Malting Company will be the first craft malt house in Wyoming. The company is hoping to meet the demands of area breweries, possibly including breweries in Wyoming and 200 in Colorado. There are currently only 31 malt companies in the country. The majority of the malt for Wyoming and Colorado is

transported from the northwest, Wisconsin or imported from Canada. **JACKSON HOLE STILL WORKS**, a small batch spirits distiller, indicates they are interested in buying malt from Wyoming Malting as soon as the product is available.

Pine Bluffs Distilling will distill craft whiskey and other spirits with a portion of the malt that is manufactured. Cash flow from the malt house will sustain the distillery while the products age and can ultimately be sold.

Family farms, such as **PURDY FARMS**, will grow the grains used to malt and distill. Additional farms in the Pine Bluffs area have indicated interest in selling grain as needed. Wyoming Malting will have an initial capacity of 600,000 pounds per year which is roughly 64% of the Wyoming market and 1% of the regional market.

Waste products can be used as feed for farm animals.

The company will start out with three full time jobs and plans to increase to nine new quality jobs within five years. The project fits Wyoming Business Council's goals for business development and agricultural diversification particularly well. The business plans to promote agri-tourism by making the facility a destination for visitors. The products will also be marketed as Wyoming-made through the Wyoming First program.

WYOMING WHISKEY continues to develop a reputation, winning five awards in whiskey competitions around the country in 2015. The stamps of approval are a good sign for the company as it continues to ramp up production and make moves to expand its market. The company hired a specialist this year to take a taste of Kirby to the east coast. A tasting room in Jackson will also help take Wyoming Whiskey into

other markets. Products can also be seen in the television show "Longmire."

KOLTISKA, out of Sheridan, has taken a slow and steady attitude about growth since beginning production in 2005. Distribution encompasses Wyoming with fingers of growth into Montana, western Nebraska and other surrounding areas. The liqueur company moved to a new facility this year, nearly doubling the size of the operation. The expansion reflects a new, focused attitude about growth into a more national market.

And, in its first year, **BACKWARDS DISTILLERY** in Mills is making a splash with Ringleader Vodka, Sword Swallower Rum, Contortionist Gin, Strongman Gin and Milk Can Moonshine. The family-run business has grown steadily since opening last January.

The business of happy hour is proving to be a big opportunity for Wyoming entrepreneurs. It offers growth for the individual and benefits several economic sectors. It's an investment to which we can all lift a glass. 🍷



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TAKES CENTER STAGE

This summer, Sheridan hosted the Wyoming Theater Festival. Talent from across the country came to develop plays and perform them in front of the community and out of town guests. It featured four new works by award-winning playwrights carried out by stage actors and directors from New York and Los Angeles working alongside current and former Sheridan College and area high school students. Participants had two weeks to prepare and two weeks' worth of performances.

Sheridan's ultimate goal is to become the premier city for new play development, much as Sundance Film Festival serves as an incubator for new film projects. Sheridan College, Sheridan Economic and Educational Development Authority and Sheridan Travel and Tourism co-sponsored the festival with the **WYO THEATER** providing the venue and box office support. This is just one more step in a new movement to take historic theaters and rehabilitate them as economic development drivers.

The WYO Theater opened in the

1920s as an extravagant movie and Vaudeville theater called the Lotus. Over the years, the building suffered through many thematic changes to both its interior and exterior before closing in 1982. Community volunteers immediately started work to save the building and it reopened as an entertainment center in 1989 with the City of Sheridan as the passive owner and the WYO Theater, Inc. as the tenant and manager. The City has continued to be involved and supportive of the downtown and expanding the arts economy.

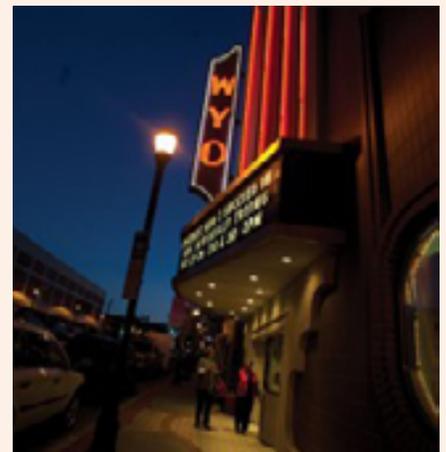
"Sheridan is an arts' community and the WYO project reflects our commitment to that pillar of the economy,"

– Dr. Susan Bigelow

Plans to extend the theater for use by both the community and the college go back many years. The adjacent Perkins Building was purchased by the WYO Theater nonprofit in 2005. In 2011, the WYO Theater donated the building to the City of Sheridan and, with Sheridan College, embarked on a project to renovate the building. Renovation plans evolved into a mostly new building which adjoins the WYO Theater and contains the **MARS BLACK BOX THEATER**, a lobby, nicer restrooms and accessibility considerations. The project was funded by two \$1 million grants from the Wyoming Business Council to the City of Sheridan and a joint fundraising campaign run by the Sheridan College Foundation and the WYO Theater.

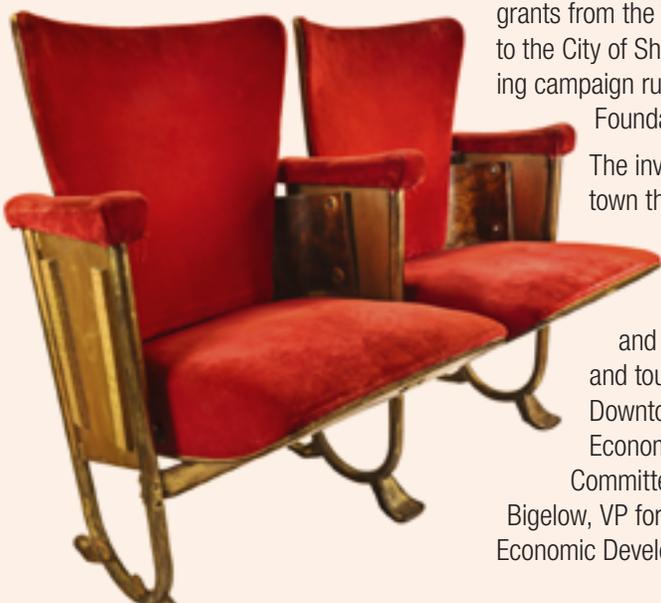
The investment in the downtown theater venue for education and performance has attracted other investment and increased visits and spending by residents and tourists alike. At a recent Downtown Sheridan Association Economic Restructuring Committee meeting, Dr. Susan Bigelow, VP for External Relations and Economic Development, NWCCD, heard

from downtown proponents, business leaders, and residents. The committee members listed numerous downtown buildings that have been renovated and several that will be renovated for upstairs housing. "Their comments and appreciation for the work the City, College and WYO have been doing in the downtown was heartwarming. Their comments demonstrate the impact the WYO Center has on the downtown and the Sheridan economy. Sheridan is an arts community and the WYO project reflects our commitment to that pillar of the economy," says Bigelow.



The City of Sheridan, Sheridan College and the WYO Theater are ready for the next phase. Sheridan College, the current owner of the building to the north of the WYO Theater, is prepared to donate this building to the City of Sheridan in order for it to be incorporated into the WYO Education and Performing Arts Center. In November, the Sheridan Economic and Educational Development Authority Joint Powers board approved \$200,000 in matching fund for the project. The City of Sheridan is submitting a grant application to the Wyoming Business Council for \$2 million. If funding is approved, the building which was built in 1902 as the Bank of Commerce and commonly known as the Hallmark Building, will provide a relocated box office, expanded wing space for the main stage, offices,

continued



WEDA SUCCESS STORIES 2015

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TAKES CENTER STAGE *continued*

a student sound and lighting laboratory, dance rehearsal space, classrooms and the much needed rehearsal space for children's performances, community theater, and Sheridan College's theater program.

"We're working to make downtown a destination again," says Chad Banks, manager of Rock Springs' urban renewal agency.

"Taking a building that had been shuttered for ten years and making it a place where people can gather fits with our mission."

The **ROCK THEATER**, built in 1948, was transformed into a performing arts and cinema venue available for a variety of events in 2012. The city's urban renewal agency manages the facility, renamed the **BROADWAY**, which can be rented out and also brings many professional acts to the stage and screen. The 370 seats retract to open up event space. About 11,000 people walk through the doors each year, attracted by approximately 100 public and private events. The Wyoming Business Council contributed about \$1.4 million to the \$3 million project.

"Walkability is critical for us," says Banks. To be a destination, downtown Rock Springs needed to inspire residents to walk beyond a single store. The URA has coordinated a number of projects including a revamped courtyard, improved building facades, an artwalk in the pedestrian underpass, and rehabilitation of the Bunning Transfer Station. The Broadway is an anchor location on the southeast corner of the district.

Located in the heart of downtown Evanston, saving the **STRAND THEATRE** was imperative for the community. Opened in 1918, the historic Strand Theatre hosted live entertainment as well as motion pictures. The theatre was successful until a fire damaged the building in 2007. The owners of the burned building worked to get it stabilized, but were unable to do more. In 2008, Kim and Kendra West donated it to the Evanston Urban

Renewal Agency. Working together, the URA and Sagebrush Theatre Production received an Our Town grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to create a cultural hub for the community. The project also received a \$1 million in Wyoming Business Council grant funding.



"It was a very controversial project for the Evanston Urban Renewal Agency," says Jane Law, Urban Renewal Coordinator and Main Street Manager. "We stuck with it and now, after seven long years, the door are open, the lights are on and we have had a wonderful, positive, enthusiastic response from the community."

The Strand Theatre reopened as the Evanston Cultural Center in March. In April, a local citizen sponsored a Buddy Holly tribute band from Minneapolis which the theatre for two nights. Both Evanston Children's Theatre and Sagebrush Theatre have performed in the facility. A concert sponsored by The Arts, Inc. and private events are also scheduled for the facility in the near future.

The URA will continue improving The Strand with a sound system and movie equipment. Sagebrush Theatre has received a grant from the Wyoming Community Foundation for lighting. Improvements are also being funded

with seat sponsorships. Over eighty chairs have been sponsored so far by supportive community members.

The **ATLAS THEATRE** in Cheyenne has been used as a community events space for decades as a way for Cheyenne Little Theatre Players to raise additional funds. In the past few years, rentals and special events sponsored by CLTP have increased. Concerts, comedy acts, fundraisers and weddings are common in the building. CLTP also participates in downtown events like Cheyenne International Film Festival and ZombieFest. It holds several sell out viewings of Rocky Horror Picture Show each year. The Ozymandian comedy troupe also calls The Atlas home.



Sparked by the donation of air conditioning by a sweaty but loyal Old Fashioned Melodrama patron, a new round of renovations have made the space more attractive to mainstream events. Both the lobby and auditorium have received new paint; the bright colors of the Pink Pony Nightclub are now part of a palette more suitable to the history of the building. The façade and upper floors are next on CLTP's list of projects.

For years, many people in Casper have wanted **THE IRIS** to serve as a downtown civic auditorium. This year, with a new movie complex coming to the community, the owners of The Iris decide to close its doors. With the downtown plaza

continued

WEDA SUCCESS STORIES 2015

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TAKES CENTER STAGE *continued*

developing right next door, Citizens for a Civic Auditorium purchased The Iris in September. Private donations, including one very large contribution at the end, made the purchase possible.

The performance space is expected to seat 1,150 people and the group hopes to attract Artcore, the Wyoming Symphony Orchestra, the Casper Chamber Music Society, schools and other education organizations to the building. The nonprofit's next step is to update plans and raise the funds necessary for construction. The timeline for the project is three to five years.

As with every movement, developers need to analyze need and potential return before acting. **CODY THEATRE** is bucking the trend by turning its performance space back into a movie theater. Dan Miller's

Cowboy Music Revue played at Cody Theatre six nights a week for eight summers. In 2016, the show will move to the spacious performing space at the Buffalo Bill Center of the West. Management at Cody Theatre looked at the needs of the community and decided affordable and niche entertainment was needed. Starting in the spring of 2016, the theatre will show cult classics, older new releases, and special event screenings for holidays and local festivals. The stage will remain in place for occasional live performances.

With Wyoming's downtowns staged for new development, culture as part of a thriving economy is proving to be a major player. Preserving key buildings of a community, attracting local and out-of-town visitors, and revitalizing struggling areas are important reasons for ACTION! 🎭



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