

SUCCESS STORIES 2017

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

PHOTO: MICHAEL GÄBLER

Economic diversification is critical to the future of Wyoming's economy and it is the goal of the ENDOW Initiative. The Wyoming Economic Development Association and the Wyoming Business Council are working with economic developers, stakeholders, business and community leaders throughout the state of Wyoming in support of diversification and expansion projects. It is important to look ahead with clear vision. Simultaneously, we must acknowledge successes throughout the state so that we can build on their momentum.

As the ENDOW Executive Council released their preliminary report in December 2017, they identified several economic engines necessary for diversification including: Data/Service IT, Advanced Manufacturing, Agriculture, Energy, Tourism, and Innovation/Entrepreneurism. Businesses in these sectors are thriving in Wyoming and with the right financing and business assistance have been able to launch, grow, and expand. We have included some of their stories here, demonstrating the power of these partnerships and what can be achieved by actively supporting businesses in our state.

We have also profiled communities who have used quality of life projects to attract the younger generation and spur economic growth. While some areas of the state are losing the youth population, areas like Evanston are attracting them - in part, because of investments made in the town itself. These projects and the contribution of the nonprofit sector are an essential part of what draws people to Wyoming. They will be necessary for continuing to attract new businesses and people to our state.

2017 was a year of unprecedented collaboration. Stakeholders throughout the state worked with the ENDOW Executive Council, and also together. Nothing demonstrates the power of collaboration more clearly than the Department of Education's Career Readiness Initiative. Constant collaboration with businesses at the micro-level has enabled the Department of Education to create a dynamic and responsive workforce education program that is preparing our students to participate in the economy of the future. These types of collaborations will be an integral part of Wyoming's economic diversification initiatives and together, as a community, we can continue to drive Wyoming's economy forward into a more prosperous future.

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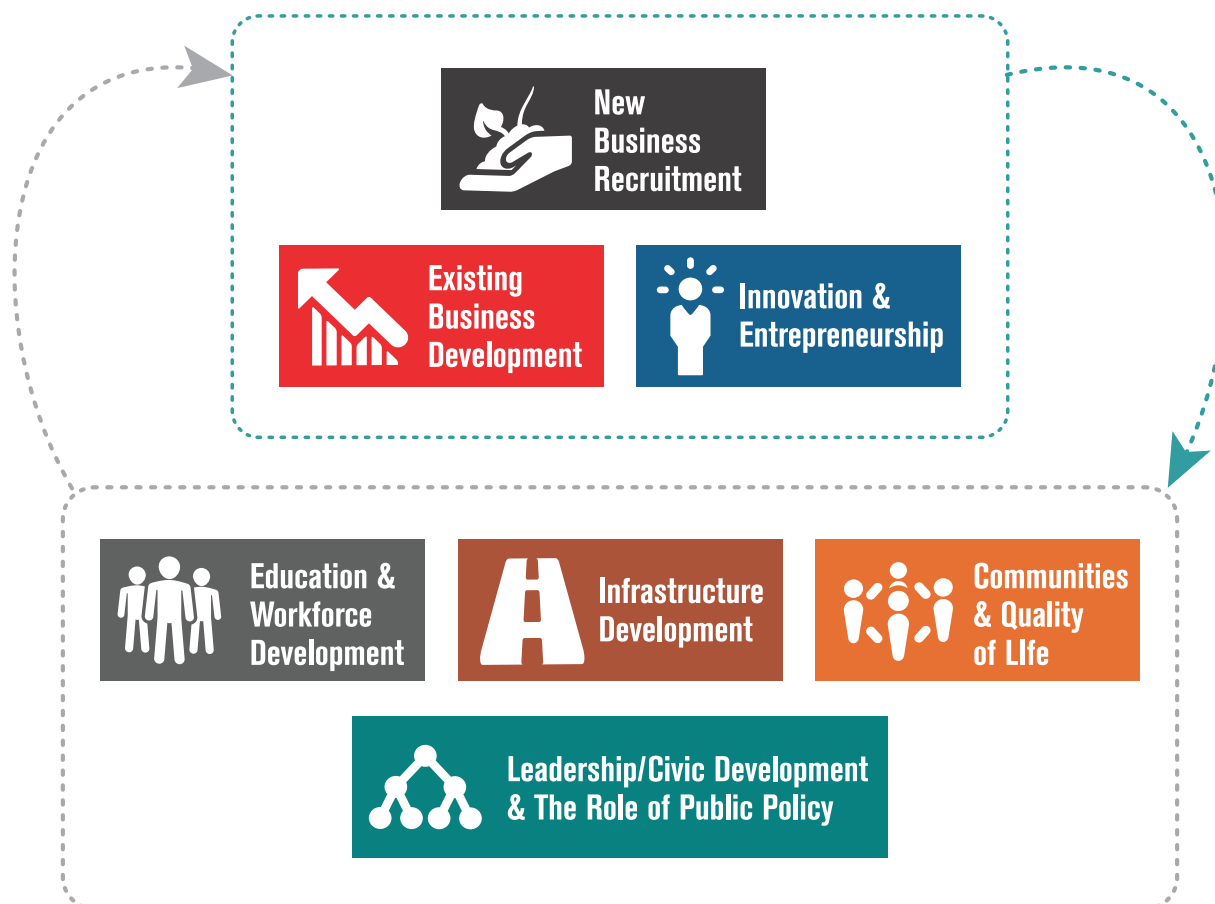
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BUILDING BLOCKS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Cycles of Development

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WEDA SUCCESS STORIES 2017

ALBANY COUNTY, *Laramie*

ENTREPRENEUR DEVELOPMENT

With the assistance of the Wyoming Small Business Development Center Network and the Wyoming SBIR/STTR Initiative (WSSI), AirLoom Energy has now received nearly \$1 million in contracts and grants. AirLoom Energy is putting Wyoming on the map for its new methods in harvesting wind energy. WSSI helped the company to obtain a \$5,000 start-up contract, a \$225,000 National Science Foundation (NSF) small business innovation research grant and an additional \$750,000 grant from the NSF.

“AirLoom Energy’s innovative wind technology replaces the massive steel structures of traditional turbines with lightweight, advanced materials that lower the production and transportation costs,” said Kelly Haigler Cornish, WSSI Program Manager. “High-tech innovative companies like AirLoom Energy are key to solving some of our nation’s pressing issues while helping Wyoming diversify its economy.”

EXISTING BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Alpenglow Instruments has received a grant to change the way water is measured in our atmosphere. The latest funding from the Department of Energy is for more than \$1 million and was obtained with assistance from the Wyoming SBIR/STTR Initiative (WSSI), a service of the Wyoming Small Business Development Center Network. WSSI also helped Alpenglow Instruments secure a \$224,000 grant in 2016 as well as \$10,000 in contracts.

Alpenglow Instruments developed a benchtop prototype in the first part of their research and now are working on the design, development, and flight testing of an All-Phase Water probe suitable for deployment on a manned aircraft. They will later adapt the probe design for use on unmanned aerial vehicles. “The simultaneous measurement of all three phases of water—vapor, liquid, and ice—is one of those ‘holy grail’ measurements in the atmospheric science community,” says Perry Wechsler, the Chief Executive Officer at Alpenglow Instruments.

EXISTING BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

With assistance from the Wyoming Small Business Development Center Network’s WSSI Program, Teton Composites, Inc. has been awarded a National Science Foundation Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) grant for more than \$200,000. The grant will allow Teton Composites to conduct research and develop innovative software to strengthen 3D printing materials. “NSF’s SBIR program provides a critical foundation for jump-starting technology driven companies that simply could not launch otherwise,” says Andrew Hansen, Teton Composites Research and Development Director. “We feel truly fortunate to be afforded the opportunity to advance our company under the NSF-SBIR umbrella of support.”

CAMPBELL COUNTY, *Gillette*

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

A recent grant from the Wyoming Business Council is helping Energy Capital Economic Development realize its dream of building an Advanced Carbon Products Innovation

Center (ACPIC) in Gillette. The grant gave Economic Development the funds it needed to buy the property. The agency is currently working with the city, county and potential tenants on building design, and one tenant is already committed to occupying space in ACPIC.

The ACPIC is a key element in Energy Capital Economic Development's mission to "stimulate and facilitate a diverse economy." In a county whose economy is heavily dependent on coal, finding new uses for that resource is critical to the economic future of the area. Potential new uses abound—carbon fiber, asphalt, fuels of all types, activated carbon, char for agricultural use and much more.

ACPIC will create a place where these potential uses can be tested on a small, pre-commercial plant-size level. This will be a place where research can be taken from the lab and be proven to be commercially viable. The next step would be a commercial manufacturing plant to make the product. The result would be a more diverse economy that strengthens the existing coal mining industry—a big win for the future of Campbell County and its citizens.

EXISTING BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Pizza Carrello in Gillette is already experiencing huge success after expanding to their current size, but Co-owner Ariane Jimison says she wouldn't have taken that next step if it weren't for encouragement from her Wyoming Small Business Development Center advisor Susan Jerke. Jimison and Rachel Kalenburg met with the SBDC to learn everything they needed to grow their business from a food cart to a full-sized restaurant. They especially credit the social media assistance they received with their early success.

By design, owners Jimison and Kalenburg are the lowest paid members of the Pizza Carrello staff, including the dishwashers. The business not only provides good paying jobs for their 27 employees, but also gives back. They have donated over \$30,000 worth of pizza to community organizations to date. Pizza Carrello has done so well, that the owners are considering expanding again and possibly franchising.

CROOK COUNTY, *Sundance*

ENTREPRENEUR DEVELOPMENT

A recent grant from the Wyoming Business Council is helping Just a few short months after opening its doors, Joni J's Bar and Grill has become a popular community gathering place in Sundance, WY. Owners Joni and Bob Latham host various events from banquets and karaoke nights to Halloween parties and volleyball team meet-and-greets. The restaurant has 20 employees and offers comfort food and old-fashioned specials at affordable prices. The Lathams met with the Wyoming Small Business Development Center to learn how to navigate challenges like inventory control, initial promotion, and how to create a business plan and cash-flow projections. After purchasing the former Aro Café, the couple completed extensive remodeling to create an atmosphere that is appealing to the locals and tourists of the area.

FREMONT COUNTY, *Lander*

ENTREPRENEUR DEVELOPMENT

A skilled contractor with a degree in landscape architecture, Adam Crenshaw saw almost immediate success when he started Crenshaw Craftsmanship in Lander. Crenshaw worked with Sarah Hamlin at the Wyoming Small Business Development Center to start the company. Hamlin also helped him with website development and sorting through financial matters. Crenshaw is now hoping to expand his operation. In addition to general construction work, Crenshaw Craftsmanship also develops comprehensive landscape plans which can be implemented in different stages. Crenshaw also makes custom furniture.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

The Lander Economic Development Association (LEDA) and Union Wireless celebrated a milestone with the connection of a second, and redundant, fiber optic line into the city. "This connection gives other providers a choice and a guarantee that they won't have any interruption in service," said Brian Woody, chief of customer relations with Union Wireless. Prior to Wednesday's connection, the only broadband service out of Lander went through Hudson and Riverton to a main fiber line to Casper. Any break in that line would interrupt Internet and wireless services. The new line connects Lander with a fiber line from Rawlins, that connects with another major line along I-80. "We needed a place for a hub, and the new LEDA Enterprise Park fit the bill," said LEDA board member Cade Maestas. "Tonight is the kickoff for this Enterprise Park, which is being leased from the State of Wyoming for an initial term of 30 years," he said.

ENTREPRENEUR DEVELOPMENT

Slow Goat Farm is a micro-dairy in Lander that started off with a small herd of Nigerian Dwarf goats, a cow named Bessie and a few sheep. The name comes from the slow food movement which encourages sustainable farming and traditional cuisine. To make sure their business didn't get off to a slow start, Lindsey Washkoviak and Ben Elzay met with Sarah Hamlin at the Wyoming Small Business Development Center. The SBDC helped the two farmers with the entire start-up process. To ensure success, Hamlin continued to offer advice on bookkeeping, inventory tracking systems and social media strategies. The farm specializes in cheese with flavorings like garlic, lemon mint and honey cinnamon. The next steps for Slow Goat Farm might include expanding production, adding sheep milk cheese to its offerings and possible commercial certification.

Dubois

EXISTING BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

A combination of glamorous accommodations and camping, Glamping on the River is the brainchild of Claudia Janiszewski and Dave Morris of Dubois. Taking advantage of the tourism hotspots in the area, the two found a way to expand their idea for supplemental income after meeting with Sarah Hamlin, their local

Wyoming Small Business Development Center business advisor. Hamlin helped the couple to create a website for guests to book their stay and educated them on the ins and outs of running a business. Glamping on the River now has five lodging options available to tourists along the Wind River, including a 1957 retro camper-trailer and two cabins. In addition to fresh mountain air, guest have access to fishing, bicycles, barbecue grills, electricity, and wi-fi connectivity. Janiszewski says her company wouldn't be where it is now without the help of Hamlin and the SBDC.

Shoshoni

EXISTING BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

When Tom Henderson's home was destroyed in a fire, all he had to his name was a tool box, an old Buick and his dog, Ding-Dong. So, he decided to do what he knew best and began repairing vehicles for friends and a few others out of a small garage in Riverton. As his customer base grew, he moved to a barn outside of Riverton and then to his current location in Shoshoni. To keep up with his growing business, Henderson approached the Wyoming Small Business Development Center. SBDC advisors Sarah Hamlin and Bruce Morse helped Henderson with recordkeeping, a business plan, financial projections and exploring local parts vendor options. Tom's Auto is now debt free and has two contract employees, so Henderson is on the lookout for ways to expand his services to the Shoshoni community. He has purchased two tow trucks—providing a service that previously had to come from 20 miles away—and offers tires and used vehicles for sale.

GOSHEN COUNTY

LEADERSHIP AND PUBLIC POLICY

In 2017, Goshen County Economic Development Corporation and Goshen County Chamber of Commerce and Visitor's Center merged under one umbrella including the services of the Brand Management for Tourism Promotion through the Lodging Tax Board. It took the leadership of several organizations to come together and figure out what was BEST for our community with the Chamber of Commerce merger. As Goshen County's Commissioner Wally Wolski says, "timing is everything". As of January 1st, this new organization became a one stop shop for all business and community needs. They have embraced a 360-degree focus on businesses from start-up, to retention, expansion, and everything in between. The Chamber arm continues to assist businesses with promotional activities for business and tourism while economic development has stayed focused on leadership, infrastructure development, quality of life issues, grant management, and business recruitment in the Goshen Enterprise Center. This expanded network brings strength to their members and truly embodies their NEW mission – "To cultivate boundless opportunity for our business and community".

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Goshen County Economic Development completed a Hotel Feasibility Study. They were awarded a grant allowing them to complete an environmental assessment for redevelopment

of a blighted property on Main Street. They are pleased to announce they were able to assist the developers in prepping this brownfield site on Main Street for the future new home of a three story, 54-room Cobblestone Hotel. The addition of this \$5.8M property will bring 12 new jobs and have an economic impact of \$435K in tax revenues for the state and \$315K for the City over a five-year period.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

GCEDC recruited two new broadband providers to their Main Street area, Vista Beam and Visionary. These two providers bring more options in wireless capacity for the residents and businesses of Goshen County.

LEADERSHIP AND PUBLIC POLICY

Goshen County rolled out a new brand in 2017. Thanks to Wyoming Business Council, they were able to use planning grant funds and include the entire community in a "research and planning" phase. Their new strategic platform is intended to generate a brand position in the minds of residents, visitors and businesses. We are continuing to create a compelling identity with a new website for goshenwyo.com and will soon be rolling out our new marketing branded materials in early 2018.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Goshen County Economic Development continues to beat the drum for the Eastern Wyoming College (EWC) Agricultural Technology Education Center (ATEC) as AG is the backbone of their economy. GCEDC assisted with securing \$1.5M in grant funding from WEDA for this \$8M facility. Set to break ground in 2018, it will include the addition of a Veterinary Technology program. This addition makes it the largest Ag program for all community colleges in the state of Wyoming and provide boundless opportunities to shape Wyoming's youth and workforce.

JOHNSON COUNTY

LEADERSHIP AND PUBLIC POLICY

Johnson County was one of three areas in the country showcased through a virtual reality video at the International Economic Development Council's Annual Conference in Toronto, Ontario Canada. JOCO First, Johnson County's economic development organization, partnered with Golden Shovel Agency to produce the ten-minute virtual reality video. The video will be utilized as a virtual familiarization tour for site selectors and businesses exploring Johnson County as a location for an expansion or relocation project. Dave Simonsen, JOCO First CEO, stated, "It is not every day that an organization gets the opportunity to be on the cutting edge of a technology, so when I was presented with this opportunity, it not only fit my marketing plan and budget, but I feel that the technology is going to disrupt how things are done in the economic development industry."

LARAMIE COUNTY, *Cheyenne*

ENTREPRENEUR DEVELOPMENT

Sarah McKinney is using her creativity and passion for organization to help clients bring order to their chaos. Sarah McKinney, LLC utilizes McKinney's degree in interior design to offer a wide range of professional organizing services. McKinney sought help navigating the start-up process from John Privette, the Wyoming Small Business Development Center's regional director for Laramie and Goshen counties. Together, they organized an in-depth business plan.

Now, McKinney helps her customers best determine how to achieve maximum the efficiency and appeal of their spaces. Whether her clients need to declutter their lives, renew the look of their workspace or stage a home for sale, McKinney provides detailed plans to accomplish their goals. She also offers completely-online E-Organizing services to create a plan of action without ever having stepped foot into the space.

Pine Bluffs

ENTREPRENEUR DEVELOPMENT

Ray Gamel, co-owner of Das Schnuffel Haus, says almost everyone in Pine Bluffs has a dog. When residents of the town are travelling, there is a need to board their companions. To bring a unique, high-quality boarding experience to the community, Ray and his wife, Uschi Erdmann-Gamel, visited the Wyoming Small Business Development Center and began the process of starting their business. Business Advisor John Privette was able to help the couple navigate the entire start-up process. "I believe people get in trouble when they think they can do it all on their own," Ray says. "The template [SBDC] has was absolutely ideal, and especially the financial spreadsheet. It saved me a lot of time."

Das Schnuffel Haus (the Puppy House, in German) consists of five 50-square-foot indoor kennels with temperature-controlled floors. Open air areas and a dog run are also available. The couple say they are happy to provide whatever special foods, medications and toys that dog owners might bring along to make their pet's stay as pleasant as possible.

Entrepreneur Development/Infrastructure Development

The town of Pine Bluffs is experiencing the taste of economic development success – literally. A new business Wyoming Malting/Pine Bluffs Distilling, began operations in the late fall of 2017 and they have their first vodka, Rock Ranch Vodka, on the market. Pine Bluffs Distilling was born in a garage. Home-brewer Chad Brown was talking malt with his cousin Gene Purdy, a farmer. Wyoming had a burgeoning craft beer and spirits scene, but the cost of shipping malt was high. They realized that it would be a great business opportunity if Wyoming spirits could be made with grain straight from local farms. Together with their Aunt, Kathy Brown, they founded Wyoming Malting Company and Pine Bluffs Distilling. The mission: to deliver quality malt while also distilling and distributing premium local spirits so everyone—in Wyoming and beyond—can taste the farm-to-distillery difference.

Wyoming Malting teamed up with Cheyenne LEADS and Laramie County who applied for an \$3.4M infrastructure grant and loan package for the facility through the Wyoming Business Council's Business Ready Community Grant program. Cheyenne LEADS owns the land and the building, and has a lease-to-purchase agreement with the company.

LINCOLN COUNTY, *Bedford*

EXISTING BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Stone Imaging provides custom carved stone for clients throughout the United States. The company's founder, Catherine Lay, worked with Robert Condie from the Wyoming Small Business Development Center to revise her business plan and financial projections. With market data in hand, the SBDC was able to help her secure financing to purchase specialized equipment and bring her skills to projects throughout the nation. Lay can work with virtually any stone and etch custom images into it or stain it to match any project. She also has over 100 designs customers can choose from.

NATRONA COUNTY, *Casper*

ENTREPRENEUR DEVELOPMENT

Just two years after opening their doors, Intermountain Home Companions now has 35 employees dedicated to improving the quality of life for many Wyoming seniors and those with health problems. It was the 25-year dream of Rachael Bickels, a registered nurse with a Master's Degree in Nursing, to own a business that brings medicine back to the bedside. Intermountain Home Companions works with local health providers to bring modern, holistic and collaborative care to patients.

Bickels worked with Cindy Unger at the Wyoming Small Business Development Center to navigate financing requirements, legal issues and business planning. Rachael says that her greatest reward is to have started a company that makes a difference in the lives of their clients.

ENTREPRENEUR DEVELOPMENT

Maegan Wittke's passion for fashion started her on the path to entrepreneurship. She attended Casper College to study retail merchandising, completed a business plan, received a Bachelor Degree in Business Management from the University of Mary and then approached the Wyoming Small Business Development Center (SBDC) for help. There, she discovered information about many free resources available statewide to assist entrepreneurs. "Maegan was one of the most enthusiastic clients I've worked with. She had great passion for her idea," said Cindy Unger, SBDC Business Advisor. She then approached Hilltop Bank and worked with Luke Carlson on a SBA 7(a) loan. With necessary funding in-hand, Maegan opened Rubenesque in 2014. The store was initially located in a shared retail space at 604 South Durbin. A year later, Maegan was ready to expand and the business

relocated to the Wolcott Galleria. "Opening Rubenesque has been my dream for a long time," Maegan said. The store focuses on plus size clothing, jewelry and purses but has a selection of fashion for women of all sizes.

PARK COUNTY

LEADERSHIP AND PUBLIC POLICY

Healthcare benefits are a significant part of employee compensation packages and critical to worker recruitment and retention for many Wyoming small businesses. In Park County, businesses have been presented with alternative options when it comes to supplying healthcare benefits. Local economic developers, Powell Economic Partnership, Powell Chamber, Forward Cody and the Cody Chamber partnered with Northwest College Center for Training & Development to open dialogue around creative solutions for employers and healthcare benefits and the event was attended by 61 people, including the business and technical experts.

A local small business owner with 9 full-time employees, Jenni Rosencranse, co-owner of Roger's Sports Center in Cody, stated, "As a small business owner for 18 years and one who has provided a group insurance program to our employees for the past 16 years, this year we have found ourselves to be at a crossroads for Health Insurance for our employees! When I walked into the meeting, I didn't know what to expect, but I was hopeful as I have been very skeptical of our ability to continue this benefit for our 9 full-time employees in our business. When I walked out, I felt more than hope, I felt that I will be able to find a solution to my issue and to continue to provide "livable wages and benefits" to our employees."

The evening concluded with the knowledge that there are choices available for Wyoming small businesses. These alternative solutions may not work for every business, but there are options.

Powell

EXISTING BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

When presented with an opportunity to purchase the K-Bar Saloon in Powell, Amy Cozzens knew there was no better way to put her seven years of bartending experience to use. She says it was an eye-opening experience when she learned what really goes into running a business. Thankfully, Cozzens had the expertise of Wyoming Small Business Development Center business advisor Cindy Unger to make sense out of everything.

After several months of sales negotiations and business planning, the deal finally closed. So far, business is going great for Cozzens. She has seen success with her efforts to keep a familiar atmosphere for regular customers while also attracting a younger crowd.

Cody

ENTREPRENEUR DEVELOPMENT

Saber Pest Control's owner, Shane Wagner, says he is experiencing extraordinary early success. After only seven months in business,

the U.S. Army veteran already has a client base of more than 100 customers and exceeded his annual goals for both revenue and customer numbers. Wagner worked with the Wyoming Small Business Development Center advisor Bruce Morse throughout the start-up process. Pest Control now helps customers throughout the Big Horn Basin, from Cody to Greybull, and Lovell to Thermopolis. Wagner continues to work with the SBDC as he considers expanding his operations while still providing excellent service to his customers.

PLATTE COUNTY,

Chugwater

ENTREPRENEUR DEVELOPMENT

Two historical buildings in Chugwater, previously used as a co-op store, creamery and meat market, have a new unified purpose as home to the Stampede Saloon and Eatery. The distinctive story of the building adds to the unique atmosphere of the space. Lance and Lilly Nilson and Merwyn and Margie Nilson opened the restaurant with the idea of blending "comfort food" with live music to recreate the old country dance hall experience. The Nilsons worked with John Privette at the Wyoming Small Business Development Center to create a business plan that resulted in them obtaining debt financing to acquire the business. The owners say that their customers love the feel of the Stampede Saloon and Eatery and that the food and entertainment have been the best advertising they could have.

SHERIDAN COUNTY,

Sheridan

ENTREPRENEUR DEVELOPMENT

As a financial planner in Sheridan, Shelley Born noticed a particular need for skilled services that are provided by home health care agencies. To fill that niche, she worked with the Wyoming Small Business Development Center to develop a new business, Devoted to Home, LLC. SBDC business advisor Susan Jerke provided start-up assistance and worked with Shelley to refine their logo for print and website applications. Within five months of opening its doors, Devoted to Home already has 14 employees and is advertising for additional help. Born says she enjoys using her skills to help her community in a new way. She also places importance on coaching her younger employees on life skills and work ethic.

SWEETWATER COUNTY,

Green River

EXISTING BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Mark and Amy Hlad started Hydrafab, LLC in June of 2007 in New Mexico. In 2011, they moved their company from New Mexico to Green River, Wyoming. They needed room to grow

and the best option was to build a new facility in Wyoming. Most lenders wanted a 25%-30% down payment but Mountain West Small Business Finance, an SBA 504 lender, and Zion's Bank approved the financing with only a 10% down payment. This allowed them to save their cash to use towards hiring new employees and growing the business. Judd Blakesley, Loan Officer/Vice President, Mountain West Small Business Finance stated, "Mark and Amy are exceptional owners. Mark actually goes to every job site and sees firsthand how the mining company operates so that he can provide repairs and enhanced replacement products that will last longer and perform better. Amy, his wife and co-owner is just as involved in running the office and handling the financials. As a lender it gave me a lot of confidence in their growth as a company because they knew their product and how to grow."

Amy advised, "We were not successful in finding financing without the SBA Guarantee after reaching out to multiple local banks. The 504 was perfect for us because we only had to put 10% down, which allowed us to leave more working capital in the business to reach our growth goals, while at the same time invest in the commercial property." Hydrafab stays connected to the community primarily through the Green River Chamber of Commerce and provides donations to help support community events. The company has been the host of several chamber community tour groups like the State Chamber of Commerce and has hosted Wyoming Governor Matt Mead and other elected officials to a tour and question and answer session. Hydrafab likes to help support events like the Memorial Hospital Gala fundraiser.

EXISTING BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Owning a garden center in Wyoming usually means a limited window for business, but Riverside Nursery in Green River is blossoming despite that limitation. Owner Laura Owens recently acquired the nursery that she had worked at for many years. To make the transition from employee to owner, she contacted Robert Condie, her local business advisor at the Wyoming Small Business Development Center. They helped Owens to revise her business plan and put together financial projects, all of which helped her to secure a loan. Condie also reached out to the lender to help the process move forward. With one gardening season already in the books, Riverside Nursery is expecting to flourish for years to come.

TETON COUNTY, *Jackson*

ENTREPRENEUR DEVELOPMENT

Madelaine German is a musician and music teacher, but now she can add music video star and business owner to her resume thanks to help from the Wyoming Small Business Development Center. SBDC advisors met with German to create Maddy's Music and to design a crowdfunding campaign to produce an original music video filmed in Wyoming. German's high-quality music video features Baby Ask, a song written and performed by her band the Groove Spots. The crowdfunding project on Kickstarter surpassed its goal and received more than \$10,000 in support from 113 backers. The final product can be seen at babyaskfilm.com.

EXISTING BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Square One Systems Design was selected by the U.S. Department of Energy to commercialize a revolutionary new type of X-ray detection technology which companies can use to develop new drugs and make better semiconductor circuits. The Wyoming Small Business Development Center and the Wyoming SBIR/STTR Initiative were able to connect the company with the resources they needed to secure this opportunity. "From an economic diversification standpoint, this is probably the best opportunity we've come across in 16 years," says Robert Viola, Square One Director of Engineering. "In terms of the potential for creating high-tech jobs in Wyoming, I think this is about as good as it gets."

Square One will combine specialized X-ray components with sophisticated positioning mechanisms into a unit roughly the size of a desktop printer. The goal is to provide a "turnkey" solution that scientists and engineers can plug directly into their experiments. Square One will work on the associated positioning technology, packaging, and ultimately bringing the device to market.

UINTA COUNTY, *Evanston*

ENTREPRENEUR DEVELOPMENT/QUALITY OF LIFE

Jocelyn Anderson and Holly Swensen worked for their mother's daycare for a couple of years before starting their own in-home daycare businesses. Three years later, they decided to open a preschool/daycare together and in August 2011, Shooting Stars Children's Center opened their doors to families in Evanston, Wyoming. According to Kevin Kallas, AVP/Commercial Loan Officer, 1st State Bank, "Jocelyn and Holly had lots of experience working for their mother, but none running their own business, so this was considered a start-up. The bank would not have been able to help them purchase the building they are currently in without the SBA Guarantee."

When asked about obstacles overcome, Jocelyn replied, "Being working mothers is obstacle enough and with eleven children between the two of us, things can get pretty hectic." "We truly enjoy working with children of all ages and being part of their growth, but neither of us was familiar with the loan side of things to get the business up and running." The sisters started by asking a lot of questions, weighing their options and then creating a business plan. "Kevin Kallas helped us get on the right track," Holly said. Kevin assisted Jocelyn and Holly in obtaining an SBA guaranteed loan in the amount of \$170,000. "The birth of a new business in Evanston and the realization of Jocelyn and Holly's dream happened because of the SBA guarantee." Today, four years later, they are running a profitable and very successful business of their very own." said Kevin Kallas, AVP/Commercial Loan Officer, 1st State Bank, Division of Glacier Bank.

VACUTECH CHOSE TO MANUFACTURE IN WYOMING



EXISTING BUSINESS

DEVELOPMENT/INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Vacutec, a manufacturer of industrial commercial vacuum systems, has been growing in Sheridan. They currently employ 156 people and are continuing to expand in the area. The company was started by two brothers, John and Tom Tucker, whose father was in the business of designing commercial vacuum systems. The two brothers came together twenty years ago to specialize in the manufacturing of custom commercial vacuum systems for car washes. As the car wash industry has grown, so has their business.

CUSTOMIZED IN-HOUSE SOLUTIONS

What makes Vacutec stand out from their competition is that they create customized solutions for every client. This means that if someone needs fifty hose drops or five – Vacutec can deliver. With an in-house design team, customers approach them with specific requests or zoning guidelines that must be met, and a solution is created for them. This means that if a vacuum system must be a certain height or hurricane safe, Vacutec can design it for those specific city or county zoning requirements. This has earned them a national reputation – one that has kept customers coming back.

They are also willing to go the extra mile. When Clark County, Nevada (home to Las Vegas) passed an ordinance requiring vacuum systems to be manufactured by someone with a specific welding certificate, they got the certification. This willingness to work hard, go the extra mile, and customized solutions is something that their Wyoming workers are happy to do. It's part of their work ethic.

WHY WYOMING?

Vacutec moved to Wyoming in 2012 from Colorado. They chose Sheridan because Wyoming is an incredible place to do business. Donald J. Parrott, Controller of Vacutec, said, "The City of Sheridan has been very supportive. It couldn't be better – honestly. This is a very positive place to have a business since the government does not have aggressive or unnecessary regulations, and the regu-

lators they do have are reasonable. We also benefit from having no sales tax on the manufacturing equipment we purchase. That represents a significant savings."

There is also an inbuilt local workforce that has made it possible for Vacutec to hire skilled employees. Those going through the welding and CAD programs at Sheridan College have been an excellent fit for the company. "Wyoming is a very business-friendly state, but it is also a good place to hire people because employees are solid workers and responsible. Because of this, we are planning to stay here and grow where we are."

FUTURE PLANS AND GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

The industry expects 2,500 car washes to be built in the U.S. in the next few years. Consolidation of mom and pop car washes is also creating the need to renovate existing car washes to match national or regional brands. Vacutec has a strong foothold in both of these areas and is primed to capture the additional business. To accommodate their growth, Vacutec is working with the City of Sheridan to build a second 40,000-square-foot facility. The City applied for a grant and loan program through the State Loan and Investment Board. It was approved and will allow the city to build a facility for Vacutec to lease for five years, at which point they will purchase the building. This will allow them to consolidate several satellite locations and bring workers under one roof. By making the company more efficient, it will become easier to continue their growth pattern – something that is beneficial for the company, the city, and the local workforce.

Vacutec is a solid company that has built a strong national reputation. The support they have received from the City and State has made it easier for them to grow and will continue to play a role in their success. As Mr. Parrott said, "Sometimes businesses just need the government to stay out of the way. In Wyoming, they understand that. It is a breath of fresh air doing business here." When asked if the state could do anything to make it easier for their business and he said, "Keep doing what you're doing."



QUALITY OF LIFE

Sundance is a charming town, steeped in history and an integral part of the Black Hills region but for years it has been missing something – a plan for economic growth. Without a clear path forward, things have remained relatively the same. Now, they are planning their comeback. As Kathy Lenz, Sundance Clerk and Treasurer, said, “We have been sleepy in NE Wyoming for the past ten years, never having enough staff or funding. That is changing because we decided to push the ball forward. We only have ten full time staff in the entire town but that hasn’t stopped us. Our little band of people has made great strides and the folks who live here are excited about it.” The linchpin in their efforts is the Old Stoney project, something they hope to have complete by Spring 2019.

Old Stoney is a vacant building that once stood as a beacon of hope and the future economic growth in the region. In the 1920’s, it was a state-of-the-art school for boys and girls that featured luxuries like indoor locker rooms and a gymnasium. In documents from the period the superintendent told the community that to grow, “we need to educate our children.” Now, Old Stoney can be part of the areas’ economic growth again. When the renovations are complete it will become the new home of the Crook County Museum, have meeting and event spaces, retail, and office space. It is key to the development of Sundance’s Main Street and will be a significant economic driver as people come throughout the region to hold meetings and events in this charming Western town. Ms. Lenz said, “The Museum and Old Stoney are a huge calling card for businesses in our community. It is the cornerstone of our plans for economic growth and revitalization. It will make Sundance a center for people to come and have meetings, gatherings, and weddings in the beautiful Black Hills.”

They have secured a \$2.45 million State Lands and Investments Board grant to start the project. In addition, they have torn down

a vacant building and seeded the lot where a new park is going to be built. It will feature a band stand, splash pad, and outdoor gathering spaces for the community and visitors to enjoy.

A HOME FOR THE CROOK COUNTY MUSEUM

The Museum was initially founded in the 1920s. It moved to the basement of the courthouse in the 60’s and they are ready for a new, larger facility. Home to over 14,000 artifacts, the Crook County Museum tells the story of Sundance and the entire Black Hills Region. It is alive with history, a place where school children come to learn and connect with their heritage, and the base for outreach programs that take Museum Director Rocky Courchaine throughout the region.

“History does not have state lines. People come to the Black Hills and they want to see Wild Bill and Calamity Jane. We have that here. We have stories, history, artifacts... We are a region up here and state lines don’t mean anything. Our history is part of the region and the Wild West history. Because of that, the Museum has the opportunity to attract people from multiple states to Sundance” said Director Courchaine. Sundance was one of the last places to be settled in the region. When Casper and Cheyenne were thriving, settlers in Sundance were still fighting Native Americans. Because of that, the Wild West history is rich and deep with families still bringing artifacts to the museum. Now, all they need is a bigger home so that they can expand their reach and become a greater tourism draw.

GETTING STARTED

The Old Stoney project has been in the works since the building was saved from demolition in the 1980’s. Since then, the town has hoped it would become home to the Museum but there was never enough funding to make it happen. Sometimes communities need outside assistance.



INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY SERVICES: A LOCAL SUCCESS STORY

EXISTING BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Medicine Bow Technologies is a thriving company in Laramie, serving customers in rural Wyoming and as far away as California. Innovation and out of the box thinking is what led to the creation of Medicine Bow Technologies. After all, they started as the IT group at Iverson Memorial Hospital. Someone came up with the great idea of turning a cost center into a profit maker and the company was born in 2006.

Laramie has been a fantastic place for them to launch because they became part of the Wyoming Technology Business Center incubator, giving them a home-base to grow and expand from. The University provided a launch pad, the hospital helped to fund them, but company growth has been quite organic. Initially, they started providing technical services to local companies, helping to install servers, fix IT problems, and solve IT emergencies, etc. Then, they expanded into Carbon County, Sheridan, and all throughout the state. If you ask Shaun Bullock, Chief Business Development Officer, what they specialize in, he will say, "Rural Wyoming." Medicine Bow Technologies has focused on serving all of rural Wyoming and is not deviating from that mission. If

they need to put an office in a new location, they will, and recently have done so by opening a location in Casper.

They also purchased another IT company out of Cheyenne which has brought their current active customers up to 200. Two years ago, they only had 50, proving that there is a true need for more IT services in the state.

As they continue to grow, Medicine Bow Technologies is moving towards more of a managed IT model, providing on-premise solutions. This allows them to become a company's IT team, without companies needing to hire an IT person full time. This is beneficial for any company who does not need a full time employee or a company who wants to work with an experienced IT firm, rather than going through the hiring process. With the managed IT model, companies also have the ability to budget a set cost for IT, rather than paying on an as-needed basis. With technology demands being high and more companies moving to the cloud, it is difficult to predict what needs will arise. With this model, it doesn't matter because the Medicine Bow team will be available to handle it.

INFRASTRUCTURE IN WYOMING

Broadband availability in Wyoming and Laramie specifically has been a great benefit to the company. They have had fast enough connections to allow them to remotely login to their customer's systems, complete work and manage large IT projects. Since their work is a combination of on-site IT and IT work done remotely, this has been essential to their business model. When many people think of a rural area like Laramie, they don't visualize a robust broadband network, but the capabilities Medicine Bow Technologies needs is here.

ORGANIC GROWTH AND BUILT-IN TALENT

Being located in Laramie has distinct advantages, including built-in talent. Coming out of the University's incubator, they have had a symbiotic relationship with the high school and college since opening their doors. This has created a unique opportunity for homegrown talent.

Annually, they speak at the local high school and many of these students will stop by to ask questions for their assignments and to intern when going to college. Then, once they graduate, some have become full time employees. This is a huge success and a pattern that can be implemented across the state. Bridging the gap between schools and local businesses is one way to expose local students to potential career paths and get them connected with businesses who can help to grow their skills and provide employment that they want to stay in Wyoming for.

When asked about this relationship, Bullock said, "Wyoming is really good at asking industry what we need to do to help students become skilled. They work with us at the school district level. We help mold what we're looking for and they tell us what they are doing and what talent they are producing. It's a win-win for everyone." In fact, the company has even helped to launch a local computer club for kids. In other words, the

community knows them, and they know the community. That's the magic of Wyoming.

You don't get that somewhere else. Companies in larger cities may need to promote their business, hire recruiters and sift through candidates. Here, Medicine Bow Technologies can start the process while students are still in high school, helping to create the talent they will need in the future. Since students already know them, many are excited to join the company upon graduation.

This has positioned the company well for their future expansion plans. They want to become the security experts in the region. They will continue to deepen existing relationships, serve rural Wyoming and expand throughout the region by investing in human capital.

When asked why they will continue to be based in Wyoming, Bullock said, "It takes a special person to live in Wyoming. We live at 7,200 feet. We like the pace of life here, we like our neighbors and community. We don't pay outrageous taxes compared with other states. We are well-liked and well-received by the county and city and we work very closely with them. They listen to us and vice-versa. These relationships... I don't know if I would find that in a big city and it would certainly take a lot longer to develop them. They happen quickly here. We love it here and we're trying to help this community stay as advanced as possible."

TECHNOLOGY IS IMPORTANT FOR WYOMING'S FUTURE

The technology sector has an important role to play in the future economic growth of Wyoming. Medicine Bow Technologies plans to be working behind the scenes to keep Wyoming companies at the forefront of technology and keep their systems running smoothly.





WYOMING'S CAREER READINESS INITIATIVE GOES HIGH-TECH

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Wyoming's Department of Education is one of the most innovative in the country – innovative for its 360-approach to learning that considers what happens after a student graduates from high school. Dr. Laurel Ballard, head of the program, stated it best when saying, "It is critical that we have students coming out of the K-12 system college, military or workforce-ready." To do so they have created high-quality career pathways that lead to careers and are relevant for the workforce of today. This requires being agile, nimble, and responsive to the ever-changing needs of industry. By doing so, they have created connections between K-12 and industry that has led to changes in curriculum and enhanced the skill set of local graduates. One of those important connections is coming from the tech industry, causing Wyoming's Career Readiness Initiative to go high-tech.

Their new focus on tech is aligned with the ENDOW initiative and the need to diversify Wyoming's workforce and economy. "We are getting buy in from across the state, stakeholders everywhere - the legislators, community, and businesses. These initiatives are born out of the Career Readiness Council. A tremendous number

of partners are working on this now and we are just getting started" Dr. Ballard said of the initiative.

ADVISORY COMMITTEES PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE

Currently, Advisory Committees are meeting throughout the state. Members include various industry representatives, bankers, people in the skilled trades, IT, K-12 and post-secondary partners, along with economic development agencies. This is a coordinated effort with the Workforce Development Council that has allowed the Department of Education to discover what exactly various industries need to see from graduating students.

BEING RESPONSIVE AND PROMOTERS OF POSITIVE CHANGE

Dr. Ballard commented, "We must be responsive and agile to changing needs of businesses and prepare our students to join the workforce." Reaching this point requires constant communication between business leaders and the Department of Education. It also requires being agile, responsive, and promoters of positive change. For example, when industry approaches the Department of Education saying they need more welders or coders, the question Dr. Ballard and her team asks is "how do we get there?" Then,

the they go to work identify what changes must take place within the current curriculum or career pathways and how to connect those students with local businesses for internship opportunities. The fact that these conversations are happening is a fantastic example of the Department of Education's determination to move the needle. Superintendent Balow has been leading these efforts. She is doing a lot of work with business and industry, learning about their needs so that students can be better prepared to join the workforce. This is a corner piece of her administration and it involves collaboration between everyone.

CODERS OF THE WEST IS PREPARING STUDENTS FOR HIGH-TECH CAREERS

The ENDOW Initiative, local stakeholders, and industry has made it clear that graduating students with IT skills is paramount to the economic diversification of the state. The Department of Education responded to this challenge by launching the Coders of the West program last year. Eleven students went through this intensive bootcamp, completing a two-week training program followed up by a year-long job shadowing/internship with an industry partner. They learned foundational skills for careers in computing, along with basic employability skills like how to work with remote teams through video conferencing and how to use project management software.

Over the course of the program, students coded and launched www.WYOCareerExplorer.com. This was a student-led initiative where they created a platform to promote Wyoming job opportunities in the IT sector. It allows middle school and high school students to see where companies are located, what jobs are available, and what courses they would need to take to become employable for each position. Novice high school students having created this innovative and comprehensive site is a testament to the reach Coders of the West can have. It has the ability to educate and inspire the next generation of Wyoming students to become pioneers in a new high-tech society.

INDUSTRY PARTNERS HELPED TO MAKE CODERS OF THE WEST POSSIBLE

Throughout the state, industry partners are highly engaged in wanting to see computer science education move forward. Business leaders are hopeful that by investing in the program, participating as mentors and exposing students to IT careers, more students will graduate with technical skills. This is a symbiotic relationship where industry has stepped in to help students today so that these same students can become the catalyst for industry growth tomorrow.

To date, the most active industry partner has been Erin Moore with Gannett Peak Technical Services, a software development company. Gannett Peak was founded by three UW alumni, is based in Cheyenne, and has a personal stake in the future of the tech industry in Wyoming. Like so many of the state's tech companies, they have roots here and want to see the industry grow. Mentoring students is one way to do so because this can help to keep students here, encouraging them to finish their education and start their tech career in Wyoming, rather than leaving the state. Once students connect with local mentors and businesses, they begin to picture themselves working here and these connections can help them to obtain employment after graduation.

GOALS FOR THE PROGRAM

With the Career Readiness Initiative, everything is tied together. The Coders of the West program connects students with industry, providing educational tools and exposure to what IT jobs are like. Then, when students choose to expand upon their education, they have built-in connections that can help with career placement upon graduating. For businesses, this means a pipeline of skilled workers to hire from, something that is essential to future expansion and growth. From the Department of Education's perspective, this all begins by sparking student interest in pursuing careers in growing industries like technology. If a student can connect with a mentor to experience what it is like to work in an industry, they are more likely to pursue that career path.

TRACKING SUCCESS

Tonya Gerharter, Career & Technical Education Consultant with the Wyoming Department of Education, has been tracking the success of these programs. "We track placement data. We have a database with career pathways mapped out, allowing us to track student progress through these programs and follow up with students six-months after they have graduated. We find out if they are in a job or career related to the career pathway they took in high school. Did they go into an IT program if they participated in Coders of the West, for example?" For those participating in Coders of the West, the trackable outcomes were incredibly positive. Of eleven students, two enrolled in computer science programs in the and eight went to post-secondary institutions for computer science. They were prepared to take the next steps.

THE FUTURE OF HIGH-TECH EDUCATION IN WYOMING

The Department of Education is just getting started. Realizing that a two-week bootcamp was not enough, they are expanding Coders of the West by offering an online program students can complete over the course of a semester, before beginning their job shadow or internship.

They are also expanding the program to include big data and network infrastructure, instead of coding only. This will provide students with an overarching view of the IT sector and potential jobs within the industry.

The Coders of the West program and Career Readiness Initiative fits nicely with ENDOW because industry and the Department of Education are working hand in hand to determine what skills students will need to be employable in the economy of the future. As the state continues to diversify, it will be up to the Department of Education to remain nimble and responsive to industry needs for an adaptable workforce. Finding ways to provide students with these skills today is what will allow for the diversification of Wyoming's workforce in the future. These are lofty goals that require forward-thinking and innovation, but the Department of Education is up to the task.

TechSparks COMES TO WYOMING

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Microsoft is investing in Wyoming through TechSpark - a civic program aimed at fostering greater economic opportunity and job creation. According to Dennis Ellis, TechSpark Manager- Wyoming, "Microsoft is working deeply in TechSpark communities and with local partners to accelerate economic growth through regional internet connectivity, digital skills and computer science education, career pathways, nonprofit support, and digital business transformation."

Microsoft President and CLO, Brad Smith, recently wrote, "The rapid transformation of our economy is driven in part by the pervasive use of new technology that is creating both challenges and opportunities for communities across the country. It has challenged our educational leaders to think differently on how to best prepare youth for the future, like learning opportunities in computational thinking and computer science." He went on to discuss how businesses also need to adapt based on changes to, and the availability of, technology. This can sometimes be more challenging in rural areas like Wyoming which is why Microsoft is taking a proactive approach and being an agent for change.

Since Wyoming is a TechSparks state, businesses can apply for Microsoft to make an investment in their digital transformation, with the aim of deepening connections and empowering growth. Microsoft is also providing cash grants to non-profit's and partnering with schools (K-12 and community colleges) to improve technology education. This goes hand-in-hand with what the Department of Education is doing to better educate students for careers in IT and technical services.

"Our hope is that TechSpark will help add to the ways that communities and businesses can work together to address critical economic challenges. We believe this model of a deep, long-term community partnership can help communities address their unique needs and create a future-ready workforce and be a catalyst for economic investment and opportunity for all Americans" wrote Brad Smith.

Microsoft's investment in the region is another example of Wyoming moving forward. Both at the hyperlocal level and through this global corporation, people throughout Wyoming are focused on technology as being an economic engine for growth.





QUALITY OF LIFE IS HIGH IN EVANSTON AND THE YOUTH ARE STAYING

QUALITY OF LIFE/INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

This is a story about a charming, historic Wyoming town, who with grit, determination and ingenuity went from being a shuttered ghost town to a thriving youthful destination.

The charming town of Evanston embodies the vision set forth in ENDOW to foster long-term growth by focusing on people, development, and amenities. Thirty years ago, Evanston was on its way to becoming a ghost town. This had been a Western railroad town and as the railroad closed, people quickly became unemployed. With a lack of true economic diversity, many families moved away, businesses closed, and the downtown was all but dead. Fortunately, those who stayed loved their town and used ingenuity, creativity, and historic development to help save it. Thanks to urban renewal and historic preservation projects, Evanston has spent the last thirty years investing in quality of life projects and their work has paid off. The town now has the youngest average population in Wyoming and instead of young adults moving away for opportunities, they are finding a way to stay.

“Our young people will carry us forward into the future. They want to be here and have chosen to stay here. Quality of life is probably the number one reason people stay or come back home. If they want to be here, they will find a way to come back home. If they want to be here, they will figure it out.”

— Amy Grenfell, Director
Administrative Services Department/City Clerk, Evanston

Evanston has proven that the concept of long-term development works when it is focused on improving the lives of people. When the town's Urban Renewal Agency was formed thirty years ago, it was created by citizens looking for ways to revitalize and save the downtown. They wanted to preserve their rich Western history and began by restoring the downtown's beautiful, brick Depot Square. With a lovely courtyard, the Depot Square quickly became the center of downtown revitalization efforts and the spark that lit a movement. Steadily, decorative lights went up, banners were hung, benches installed, flowers presented, and one by one, buildings restored.

PROJECTS

- Roundhouse and Rail-yards etc.
- Depot Square
- Strand Theater
- Chinese Joss House Museum

Evanston has utilized available grants and funding sources such as the Wyoming Business Council's BRC (Business Ready Communities) grants, Wyoming Main Street Technical Assistance, private donations, and community fundraising to pay for these restoration projects. Their annual Renewal Ball Fundraiser has raised over \$1 million in the past 35 years to help pay for historic preservation projects and redevelopment in the downtown district.

RESULTS

- People are coming here to retire, including those who previously moved away for employment and are returning to their roots..
- Evanston has a youthful culture with young people and families finding ways to live here, even if they are working remotely or in nearby cities.
- There is an entrepreneurial culture here, keeping the downtown thriving, even as older people retire. In many cases, the youth are stepping up to open new businesses or taking over existing ones.
- Heritage tourism is high with people visiting daily (Railroad tourism, Western tourism, and Chinese-American tourism).
- The community is proud of their town and their efforts to preserve their Western heritage. This has truly been a community-wide effort with businesses and citizens working to make things happen.
- There is additional opportunity to capitalize on natural assets such as proximity to the Bear River Greenway and Bear River State Park, with a Greenway that connects the historic downtown and State Park.

WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM EVANSTON

Historic preservation and quality of life projects should be a community-wide effort, with widespread volunteering and fundraising. Even school children have participated in Evanston's preservation fundraising, giving the children a sense of belonging and empowerment.

Restored spaces should be open for public use. In Evanston, people are encouraged to be in the buildings, use them and experience their history. Community members can access them during events like summer concerts and farmers markets, or rent them for personal use. They have become a usable piece of history that makes the community more accessible and vibrant.

WHERE WILL EVANSTON BE IN THE NEXT TWENTY YEARS

“Historic preservation is part of Evanston's culture now. This is just what we do. We keep going. We don't stop. There is no finish line or ending point. We will continue to work on preservation projects and improving quality of life in our area. You're never done. There is always another quality of life project.”

— Jane Law, Urban Renewal Coordinator and
Main Street Manager, City of Evanston

As the ENDOW Initiative inspires quality of life projects throughout the state, communities should be encouraged by Evanston's success. With a thirty-year track record, they have proven that investing in quality of life projects has immediate and measurable results in the form of hope, optimism, and opportunity. It creates a culture that makes youth want to stay, and retirees want to return, to become a vibrant part of the community's future.

WYOMING'S DYNAMIC NON-PROFIT SECTOR IMPROVES QUALITY OF LIFE WHILE BENEFITING THE LOCAL ECONOMY



QUALITY OF LIFE/EXISTING BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Wyoming's non-profit sector plays a critical role in creating a high-quality of life for residents, one that can be attractive for those considering moving to the state for employment opportunities. Rachel Bailey, Executive Director of the Wyoming Symphony Orchestra said, "I have heard of people who have moved to Casper because of things like the symphony. When looking for where to move, people selected Casper because of the arts scene." People have said to Rachel Bailey, "When I was reading the literature I noticed the symphony was here and it made the community more attractive." Promoting Wyoming culture and fostering a vibrant art scene is a community endeavor that can pay dividends.

The Wyoming Symphony Orchestra has deep roots in Casper, roots that span nearly one hundred years. In 1920, Casper was a rough and tumble western town, but culture and music was important enough for the community to create a way to come together and experience music, and for the local musicians to play. With the next closest symphony over 100 miles away, Casper became and still is, a beacon for anyone with a passion for playing or listening to classical music. Not only has this benefited the local community, it has also become a tourist draw and a way to promote the area. For the solar eclipse, people came from all over the state and country to watch the eclipse and listen to the orchestra play. This was the largest concert they ever played, with over 2,500 people in attendance. Casper was able to show off a cultural gem

and everyone was proud of the quality of the concert, showcasing what exists in Casper while breaking preconceived notions of what life is like in Wyoming. Simultaneously, local businesses benefit from these types of cultural draws by participating in events like the eclipse concert and serving those who come to town for them.

"The Wyoming Symphony Orchestra is a very relevant and integral part of Casper's community. Not only for its cultural outlet but also for the economic benefits that it brings to our community, including workforce attraction and tourism"

— Rachel Bailey.

In some cases, the economic impact cannot be felt as directly as it can for businesses who participate in events. However, that impact is still incredibly strong. Teton Literacy is an excellent example. Located in Jackson Hole, they are a free-resource for children and their families to improve their literacy skills. For those working in the area who speak English as a second language, this can be a critical lifeline that makes it possible for them to actively participate in the workforce and overall community. With workforce development critical to the success of our state, the ability to educate and empower new residents is a vital tool for local businesses looking to hire. When workers are literate and can fluently speak English, it can also help to increase productivity and output.

WYOMING CHARITABLE NONPROFIT SECTOR

EMPLOYS 14,000 PEOPLE (2015)

3,139 REGISTERED CHARITABLE NONPROFITS (2017)

\$1.09 BILLION IN EXPENDITURES IN 2013

Source: Wyoming Nonprofit Sector Report, Wyoming Nonprofit Network

Having the opportunity to volunteer is equally important for other members of the community. “Volunteering and nonprofit philanthropy is part of the culture in Jackson Hole. It is exemplified here through the wide range of volunteers we have – high school students, young professionals, retirees – the entire makeup of community. These volunteer opportunities are a quality of life benefit that draws people to the area who want to live a culture of giving back” said Kristin Livingstone, Associate Director of Teton Literacy.

EDUCATION IN ACTION

According to the Wyoming Nonprofit Network, there are 3,139 charitable nonprofits in Wyoming registered with the IRS. Many of these organizations are involved in educational outreach. Both the Wyoming Symphony Orchestra and Teton Literacy are excellent examples of this. Teton Literacy has the longest running tutoring program in the state, where students are paired one on one with a tutor who mentors them using a proven curriculum. Their tutoring program is so successful that 75 percent of their students are at grade level by the end of the first year. Most of the participants are native-English speakers but, realizing that students who spoke Spanish at home had a harder time catching up, they launched their family program where parents can come in to improve their English speaking and literacy skills. Of these parents, Kristin Livingstone said, “They are coming after working two jobs and showing their children what it means to be dedicated to their education. Families who need support with academics can come to us no matter the situation and we will get them the support they need thanks to an incredibly engaged volunteer community.”

Teton Literacy also launched a free preschool for those who could not afford it otherwise. The program is two days a week and academic intense. Parents receive home visits and have monthly conversations with teachers to provide inclusive support. This is an interactive program that looks at entire family, supports them and provides them the resources they need for parents to play an active role in student education as they grow. It was developed because they realized that if they could reach children at this young age, it could prevent them from having difficulty in school later on. These are programs that are not offered by the school district so were it not for Teton Literacy Center, these children and their families could be struggling academically today, making it more difficult for them to contribute to the workforce in the future. “If you know how to read you can access whatever you need to access. It is a foundational skill. If we can support families in their literacy they can thrive in their jobs and everyday life” said Kristin Livingstone.

Literacy is not the only aspect of education that plays a role in student’s future successes. Music has been proven to create neuropathways in the brain, helping children and adults to be better learners and more creative. When the County School District eliminated the band and orchestra program for elementary students, due to budget constraints, the Wyoming Symphony Orchestra stepped in to help. They put a program in place to work with fifth grade students and elementary music teachers. This program is providing initial music exposure for elementary students, encouraging music education with the hope of inspiring a lifelong love of music. Since music scholarships are available for students in the future, this creative outlet can also be a door to a world of opportunities.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT IS CRITICAL

Without community support, Wyoming’s vibrant non-profit sector could not exist. With the Wyoming Symphony Orchestra, the community has been providing financial support since its inception in 1920. They are a non-profit who gets grants from city, local foundations, individual donations, and fundraisers. In turn, they perform five to six concerts a year and give back to the community through their music on the move program. This includes elementary music education, free community performances, and a health and wellness program in joint efforts with the Wyoming Medical Center. Beyond improving the quality of life for Casper residents, these programs offer another level of enrichment. It is circular. The community supports the symphony so that the symphony can enhance and support the community.

Teton Literacy is also reliant upon the support of the community. They receive funding through grants and donations but more importantly, they depend on the volunteers. It takes a lot of work to provide one on one tutoring to students - year in, year out. Teton’s programs are made possible because of their large community of volunteers, ranging from 15 to 93 years of age. In fact, many of their volunteers are returning students and their families, hoping to give back to a program that inspired them to succeed, gave them hope and the skills to improve their future.

THE FUTURE OF WYOMING’S NON-PROFIT SECTOR

These two organizations are representative of the many non-profits who are daily demonstrating a commitment to the youth and residents of Wyoming. They prove that large statewide programs are not always necessary to make a significant impact. It can come from passionate individuals and nonprofits committed to making a difference. Supporting their efforts is supporting a strong quality of life today and a better Wyoming tomorrow.

STRATEGIC PLANNING 2017



**New
Business
Recruitment**

**Providing the Foundation
for Growth of All
Economic Development
Building Blocks**



**Existing
Business
Development**



**Innovation &
Entrepreneurship**



**Education &
Workforce
Development**



**Infrastructure
Development**



**Communities
& Quality
of Life**



Leadership/Civic Development & The Role of Public Policy

EDUCATION

Strategy:

To provide high quality learning opportunities for our members.

Strategic Actions:

1. Provide conferences that have immediately relevant and high quality trainers and sessions;
2. Provide education to support development in education and workforce, infrastructure, community and quality of life, business retention and expansion, innovation and entrepreneurship, and business recruitment;
3. Develop a comprehensive plan to educate elected officials and the public regarding the need for and impact of economic development.

PUBLIC POLICY

Strategy:

To support an ongoing state and local public policy agenda that moves the economic diversification of the state forward.

Strategic Actions:

1. Build stronger relationships between WEDA members and their local and state elected officials;
2. Create a strong and evolving legislative agenda that is supported by the WEDA board and membership and is communicated effectively to elected officials.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Strategy:

To develop a strong and educated core of Wyoming economic development professionals.

Strategic Actions:

1. Grow and refine the WEDA mentoring curriculum to provide high quality economic development leadership training;
2. Provide opportunities for professionals to come together to share ideas, concerns and solutions for the betterment of Wyoming.

COMMUNICATION

Strategy:

To lead economic development conversations in the state of Wyoming.

Strategic Actions:

1. Diversify our electronic communications both in content and audience;
2. Update and provide high quality, informational and marketing materials to educate communities on the importance of economic development;
3. Provide continuous, relevant and meaningful information on economic development.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Strategy:

Refine and develop our organizational structure to best meet the needs of our members and strategic priorities.

Strategic Actions:

1. Grow and diversify our membership;
2. Develop the organization to fund a full-time executive director position.



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