



BIZ HARNEY

Opportunity
COLLABORATIVE

The Entrepreneurial Spirit is Alive and Well in Harney County

Community training ground for developing entrepreneurial skills

Every business in Harney County is essential. Unlike urban areas with multiple competing businesses, Harney County relies on every individual small business that serves the communities. The good news, interest in building successful small businesses is alive and well in Harney County and there's a program, CO.STARTERS, that this spring helped 10 entrepreneurs develop skills and build their confidence as small business owners.



These 10 entrepreneurs represent a cross-section of businesses including a food truck, a videographer, a design agency, a specialty dog breeding kennel, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), in-home health care, ecological monitoring service, a youth group home and a fluff and fold laundromat. Small business is the backbone of Harney County and the goal is to help these entrepreneurs succeed so the business owners can follow their dreams and the community can benefit from the services and products they bring.

Pictured: 9 of the 10 entrepreneurs from the spring 2022 CO.STARTERS program.

An important part of this is community. CO.STARTERS is about bringing people together to learn from each other. The entrepreneurs learned from each other as well as current local business owners. Local business owners came and spoke providing mentorship, experience and connection. As one participant shared: "What I found most valuable about CO.STARTERS is all the knowledge you gain from it and the friends you make that can help you in the future."

The community aspect of this program is a big driver behind why the Biz Harney Opportunity Collaborative brought it to Harney County and why Andrea Letham so passionately facilitates the program: "I love that CO.STARTERS connects entrepreneurs to seasoned local businesses. Their experience and wisdom is key to knowing what it takes to run a business in Harney County. Learning from your peers is powerful and meaningful."

Following 10 weeks of class many of the entrepreneurs have continued their momentum by joining a goal focused 30-60-90 group that helps them continue to map out next steps. They also receive one-on-one technical assistance to develop their business plans through Idea Buddy, a business planning software. This continuation of their entrepreneur education is not surprising, when this group started the program 22% of them felt like they knew what their next steps were, now 100% do. As

a participant shared: "I just think that everyone should go through this program before starting a business. It made you think of the right questions and how to structure your business so that it would be successful. I have taken several business classes but they have not been as hands-on or thorough as this one."

For budding entrepreneurs out there, CO.STARTERS will be offered again this September. If you are interested in joining the fall cohort, contact Andrea Letham aletham.sbdc@gmail.com or go online and register at: reinventingrural.com/costarters/core/. CO.STARTERS is funded in part by a grant from Business Oregon; a suggested participation donation in the program is \$50.

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