

WOMEN IN BUSINESS

Honoring women making
an impact in local business



Weisz helps those in need

By CINDY PETERSON

Lisa Weisz knows she can't save the whole world.

Heck, she knows she doesn't have the power to turn around everything in her small corner of the globe, but that doesn't mean that she won't try.

Weisz has been the director of the Women's Action Resource Center (WARC) since 1994. As long as she can help one person, then her efforts have not been fruitless.

WARC is primarily a domestic violence and sexual assault agency that offers help to those who are being abused or stalked. It provides shelter and at times even financial assistance for things like rent and utilities. The agency acts as an advocate and works with the courts. It operates a 24-hour crisis line. WARC also runs a food pantry that is available for all community members and gifts for children at Christmas.

"If it's not right in your family, you don't think about it," said Weisz, who admitted the agency is busier than one would think for a small town. "You don't see everything that's going on because you don't have to. With domestic violence, people often feel ashamed about it so they keep quiet about it, unfortunately."

Weisz started at WARC in 1987 on the crisis line and served in a part-time role. She has also worked as an advocate



Cindy Peterson

Lisa Weisz of the Women's Action Resource Center helps those in need in Beulah in several fashions.

at the Abused Adult Resource Center in Bismarck and at a group home in Hazen. The director's job came open 1994 and she was promoted. She never envisioned herself as the director when she first started at WARC.

"I don't get to work with as many people, and I do miss that," said Weisz, who graduated from the University of North

Dakota with a degree in social work. "I'm on the outside more. I have a lot of paperwork and administration stuff. I have a good community that helps me if I don't know how to do something. I just love it when people are able to be free from the hurt."

Weisz's upbringing spurred her into a role of helping others.

"There was verbal abuse and dad wasn't afraid to use the fly swatter when we were kids," Weisz said. "I just wanted to help people who were hurting and help them find other options."

Weisz gradually was able to move toward healing and now wants to assist others in doing so.

"As you're getting stronger

yourself and learning more, some of that just goes away," she said. "In life there are a lot of bumps and bruises. I'm still growing. I don't think you ever quit growing, and if you do, you're missing out on something."

Weisz has enjoyed teaching people what behaviors are acceptable and helping people learn the dynamics of domestic violence and the laws so they can protect themselves.

"Anytime somebody reaches out, that's a blessing," she said. "It takes a lot to get to that point, so you know they are ready, generally."

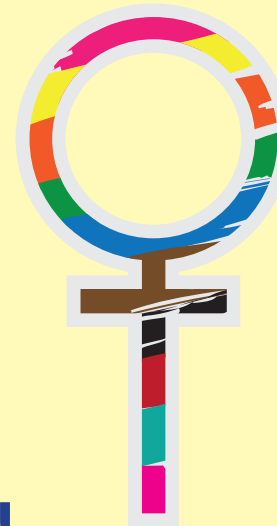
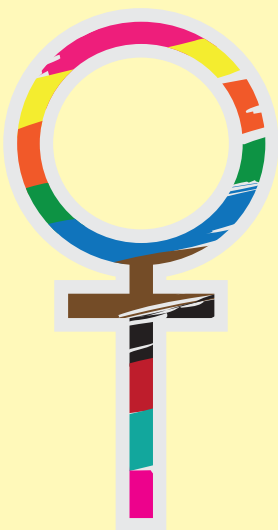
There have been frustrating aspects of the job, but through experience Weisz is equipped to deal with them, like when somebody returns to their abuser.

"Each person has to decide what is best for them," Weisz said. "I don't take that personally ever. As long as they know we're here so if they ever need to reach out again if they need to get away, that's the most important thing. If you take it personally, you would never last long in this job."

Weisz said WARC is happy to run the food pantry and the gift program.

"We don't judge," she said. "We've all been there. We're glad to be here so we can help. We couldn't do it without the community. People think of us and bring donations of food, personal items and money."

Women in our state and around the country want and deserve an equal future free of stigma and stereotypes. A future that's sustainable and peaceful, with equal rights and opportunities for all.



These local businesses support this message:



Women's participation and leadership in all areas of life is progress for everyone.

Quality skincare in rural North Dakota

BY DANIEL ARENS

For people living in small-town North Dakota, having opportunities to access medical-grade skin care services is usually difficult without making the journey to one of the larger cities in the state.

In Hazen, though, a prime opportunity for quality service and products is available, thanks to one woman's ambition and passion to small town residents.

Corrie Rogness owns both a skin care business, Surge Aesthetics, and Surge Fitness, a gym also located in Hazen, along with her husband Tim. The couple bought the gym in 2015, rebranding as Surge Fitness, then followed up in 2016 with the new business Surge Aesthetics.

Corrie is a licensed family nurse practitioner in the medical field, having worked at both the clinic and hospital before. She decided she wanted to use that professional background to encourage wellness and body care in Hazen through her businesses.

"I just wanted for people to be able to exercise and work out," she said of the gym. Then, taking advantage of a building on the north side of Highway 200 that was sitting empty, she bought that building to make into a skin care option for the community.

"It was a slow, evolving business," Rogness said. "It was the kind of things that you think of getting done in big cities, so it took a while to catch on here."

Rogness said one of the most important steps in making Surge Aesthetics a success was overcoming people's natural concerns about their privacy, both in her own medical approach to their skin's health and in her keeping their information confidential.

"I think I have earned people's trust that way, and because of my background as a medical provider," she said.

Initially, Surge Aesthetics started out with the basics of skin care, with things like laser hair removal and Botox. Gradually, Rogness has been able to expand her products and services, partly as a result of taking the initiative to undergo the training for new procedures.

One example of this is tattoo removal.

"There are not a lot of places in the state that do that," she said.

Another example is microneedling, which uses sterile needles to puncture the skin, resulting in the brain thinking there's an injury and resolve to fix the issue. This helps with things like acne and wrinkles.

And Rogness continues to pursue new opportunities to expand her services.

"One thing, I have the ability now to take training to treat migraines with Botox, not just cosmetics," she said. This is still an upcoming service, but it is something she wants to pursue. She also plans to begin offering HD PDO Threads, which is like a non-surgical face lift.

"This field and this indus-



Daniel Arens

Corrie Rogness uses these lasers for tattoo removal and laser hair removal, respectively. These are two of many kinds of services available at Surge Aesthetics, which Rogness owns with her husband, as well as their other business, the Surge Fitness gym.

try of aesthetics is changing all the time, all the time," she said. "There's different devices, different procedures. I try to keep up to date with what is in the cities and provide it here, so people don't have to go out of town to get these services."

Rogness said one of the most difficult things for her has been learning the business side of things. She's had a lot of experience in health care and wellness, but has had to figure out the intricacies of payroll and management.

"I'm learning everything as I go," Rogness said, adding the role of her business leadership extends from billing to promotions. She praised business

partners that have helped her through the transition into business ownership, including Capital Credit Union and

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- Corrie Rogness

Dakota Business Lending. Another business challenge for Rogness is selling. She

said she's never done sales before, having been used to simply work with patients on the proper procedure while in the hospital and clinic. Now, she said she needs to strike the right balance, informing people of the different services she offers while ultimately leaving the decisions up to them.

One advantage in the business was having both buildings available. The gym was already established before the Rognesses bought it, only doing some renovations in terms of the building itself. And the formerly empty space has worked well for Corrie to develop Surge Aesthetics.

"We were kind of fortunate

that things fell into place with the building," she said. "My husband and I put a lot of love into it with painting, stuff like that."

With Surge Fitness, a new addition is allowing members to have key fobs so they can access the building at almost any time. Some restrictions did come into place with the onset of COVID-19, though.

"COVID is scary when you own a fitness facility," Rogness said. "Our members were really good during it all." She said many members were willing to do a time extension on their membership, rather than just asking for their money back, which helped the gym out financially.

With Surge Aesthetics, Rogness' medical credentials allowed her to continue operating some of her services. However, the business did see a definite reduction in services during 2020.

There were also some benefits that came as a result of programs and grants created as a response to COVID. Through the economic resiliency grant (ERG), Surge Fitness was able to get an automated water bottle dispenser and automated sinks and toilets, as well as new floor mats.

Surge Aesthetics also received the automated sinks and toilets, and got a new stackable washer and dryer unit to help minimize transferring material back and forth.

These changes help keep Rogness' business thriving, and allow her to continue offering services in small-town North Dakota that are normally only accessible in major population centers.

"I love being able to be in this community and do what I love to do here, rather than having to go somewhere else," she said. "Seeing how people react, it just really changes how they interact with people at school, at work, in their social lives."

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How small businesses can support and help each other grow

Small businesses play a vital role in economies across the globe. The Small Business Administration says small businesses - which are defined as firms that have fewer than 500 employees - comprise 99.9 percent of all businesses in the United States. Small businesses may be defined differently elsewhere in the world (in the European Union, small businesses are defined as firms with 50 or fewer employees), but they are no less valuable to their economies.

Because of the key role small businesses play, including employing millions of people throughout the world, it is essential that small businesses thrive and prosper. There is much the public can do to help small businesses be successful, but there also are steps small business owners can take to assist one another.

- Pass along opportunities. As a business owner, if you come across a resource or an opportunity that may not be the ideal fit for your own company, consider sharing the information with another small business owner or recommending another firm that might make for a more suitable partner.

- Promote one another. Make sure there is a prominent and visible collection of business cards or promotional materials available in your facility. For example, if you are a local real

estate agent, you can promote and recommend mortgage brokers, home inspectors, interior designers, and moving companies. If you own a store, enable other businesses to advertise their own stores and services.

- Organize networking and meeting opportunities. Networking and meeting with others in the industry is a great way to share ideas to see what may be working for others and what is not. Networking meetings also provide great opportunities to work on potential collaborations.

- Consider sharing resources. Certain businesses may benefit from sharing facilities, equipment or even supplies and other resources as cost-saving measures. This also may open up opportunities to collaborate.

- Use one another's services. One of the simplest ways to help another small business is to be their customer. This is the ultimate show of support and can help validate your recommendation.

- Explore co-branding or co-marketing. Some businesses support each other by working together. Finding ways to work together can be effective, especially in similar industries. For example, pet store owners can work exclusively with a nearby dog trainer, and both can market their services together.

- Start a social media group. A small business with social media savvy can be the administrator/moderator of a local group that encourages other businesses in the area to frequently post and advertise their businesses.



Small businesses can work together to support one another so these vital cogs in the economy can flourish.

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3 ways women can build and maintain professional networks

Established professionals often tout the importance of building strong networks. In fact, a 2017 global survey from LinkedIn found that nearly 80 percent of professionals consider professional networking to be important to their career success.

Professionals may see networking as a great way to land their next job, but establishing strong networks can pay dividends even for those people who have no immediate plans to leave their current companies. Small Business BC, a resource that caters to entrepreneurs in British Columbia, notes that successful networking can lead to referrals and new partnerships and raise the profiles of professionals and the companies they work for. The LinkedIn survey supports that notion, noting that one-quarter of professionals across the globe have established new business partnerships through LinkedIn Messaging. Of course, networking often helps people find new jobs as well, as the LinkedIn survey also found that 70 percent of people hired in 2016 found work at companies where they had existing connections.

Women can employ various strategies to build strong networks and maintain those networks once connections are established.

1. Join professional organizations.

Professional organizations provide great networking opportunities, serving as avenues to begin new business relationships. Many such organizations host annual conferences, and attending these conferences can help women maintain the relationships they develop through their participation in these groups. That's an important



benefit, as the LinkedIn survey found that 38 percent of professionals admitted they find it hard to stay in touch with their network.

2. Offer help as much as you seek it.

The LinkedIn survey found that only 48 percent of professionals keep in touch with their networks when things are going well in their career. By reaching out to a network when things are going well, women are showing a willingness to offer help as much as seek it. That can lead to stronger, more easily maintained networks.

3. Schedule networking each week.

Build networking into your weekly schedule. Even the busiest professionals can find time each week to email someone in their network to see how things are going or share updates on previous collaborations. That's a quick and easy way to maintain connections.

The value of networking is undeniable. Women can take various steps to build strong networks and maintain those relationships for years to come.

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Inspiring future entrepreneurs

Driessen has presented Expo for 35-plus years

BY SUZANNE WERRE,
BHG News

After 35-plus years of putting on an Entrepreneur Expo at the Underwood School, business teacher Julie Driessen is about ready to hand over the helm to some new blood.

She's planning on being more of a helper at next year's Expo, which should tentatively be held in Turtle Lake, with Turtle Lake-Mercer Business Teacher Whitney Jangula taking over the helm of organizing the Expo.

Soon to retire, Driessen is happy she's found a couple teachers (including one from Washburn) who seem to want to take over the annual event that brings students from around the county together to compete for prizes as they present their business plans and ideas to the judges.

"The reward is seeing the anticipation of getting an award, and when they get one, how excited they are for their success," said Driessen. "It's really a lot of fun to see the kids get an opportunity like this and succeed with it."

"Even those that don't place as high, it's still a rewarding experience no matter what," she added.

Driessen will readily admit that sometimes entering the Entrepreneur Expo sometimes lets the students know at an early age that being a business owner probably isn't for them. Others, though, have embraced the idea of being an entrepreneur and opening their own business – and they've gone on to be successful business owners.

"I've had students leave here and they're successful in their own businesses," said Driessen. Sometimes she hears through the grapevine about former students who have opened their own businesses.

"I've had some big success stories of students that were in the Expo . . . there are some kids that have done some really fantastic things with their own businesses," she added.

Many of the businesses presented at this year's Expo were in the food service industry, noted Driessen. But the non-food-oriented businesses did very well, too. While those attending the Expo enjoy the food items they get to nosh on at the Expo, it's not all about the food sales.

"Some of the kids found out that it's not necessary to do a food business because some of the kids that just had a poster and a business plan at their table received large awards because their business plan was very good," she said.

Driessen hopes the Entrepreneur Expo opens up the world of business to all of the students who participate and attend, and while men are still the vast majority of business owners, Driessen is hoping that girls really consider becoming entrepreneurs, too.

"The opportunities for women in careers is growing and growing, and this gives these young women a chance to find out that they can do it."

There are so many careers out there where women can move up and become the CEO, or even owners of the business," said Driessen.

Driessen appreciates the TV show Shark Tank in part because some of the "sharks" are very successful women entrepreneurs, and young women are able to see them in action and realize they could also be successful business women.

She likes Shark Tank so much, there may be some tweaks to next year's Expo that will make it look a lot more like the TV show, where the students will make their pitches for their business to the "sharks/judges."

Driessen would love to see more women get into the business world, and while participating in the Entrepreneur Expo is a great introduction to what they will need to do to have a successful business, it's probably not the biggest factor the students think about when they're deciding on their future path.

"I still think the motivation comes from seeing all these other women that are successful," said Driessen.

She wants the students to find something they love, and go for it.

For Driessen, part of what she loves is inspiring students to start and run their own



Underwood Business Teacher Julie Driessen, center, has dedicated more than 35 years to introducing students to the business world, encouraging them to be entrepreneurs with the annual Entrepreneur Expo. Also pictured are young entrepreneurs Rena Johnson and Ari Troyna.

businesses. She admits she would never really want to run one herself. It's not her passion.

"I would not have my own business," she said with a laugh. "I wouldn't want to own one."

"The career that I have is what I love – I'd much rather teach it. That's my love right there," she added.

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3 customer service practices that can make consumers happy

In 2009, a handful of protest songs posted to YouTube created quite a stir. After their guitars were mishandled and damaged while traveling on United Airlines, the Canadian folk duo Sons of Maxwell attempted to negotiate with the airline in an effort to be reimbursed for the damage. Those negotiations ultimately proved fruitless, so the rockers took to YouTube, posting a series of comical songs and videos.

While the songs became viral and drew many a laugh, the people at United Airlines, and their shareholders, were not laughing. The bad publicity sparked by the videos caused United stock to plummet, costing shareholders as much as \$180 million.

Incidents like that highlight the importance of exceptional customer service, especially in regard to small businesses. Industry giants like United Airlines can no doubt afford some bad publicity, but small, locally owned businesses operate on much thinner margins.

In recognition of the effects bad customer experiences can have on their businesses, business owners can emphasize the following three strategies to keep customers happy.

1. Encourage customer input.

Business owners may not have their boots on the ground every day, so encouraging customer input may be the only way for business owners to get a handle on what it's like to be their customer. That input can be used as a springboard to making positive changes that make customers happy, and it also can be used to help business owners recognize which staff members are going above and beyond to make sure customers have positive experiences.

2. Respond to reviews.

A 2018 survey from Review Trackers found that 63 percent of reviewers never received a response to their reviews. Engaging with customers is vital for small businesses. Consumers appreciate it when business owners respond to their reviews. Customers who leave negative reviews are more likely to put such experiences behind them if business owners reach out and seek their input while assuring that they'll work to provide better experiences in the future. Responding to customers who share positive experiences takes little or no time at all and it's a thoughtful gesture to thank customers who take the time to leave positive reviews.



Business owners can emphasize the following three strategies to keep customers happy.

3. Get personal with customers.

A personal experience drives many consumers to support local businesses. Taking time to be cordial with customers also is a great way to learn about their needs and wants so you can better serve them, potentially turning them into highly valuable repeat customers. Repeat business is vital to the survival of small businesses. In fact, a 2018 survey from InMoment found that 77 percent of consumers acknowl-

edge having had relationships with specific brands for 10 years or more. Getting personal can lay the foundation for customer-business relationships that can

last for years to come.

Customer service is vital for small businesses, which can employ various practices to keep customers happy and coming back.

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Washburn's quilting queen

Bobbie Barnhardt popularizing multi-layered coverings and pattern design

BY RALPH MANCINI

A local shopowner's transition from being a homebased quilter to later owning her own retail shop and education center proves that there's some truth to necessity being the mother of invention.

"When I got married and had kids, I couldn't afford to send quilts out to anybody that did what I do. So, then I went ahead and bought my first machine and started quilting by myself," recalls Bobbie Barnhardt, who was first introduced to stitching together fabric layers by her grandmother as a child.

"It was kind of a need to finish off the stuff I had already started and it just kind of grew from there."

Barnhardt's dexterity in operating her sewing machine from a spare bedroom in her Washburn home began gaining steam when other machine owners began hitting her up for advice. And though the San Diego-born stitching artist willingly dispensed tips on how to properly use her long-arm apparatus, she began exploring the possibility of selling machines out of her own store.

After performing much of her work from home for nearly 10 years, the married mother of three boys went searching for her own storefront. Barnhardt set up shop in a backroom inside the Cottingham Insurance building at 210 7th Avenue, when she jokingly asked if there was an available broom closet for rent back in 2012.

Running her own brick and mortar business only made Barnhardt more visible, as a growing amount of clientele began bringing their tops into her shop to be sandwiched and decorated with fancy stitching.

Washburn's foremost quilting expert eventually purchased the downtown building from Cottingham, and soon began offering classes in how to manipulate Handi Quilters from her Quilting for You site.



A humorous sign that can be seen upon entering Barnhardt's Downtown Washburn shop.

"I think quilting in itself is very popular. It used to be that older people quilted, but now they're starting to quilt at a younger age," she said, as many quilting enthusiasts end up buying machines from Barnhardt, who will occasionally offer on-site training.

"A lot of people buy them as retirement gifts for themselves and so, they're easy to pay off. If they buy one and make their own quilts, they're like an investment."

Barnhardt pointed to one of the more compact models on hand that's becoming the preferred choice among home-based quilters who can now do their work on smaller frames.

The business owner currently has two long-arm machines inside her store, neither of which are more than a year old. The devices come with built-in computers that allow the operator to set it to perform its own stitching, and opening up more time for Barnhardt to multitask.

"I like to be creative," she explains. "I really don't enjoy sitting down by a sewing machine like this and sewing the tops. I like to do the decorative stuff—the fancy stuff."

As for the different techniques employed by industry people and stay-at-home quilters, the 32-year Washburn resident says that there are



Photos by Ralph Mancini

Bobbie Barnhardt's Quilt for You store has become the go-to spot for people's quilting needs, as she services people from McLean County, Bismarck and all over the U.S.

still a few freehand craftspeople out there, while others use the darning foot method. Some people, though, have graduated to using computerized machines with design patterns that have been programmed into it.

Helping her satisfy her considerable workload is Becky Tibke, who has lightened the business backlog from one year to now only being backed up a few months with outstanding orders.

And while there is never truly an offseason in the quilting business, Barnhardt still manages to carve out time to chip in with office/accounting work in her husband's downtown mechanic's garage.

What's more, the local entrepreneur still finds it necessary to continually undergo professional development despite her wealth of experience. To that end, she'll often attend quilt shows around the state and also trek out to an annual conference in Salt Lake City, Utah.

One art form that Barn-

hardt has become more proficient at in recent years is Zentangle, and has gone as far as conducting classes in the practice of creating abstract patterns.

"I am also a certified Zentangle educator. This drawing method is used for a lot of therapies. It's a medi-

tative form that's used for Alzheimer's, ADD and autism," she said, while noting how she's applied her art on everything from placemats to coasters, and jewelry as well.

"I've done it on practically everything but underwear," she quipped.

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Barnhardt's Zentangle artistry on display. She also teaches classes on applying the art form.



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WOMEN IN BUSINESS

Section 2

How small businesses can utilize social media to foster connections during the COVID-19 outbreak

Social distancing has compromised the financial health of many small businesses. Accustomed to daily, in-person interactions with their customers, many small business owners have had to look for other ways to connect with consumers.

Social media can be a great way for businesses to maintain a connection with their customers, even while social distancing. Businesses unaccustomed to using social media may need some help when trying to connect with customers, while even social media savvy establishments may need to recognize that the uniqueness of this situation calls for an equally unique approach to social media. The following are some ways small businesses can employ social media to stay connected with their customers while social distancing.

- Set an appropriate tone. A little levity can go a long way while social distancing, but it's important that small businesses remain cognizant of the current situation when posting to social media. Too many jokes may be interpreted as tone deafness. A funny anecdote can do the trick, but don't go too far. By the end of April, more than 200,000 people had lost their lives to COVID-19, and some customers may have lost loved ones or had the virus themselves. Businesses must keep that in mind when posting to social media.

- Tailor your interactions and efforts to your audience. Employ analytics tools to de-

termine who engages with your brand on which platform, then use that analysis when designing your message. For example, older customers may not interact on Twitter, but they might read your emails. You can use that knowledge to focus your emails on issues older customers may have, like the safety measures you're taking or, if your business has been allowed to keep its doors open, any new policies you've instituted to keep older customers safe.

- Be gracious when posting. Social media can be used to promote your business, but it's also a great way to express gratitude to customers and show you support them as much as you want them to support you. Thank customers and wish them health and happiness in each post.

- Support community efforts. Social media also can be used to spread the word about community efforts, such as food drives for families of laid off or furloughed workers, community blood drives and collective efforts to express support for first responders and medical personnel. Promoting such efforts via social media shows customers that your business recognizes its place in the community and the important role it can play in giving back during this time of great need.

Social media can help small businesses affected by the COVID-19 outbreak maintain connections with their customers and communities while social distancing.



Accustomed to daily, in-person interactions with their customers, many small business owners have had to look for other ways to connect with consumers.



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Dahl chases dreams

BY JARANN JOHNSON

Sandy Dahl had a dream. Her dream was simple, open a small-town restaurant that families would want to eat at. But what she didn't know was the challenges she would face.

Dahl's dream started years ago when she moved to Center. She found herself visiting other towns when she wanted to have a nice diner with friends or family.

"There really wasn't a place for people to go and have a nice dinner or drinks, that sort of thing and have it family-friendly as well," Dahl said.

"We would go with our group of friends and either go to Bismarck or Mandan. Or we would end up going to other small-town communities that had establishments. We would visit them, go eat and have drinks or dinner there."

Dahl decided she was going to do more than chit-chat with locals about having a restaurant in town.

"We talked about it for years and years and years. Finally, we decided it was time and pretty much bought out Square Butte Diner, tore it down, and reconstructed new. We brought new into the community," Dahl said.

Crossroads Bar and Grill opened in November despite facing numerous challenges. Dahl said it's important to chase aspirations, even when obstacles appear.

"Of course, when you have a dream, go for it. If you see something out there that you want to do, go for it. Don't give up," Dahl said.

"It's hard, it is no matter what when you are starting a business -- any type of business. It's tough to start with all of the different hoops you have to jump through. From making sure you have business plans, financial backing, and all that type of stuff."

COVID presented challenges to several local businesses. Dahl said the COVID challenges for Crossroads were supplies and construction related.

"I honestly can't say that we felt any negative aspects of COVID, other than supplies and the building time. And having to restrict the amount of construction workers we had in to make sure we were compliant if there was an outbreak. So that's they couldn't come back and say it was us," Dahl said.

"There were a lot of setbacks with COVID. From the building to getting supplies to limited supplies and that type of stuff. But I can honestly say, I think people were ready to get out, go places and do things. The support that we have had from our community and surrounding communities has been phenomenal."

Dahl wanted to install a drive-through months before the COVID pandemic started. Her idea was to offer a place customers could quickly get a jolt of caffeine or breakfast snack before their day started.

"As they're driving to go to Bismarck/Mandan or any other community for their jobs. Why not have the opportunity to call ahead or stop at the window place for their specialty

coffee, grab a cinnamon roll or breakfast sandwich and go. That was the whole reason we started with the drive-through window," Dahl said.

"It's been crazy with how busy that drive-through window has been, especially for supper. When the first portion of carbon capture was going on before the holidays. We would have some of those crews come through the drive-through."

Dahl is happy with the drive-through and glad she decided to complete her idea to have one. But there were challenges with completing it. There were also other building challenges.

"There were so many different things with the building process like that. Having to do full-fire suppression throughout the building because of the size and the fact that we have two stories," Dahl said.

"Going through all that stuff. Well, then the water lines going to the building weren't big

enough. So we had to put in new water lines all the way up to our property."

Dahl kept pursuing her goal and pushed through.

"My biggest thing is don't give up. If you have a dream, go for it. It might seem tough. It might seem like it's not achievable. But even if it takes time, push forward. We talked about this for 4-5 years before we actually moved forward with it," Dahl said.

"All these little things that you don't even think of come up. And you try to be so prepared when you go in and have your full financial plan, and everything laid out; what you might need, what obstacles you might face," Dahl said.

One of the other challenges many local businesses face is maintaining a full staff. Dahl said she hasn't had any issues with staffing. She has workers ranging in age from teenagers to adults. She said her employ-

ees are doing a great job.

"We have been very, very blessed with the employees we have found and hired," Dahl said. "We are very thankful for the great job that they do. If it weren't for the employees we wouldn't be able to have a successful business either."

Dahl's advice for entrepre-

neurs is simple.

"Just don't give up. That is probably the biggest thing, and no matter how hard it gets, push your way through. There is always light at the end of the tunnel," Dahl said. "There's always obstacles with everything. It's just working through them."



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How small businesses can plan for financial uncertainty

The uncertainty wrought by the pandemic has affected people from all walks of life. In the winter of 2019-20, the outbreak of the novel coronavirus COVID-19, and the ensuing measures implemented in the hopes of curbing the spread of the potentially deadly virus, changed the way people live and how companies do business.

Some companies have thrived during the pandemic, while others have faced unprecedented challenges. Many small businesses have been hit especially hard since the pandemic began, prompting many small business owners to express concerns about their long-term viability. A recent MetLife & U.S. Chamber of Commerce Small Business Coronavirus Impact Poll found that 70 percent of small business owners are concerned about financial hardship due to prolonged closures, while 58 percent worry that they will have to permanently close their businesses as a result of the pandemic.

Few people, if anyone, likely saw the pandemic coming, which is perhaps why the resulting financial uncertainty has proven so difficult to comprehend. As the months go by and COVID-19 case numbers again begin to increase all over the globe, small business owners are understandably concerned by the potential implementation of additional lockdown measures to stop the spread of the virus. However, there are steps small businesses can take so they're ready for any additional financial uncertainties that arrive in both the near and distant future.

- Build cash reserves. Cash on hand can help small business owners in much the same way that sizable savings accounts can help laid off workers overcome a sudden loss of income. Forced closures hurt



There are steps small businesses can take so they're ready for any additional financial uncertainties that arrive in both the near and distant future.

many small businesses because their bills still came due even if government officials deemed them "nonessential" and forced them to close. Rent was still due each month and, in many instances, contracts signed prior to the pandemic

still had to be honored, even if companies were no longer generating revenue. Many small businesses operate on slim margins that make it hard to save while still improving the business. But small business owners who make concerted

efforts to build their cash reserves without compromising their offerings should be in better position to withstand financial uncertainty in the years to come.

- Watch inventories care-

fully. The Small Business Administration recommends that small business owners keep watchful eyes on their inventories. The goal in doing so is to ensure you can continue to meet sales needs without ending up with a stockpile of leftover merchandise that's difficult to move if or when retail sales slump. Stocking up on more than you need to meet sales needs can eat up cash that you can otherwise use to build your reserves.

- Reduce rented space if possible. One potential positive that may come from the pandemic is that many workers and businesses deftly handled the transition from in-office working to remote working. Small businesses that successfully made that transition can safeguard themselves against future uncertainty by reducing their office space. Small business owners can renegotiate existing leases to allow for subleasing or simply move into smaller offices when existing leases expire. Money saved on office rentals can be redirected to help businesses grow their cash reserves.

Effective planning can help small business owners weather financial storms that can arise unexpectedly.



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Come on in – the **BLUE DOOR** is open

BY SUZANNE WERRE,

Blue Door Decor in Turtle Lake is the quintessential story of how a woman turned her passion into a business.

Blue Door Decor, opened in 2016 and the brainchild of Mercer's Laura Fiedler, is the home decor and painting business that has evolved from her love of painting furniture. It is located at 60 3rd Ave. W. in Turtle Lake, a move she made in July after a short stint at a location near the NP railroad line on the north side of town.

The shop is now located right downtown in the business district -- a much better location, she noted. For one thing, people can find it now.

"It actually shows up on GPS now, so people can find it so much easier," she said. The old location didn't show up on GPS, so even when people were using technology to find it, they couldn't. The new location has also improved local awareness of where her business is because it's closer to the downtown business area.

Blue Door Decor (named for the blue door on her new farmhouse near Mercer) started as an off-shoot of her love for painting furniture. She used to just paint furniture for her own fun, giving it new life. Once people found out she was able to turn worn-out looking pieces of furniture into beautiful pieces of art, word got around quickly, and people were asking her to refurbish their old pieces of furniture.

"I just really loved painting furniture, basically repurposing old stuff or giving old stuff a new, modern look," Fiedler said. "I started for myself, and I really loved it, then I



Laura Fiedler, owner/operator of Blue Door Decor in Turtle Lake, has turned her passion for painting furniture into a store that specializes in modern farmhouse decor.

forever.' That's one of the challenges. You have to have enough stuff so it feels full, but you also have to make sure it's not the same stuff all the time. For that, she relies on a handful of consignors, her dad's carpenter work, her finds at yard and estate sales, as well as the wholesale shopping she does.

She does have some regular consignors -- and even bringing in the right kind of items from consignors can be a challenge, she said. She's had a lot of offers from people who would like to bring their items in to Blue Door Decor, but they're not always a good fit for the store.

When opening up a retail space, said Fiedler, one really needs to stay true to the brand and stick with a theme.

The overriding theme of Blue Door Decor is "modern farmhouse,"

according to Fiedler. Some people may look at some of the items she has on display and think, "I could make that," she noted. But will they? And when?

"For me, it is still kind of a hobby," said Fiedler. "People say 'do what you love, and you'll never work a day in your life'. Well, it seems like with owning your own business, the business side can easily take over the part that

you love because keeping track of your inventory, and taking things and arranging them -- all of that has been kind of challenging."

Fiedler has advice for others who are thinking about opening up their own business.

"You have to charge enough so it's worth your time," she said.

Your business might be your "fun," but you are also taking time away from your family and other things you could be doing.

"You need to charge what your time is worth," she reiterated.

She also advises young entrepreneurs to "be intentional." For her, that means being prepared in advance. For her, that means, in part, picking the days each month Blue Door Decor is going to be open.

Fiedler doesn't have regular business hours every day. She picks one time each month to be open, careful to work around days when she knows a lot of shoppers will have other commitments -- like basketball games, weddings, and other activities.

For her, being intentional also means getting seasonal items into the store and on the shelves before the season arrives.

She makes sure she knows what might be going on around the community before she decides which days she'll be open, because she does have regular customers who like to come in, and both she and they would be disappointed if they weren't able to make it in.

She has learned a lot during her first five years of business.

She learned quickly that people will buy Christmas decor pretty much any time of year -- even in July, like last

year. She had just opened and had a consignor ask if she could drop off some Christmas items. Fiedler said sure, but she didn't really plan on displaying them right away.

Surprisingly, the Christmas items flew off the shelves right away.

Even with her limited hours, owning a retail store is a challenge, said Fiedler.

"I will say that having a

retail space is a challenge. It's a challenge to balance everything," she said, noting that she is a married mother of two, who also has a full-time job.

She does get some help from both of the kids, who like to help tag things and put them out on display, and her husband Barry helps move inventory in and around the store as well -- so she is able to combine family time with "at the store" time. She also gets a lot of help from her dad/carpenter, who builds some of the items she has for sale, including plant stands, sleds and Christmas trees.

Having her family involved with the business is one of the rewards for her.

Another reward of owning her own business is the connection she's making to her community.

"I love being part of the community, and that's part of why I really like doing the workshops. You're there for a couple hours with people -- they visit -- it gives people a place to go and something to do," Fiedler said.

She hopes her business is one of the reasons Turtle Lake continues to be a thriving community. She doesn't take

“You need to charge what your time is worth.”

-Laura Fiedler, owner of Blue Door Decor

her customers, whether they live just down the street or are driving in from 60 miles away, for granted.

"Our small towns... we just really

need our local businesses," she added. "I really do appreciate each and every person who comes into the shop, whether they spend \$5 or \$500, we do feel honored and blessed for every customer."

“The workshops still give me that feeling of doing the part that I love the most, even though it's other people doing the painting.”

-Laura Fiedler, owner of Blue Door Decor

started painting things for other people."

Borne from those humble beginnings is Blue Door Decor, a place where people come to create -- and shop.

Fiedler puts on painting workshops for those wanting to get together for a couple hours to create their own one-of-a-kind pieces. That's the really fun part for her these days.

"The workshops still give me that feeling of doing the part that I love the most, even though it's other people doing the painting," said Fiedler.

When she's not putting on painting workshops, she's making sure she keeps the store full of a variety of items for her customers. She learned quickly that the store always needs to be full of different things, or people may start to think you don't have enough variety.

"You have to keep it full and fresh, and you really have to turn over the merchandise every so often so (customers) don't think 'this has been here

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Women entrepreneurs are driving America's recovery from the pandemic

BY AL HAUT,

U.S. Small Business Administration North Dakota District Director

Since 1987, the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) has celebrated Women's History Month to recognize the role women entrepreneurs have in building and strengthening our local and national economies. Women have transformed the face of entrepreneurship across America in both urban and rural communities. This is especially true while our nation confronts the challenges of the COVID 19 pandemic.

Women entrepreneurs continue to play a greater role in creating new jobs and economic activity across the country. According to the National Association of Women Business Owners, nearly 12 million businesses are owned by women, generating \$1.7 trillion in sales, and employing over 9 million people. Together, these businesses represent one of the fastest growing sectors of our economy.

Even given this tremendous growth, women continue to face challenges and obstacles that men do not when starting and growing a business. According to a recent study by the SBA's Office of Advocacy, women-owned firms are overrepresented in industries related to domestic services which tend to have low growth potential. Also, women are more likely than men to run home-based businesses, and women with children were more likely to have a home-



based business.

The study also found that men with children were less likely to operate their businesses from home. Women with children at home were less likely to operate in high growth industries, while the opposite was true for men. Women with college degrees were more likely to be in high growth industries like construction and accounting/booking services. Men in high growth industries tended to have proportionately fewer college degrees. Finally, racial minorities own more businesses in women-concentrated industries such as beauty salons and childcare services.

To level the playing field for women entrepreneurs, the

SBA is administering vital economic aid programs to provide a lifeline to millions of American small businesses, non-profits, and their employees. The Paycheck Protection Program, COVID-19 Economic Injury Disaster Loans, Targeted EIDL Advance, Shuttered Venue Operators Grants, and debt relief for existing agency borrowers are part of the nation's largest economic relief efforts ever.

The SBA continues to support initiatives that benefit the women's business community to address barriers to access to capital, business training, government contracts, and disaster recovery assistance. This is especially true in minority communities where the agency has

called on its lending partners to redouble efforts to assist eligible borrowers. SBA is working to ensure economic aid programs are accessible to all eligible entities, including those hit hardest, while protecting program integrity and ensuring that aid is released as quickly as possible.

Another way SBA assists women entrepreneurs is through its more than 100 Women's Business Centers nationwide, including the North Dakota Women's Business Centers, which assist women in starting and growing small businesses. These centers pro-

vide a full range of services for women entrepreneurs at all stages of planning, implementation, and growth. For those interested in contracting with the federal government, the Women-Owned Business Certification helps equalize the procurement process for women business owners, as the government limits competition for certain contracts to businesses certified as women-owned. This initiative compliments SBA's 8(a) program to assist socially and economically disadvantaged business owners in accessing federal contracts.

Other mentoring programs include SCORE, a network of thousands of volunteer business counselors around the country who mentor and educate small business owners, our statewide network of North Dakota Small Business Development Centers, and the Veterans Business Outreach Center of the Dakotas.

At the SBA, our role is to support all entrepreneurs scale-up their business and recover from today's challenges. This is especially true as we celebrate national Women's History Month. For more information on SBA's programs and services please visit www.sba.gov, follow us on Twitter @SBA_NorthDakota, and subscribe to our e-newsletter at www.sba.gov/updates.

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“There’s “good luck” in Garrison

Cricket on the Hearth reopens after COVID-19

BY TYSON SMEDSTAD

As a young lady Jude Iverson had a dream to someday open her home up to travelers.

Her first thought was a youth hostel of sorts.

And now she has a beautiful bed and breakfast for up to six guests and an event center that can hold up to 100 people.

Her home was built in 1927 from a Sears and Roebucks house kit delivered via railway and put together by area farmers. Her husband Mel’s family moved in to the “Walton” floor plan home in 1942 and has lived in the home since he was born in 1952.

Iverson has held many jobs throughout her life. She worked as the ad salesperson at BHG, a server with Kyle’s Katering and worked at GAIA. She has been able to bring pieces of knowledge from each job to culminate into owning the Cricket on the Hearth Bed and Breakfast just a few miles west of Garrison.

In 2007, she decided to pull the trigger and opened her bed and breakfast.

“It has always been a long-time dream of mine from when I was in my early 20s. I had a dream of owning ... a youth hostel,” Iverson said. “A place where traveling young people hiking and biking could find a cheap bed and a place to eat. That kind of hung in the back of my mind until I was 60.”

Still employed full-time with GAIA, she started looking at options to fulfill her dreams. In a few short years she would be looking at retirement and was looking for something to occupy her time.

“I couldn’t imagine not working,” she said.

She said she learned marketing at BHG, food service at Kyle’s and cooking skills from being a partial owner of a steak house in town.

“It just kind of seemed like something I should do. I could combine this old dream of mine with some of the skills and talents and things I’d learned through jobs I had here locally,”

Iverson said.

While still employees, she could ease into the business and see how it went.

She and her husband decided to add on the existing house and used the new addition as the B and B.

Many people in town encouraged her in her new adventure, She was able to receive a few grants from GAIA to help with marketing, advertising and signage.

“It started slow, but picked up. I continued to work two jobs, the B and B and my day job for six years,” Iverson said.

“When I completely retired it was mine to do with as I wished. I toyed with expanding and adding on more rooms ... but as chance would have it, we had just cleaned up our old barn and refurbished it a little bit to make a gathering place for our family. Well, somebody saw it and asked if they could get married in it.”

That is how the event center side of the business began.

As that summer went on, Iverson started picking up more events like family reunions, anniversaries, family gatherings and five to six weddings each summer.

“With adding that new feature to the business, I went back to GAIA and was able to get a grant on two different occasions to establish an area outside the barn that was a patio area for the guests to use ... two years later we had the concrete poured,” Iverson said.

She does specialize in small events, 75-100 people, along with the bed and breakfast.

Recent bride Amy Rime said, “The house was the perfect place for the girls to relax and get ready in. Jude was too accommodating to us. The property was absolutely gorgeous and there were many places to take beautiful places to take pictures.”

Iverson said, “We pride ourselves on hospitality, we have all the little perks. If you want privacy you go to a motel, but if you want an experience you



Jude Iverson

go to a bed and breakfast. You get to know the people and you get treated like grandma would treat you is what it come down to.”

This includes fireplaces in each room, bathrobes for each guest, complimentary toiletries and snacks in the evening, just like you’re family.

“We only take one booking at a time, we don’t put people in the house who don’t know each other ... I like to just zero in on one couple or one booking and they get specialized treatment,” she said.

Iverson will arrange for flowers and special dinners for guests. She will also provide a directory of other services in town like catering, photographers, flowers, cake decorators, officiants, additional lodging, cash bars and music providers.

“It’s what I love to do and I get to promote the area which is something I always have liked to go,” Iverson said. “I try to promote the businesses around here.” She would rather have her guests use local service than have it brought in from Minot or Bismarck.

“I think Kyle’s (Katering) has catered every event but one that required catering,” Iverson said. “But people can bring their own food. We have



The rustic events barn at Cricket on the Hearth bed and breakfast located a few miles west of Garrison.



Guests gather inside the barn for a summer event at Cricket on the Hearth bed and breakfast near Garrison.

grills and fridges and freezers.

She prides herself on being ‘rustic’ and casual, which is perfect for North Dakota.

“We don’t have a lot of fancy stuff for our events, the barn is quite rustic. It looks like a barn,” she said.

While discussing her business being female owned, she said, “I think women are uniquely equipped to run certain types of businesses, for instance what I do, simply because of the way we were raised. Women were raised to take care of the household,” Iverson said. “But I’m not saying that because gender-wise that’s the way it should be. There may not be complete equality, but my my world that’s the way it should be. We are all equipped to do whatever we want to pursue in life, and if you are good at it, go for it”

She had a passion and wanted

to try it. She never had any doubts she could do it.

“A woman can be educated in anything. To me, the equality is there for any gender to run a business. I don’t really think there’s a difference in what men and women can do in terms of running a business ... I think it’s wide open, or at least I hope that it is,” she said.

For many years her bed and breakfast’s style was Victorian to go with the theme of the Garrison Dickens Village Festival, but is now moving towards a more casual motif.

But to still carry on the “Cricket of the Hearth” theme from the Charles Dickens book, a cricket will be found on each fireplace hearth in every bedroom to bring good luck to all that stay in her home.

“I’ve got crickets all over the house,” Iverson said.

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How to sustain a small business

Opening a small business can be an exciting time in the life of an entrepreneur. Part of that excitement no doubt stems from the financial risks associated with opening a new business. Keeping that business growing and thriving takes effort, but the results can be rewarding.

It is reasonable to feel nervous when starting a business. Information from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that about 20 percent of small businesses fail within a year of opening. That number climbs to 50 percent after five years and 70 percent by year 10.

While it's essential for small business owners to focus on getting their businesses off the ground, it is equally important to consider the strategies necessary to keep that business afloat for the long haul.

Find an industry with staying power

Statistics indicate that health care and social assistance businesses have longevity. The BLS indicates businesses in the construction, transportation and warehousing industries do not enjoy the same staying power. After the fifth year in business, about 35 to 40 percent of these industries will survive. Opening a business in an industry where the stats are on your side can be a savvy move.

Access capital

Quite often businesses fail

because of lack of access to cash to sustain their operations. Fundera, a small business lending marketplace, advises that a large percentage of small business owners who apply for bank loans from big banks get rejected. In addition to raising capital through daily operations, businesses may have to turn to alternative lenders. Alternative lenders are typically companies, but not banks, that operate primarily online to quickly approve and distribute funds. Many are comprised of peer-to-peer lenders. According to a study by Harvard Business School, most major alternative lenders offer full loan applications online on desktop or mobile that take 30 minutes to complete. Keep in mind that interest rates typically are higher with these lenders than with traditional banks.

Stay efficient

Small businesses can grow by maximizing operational efficiency and eliminating unnecessary duties. Efficient business owners delegate tasks to employees so they can keep their own management and business-growing priorities in order.

Build a strong brand and emphasize customer service

Whether a large company or a mom-and-pop business, building a trustworthy and reputable brand can help sustain a business for years



While it's essential for small business owners to focus on getting their businesses off the ground, it is equally important to consider the strategies necessary to keep that business afloat for the long haul.

to come. It is key to keep a business fresh in the minds of consumers. This can be achieved by making small changes dictated by evolving markets and/or offering new products or services.

Forbes says employee interactions are also key to building loyalty among customers. Keeping in touch with clients and using their opinions to make a product or service better can ensure repeat busi-

ness.

Small business success comes down to recognizing that it takes continued work to keep operations afloat. Knowing what supports a business is essential to its longevity.

BEING AUTHENTIC

Elyse Puklich's authenticity was on full display the day she stepped into the role of dealer at Puklich Chevrolet and told her employees, "if you follow me, I will follow you. If you hang in there with me, we'll figure it out." After she made some initial changes and her team implemented a few new ideas, business exploded.

Her authenticity has carried her from "hating" her job at the dealership's switchboard as a teenager, to a career as a teacher, then returning home to study for GM approval to become General Manager.

Her authentic approach is also why employees think of Puklich Chevrolet as family, and the dealership continues to be a respected and vital member of the community.

TRADITION. VALUES. FAMILY TIES.

Puklich has been serving the community since 1983.

Elyse Puklich, Dealer

3701 STATE STREET • BISMARCK, ND 58503
(701)223-5800 • WWW.PUKLICHEVROLET.COM

24-hour CARE

When you need in-home care services, look to Home Instead to deliver the excellence and compassion you deserve.



(l-r) Kim Zuther – Office Coordinator, Erin Sorensen RN, BSN – Franchise Owner and Christy Mindt – General Manager.

- Companionship
- Home Helper
- Personal Care
- Transitional Care
- Memory Care
- Respite Care
- Hospice Support
- Transportation
- Meals and Nutrition
- Shopping and Errands
- Mobility Assistance
- Couple Care
- Awake Overnight Care and 24-hour care

Participant in these state programs

- ♥ North Dakota Family Caregiver Support Program
- ♥ Home and Community Based Services
- ♥ FREE COVID Companionship Program (Ends 09/30/2021)

Meet our CAREGivers

- | | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Alicia Aune | Christina Hirschhorn | Oreen Runge |
| Cara Ballensky | Samantha Kost | Shannon Sailer |
| Chyanne Berry | Dante LaPierre | Samantha Schnaible |
| Yasmaris Castillo | Penny Mattheis | Shari Selzler |
| Tori Conrad | Melissa Nelson | Shilista Soberg |
| Lorena DeVoe | Karen Pantaleone | Jodi Soberg |
| Misti Hartleib | Rachelle Ravnaas | Corryn Vigen |
| Brittany Hiatt | Mariah Richter | Sarah Yunker |

If you are passionate about caring for others, contact us about becoming a member of our team.

New clients welcome!

We offer FREE consultations with a safety and home evaluation.

"Home Instead has been an answer to our prayers for our family! It sets my mind at ease knowing someone is checking on my parents every day. My mom tells me often how cheerful and kind the caregivers are. They have helped her see that she's not alone. It's also a blessing to know that they are helping my dad do more of the things he loves."

M.C.

"We could not be happier! Because of Home Instead and the ND Caregiver Support Program I have been able to leave the house for longer periods to run errands, appointments, etc. and know that my husband is in good hands. I can relax while I am gone and know that he is well cared for and not worry about his health or safety. Also, Bob really likes the caregivers and enjoys their company."

Brenda M.

"As an LBSW, I referred a client to Home Instead, and in 2 1/2 years, I have never seen a success story like this. The home is clean and organized, meals and meds are taken care of, and the client is gaining cognition and mobility."

Lori H

701.748.9953
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