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GREATER MADISON

40 Under 40 and 7 Over 70
The personalities behind the professionals PAGE 28

The FREEMAN

Waukesha County's Daily Newspaper

Realizing the dignity of work

By DAN STEININGER and WENDY BAUMANN

The issue of black unemployment is front and center. We can ignore it by closing our eyes, but life is not that simple. We need solutions. This op-ed points the way. It's time to stop talking and start acting.

Vrakas' micro-loan, gap-funding program finds new life

Program supposed to help small businesses get bigger bank loans

INSIDER NEWS Wisconsin

VOLUME 2 NUMBER 3 FREE-TAKE ONE

Celebrating A King

WWBIC in the news

MEDIA

headlines & highlights

Clearly, High 42 • Low 28 • Details, 88

ELECTION PREVIEWS LOOK AT MAYOR'S RACE, SALEM TOWN BOARD

KENOSHA NEWS

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2012

From beginners to

Bigshots

MAY 20-26, 2012

WISCONSIN STATE JOURNAL • APRIL 8, 2012

BUSINESS

SECTION F

Women-owned firms growing

Kenosha play space entrepreneur part of trend in state

By MARISA EVANS
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Shyenne Lamb, 29, will graduate with a degree in early childhood education from the University of Wisconsin-Stout. She could take her three children—Sara, 10, and two boys, 7 and 5—out to her own business: PlaySpace. An indoor play area, she uses everything from playground equipment to business books, to playpens and coloring for kids from \$1.99. Now, almost four months later, Lamb said that the business is doing well. In addition to the kids playing, she has hosted events including a wrecker fix, holiday parties, a musician and an Easter egg hunt.

"I think one of the major challenges worth \$77.7 million to women last year. That compares with \$4 billion in 2011, an increase of 18.5 percent. In the last year, 25% of the participants in the group's business education classes were women," Baummann said. In addition, 57% of approved loans by the organization's loan program went to women-owned businesses.

"We're still seeing an array of businesses being started by women entrepreneurs," Baummann said. "We need to be a good effort to make information and resources available for small business development and outreach to women entrepreneurs," said Christine Lindberg, executive director of the Wisconsin Women's Council.

"This survey shines a light on the key role women owners play in our economy, and how important it is for policy-makers to support women entrepreneurs in starting and growing their businesses."

She

MAGAZINE

EMPRESARIO

WOMEN OWNED BUSINESSES

PROMISING YEAR for contractors

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JOURNAL SENTINEL

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Woman plunges into plumbing business after 17-year career in banking

5 headlines set for State Fair
Kenosha, IA

THE Business Journal

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Biggest Challenges

Adapting to the new economy; keeping the dining experience fresh; why maintaining consistency; seeking new customers while keeping our regulars happy

Counseling from women's center puts restaurant back on track

By STACY VOGL DAVIS

A master's in milestones

Tooled with an MBA, a plumber opens her shop

By GEORGIA HAST
ghast@journal Sentinel.com

Jessica Castellano has a master's degree in business, but she doesn't wear a dressy suit and heels to the job. When she gets ready for work, she puts on jeans, a gray T-shirt, steel-toe boots and puts her hair into a ponytail. Then she heads into her shop on four wheels—a 2007 Chevy Express van outfitted with wooden trays and boxes of pipe and other supplies she needs when she heads out to fix a faucet, repair a pipe or unblock a drain.

A journeyman plumber with an MBA, Castellano launched her own woman business, Milestone Plumbing Inc., on June 1, 2011, just two weeks before her son was born.

"Some of my friends were having a crisis because they were turning 40," she said. "I set a goal to start the business before my 30th birthday. I made it two weeks early. It took a lot of time, a lot of training, I worked really hard. It was a milestone for me."

But during her last year in college, her mom went back to school to become a nurse. Castellano helped her dad with plumbing jobs. By the time she received her degree, she had switched career plans. She decided she liked going out and fixing things, instead of working in an office.

"This job, every day is a new adventure," she said.

After about a year on the job, her dad sponsored her to go into a five-year plumbing apprenticeship program that included night classes and day school on building codes. The best to become a journeyman lasted six hours.

To gain additional experience, she worked for a larger company in Wisconsin that does new construction, then returned to her dad's shop.

At the same time she was doing her apprenticeship, she went back to school to get a master's degree in business because she wanted a solid business background. She also participated in the entrepreneurship program at UWM.

That's when Castellano met the executive director of the Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative Corp. After getting the approval of a \$50,000 loan, she received a \$20,000 loan. Along with the loan she got regular assistance from a business adviser.

Photo by PFP CREATES, 2D

PUTTING DREAMS TO WORK

Racine County's Daily Newspaper

The Journal Times



11:02 a.m. Jan. 21, 2014

Coast In Bikes contributes to a healthier Milwaukee
by Molly Snyder



Carolyn Weber is a year-round biker and co-owner of Coast In Bikes.

Welcome to Healthy Living Week at OnMilwaukee.com! The resolutions are made, now the real work begins. But we're here to help get you – and keep you – on track with stories about medicine, diet, exercise, spiritual and emotional health, and more. Healthy Living Week is brought to you by Pairdd: easy gluten-free cooking at your fingertips.

Bicycling is an environmentally friendly and healthy way to get from point A to point B. Plus, it's affordable, healthy and, most would agree, fun.

However, even though more and more Milwaukeeans are getting into bicycling, some neighborhoods still lack bicycle shops. Surprisingly, trend-setting Walker's Point was without this service until last April when Carolyn Weber and Tristan Klein opened Coast In Bikes, a bicycle retail and repair shop in the former Bucketworks building at 700 S. 5th St.

On Dec. 1, Coast In moved into the former Gay Arts Center, 703 S. 2nd St., and the owners find it to be a better fit for their business goals.

"Our old space was a wonderful start to our first summer being open; however, it quickly presented challenges in not having enough space, windows and the room we needed to expand the bike shop," says Weber. "We always had the vision of having a coffee shop within the bike shop and the old space couldn't accommodate both businesses."

The new space will house the bike shop, a DIY repair area as well as a coffee shop in the back. Although Coast In is currently open for business, they are focusing on a grand opening in spring.

The new space also allows the owners to offer more cargo bicycles, clothing and used parts. And it provides higher visibility.

"We are on the main commuter path and already have seen an increase in foot traffic," says Weber. "We will soon have a larger sign that we'll share with the bar next to us in the same building."

The space is open and attractive with cream city brick, original plank floor boards, natural light and a vintage steel sliding door.

"We quickly have grown to enjoy being on 2nd Street. The business owners work well together here and network to help each other succeed," says Weber.

Currently, Weber and Klein are working on creating more bicycle parking on the block, possibly in front of Sabbatic, 700 S. 2nd St. Weber says they might start a Kickstarter campaign to help fund the project.

Weber and Klein hired a couple of employees last summer to help out and plan to hire more employees in the future. "I'm proud to still be the only woman co-owner of a bike shop in the city of Milwaukee but hope that many more will follow," says Weber.

Coast In offers repair services, rentals, new and used bike sales and mechanic classes on Sundays for women and Mondays for anyone. They have a special focus on cargo bicycles, commuter bicycles and mountain / trail bikes as well.

"We will also have a bike shower for cyclists to bring their bike in for a small fee to wash their winter or muddy bikes all year," says Weber.

The cafe – although under construction – serves Valentine Coffee and Rishi Tea and later this summer will offer espresso drinks, sandwiches and soup. It will also eventually have a name of its own, too.

One of the most important aspects of the business for Weber and Klein is that it feels like and functions as a community-driven bike shop. This means the owners want people to feel comfortable stopping by to hang out as well as shop, network, learn and repair.

Weber says she was inspired by other bicycle shops with this vibe such as Red Lantern in Brooklyn, Heritage Cycles in Chicago and Angry Catfish in Minneapolis. All of these bike shops have cafes and a few are also a bar.

"We hope that cyclists will find Coast In Bikes a place to hang out, plan events and meet up with other groups," says Weber. "Already I'm planning a series of fireside chats in the coffee shop on a variety of bicycling topics from bicycle safety to bike fitting."

Coast In has a variety of upcoming events, including Crafticle, a winter cycling DIY craft event, which takes place Sunday, Jan. 26 from 2 to 6 p.m. at Stone Creek in the 88.9 building. At Crafticle, attendees can make rice hand warmers, sew reflective material onto their clothing and accessories, learn about bicycle safety and more.

So far, business has been great at both Walker's Point locations. The neighborhood has many cyclists who wanted a local shop and the central location draws customers from surrounding neighborhoods as well.

"We've really enjoyed developing the bike shop" says Weber. "As small business owners we appreciate every customer and hope to get more people riding year round – even in the super cold weather."

Web address: <http://onmilwaukee.com/articles/coastinmoves.html>

Alarm sounded over Wisconsin's lack of start-ups, venture capital



Gary Porter

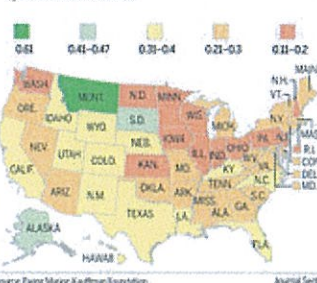
Heather Johnston is the founder and CEO of Find My Spot, which helps renters new to Milwaukee find a places to live that are tailored to their needs.

By Kathleen Gallagher of the Journal Sentinel

June 1, 2014

Entrepreneurial activity rates, 2013

With a business start rate of 0.17% — or 370 businesses created per 100,000 adults — Wisconsin ranked near the bottom in an April study by the Kauffman Foundation.



In many ways, Heather Johnston is an anomaly.

A mechanical engineering graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the Phoenix native took a different career path than most of her college friends: She stayed in Wisconsin.

After working at Harley-Davidson for seven years and getting an MBA at the University of Chicago, Johnston again made an uncommon decision: She left her corporate job to start a company in Milwaukee.

Recent reports from two respected nonprofits — the Brookings Institution and the Kauffman Foundation — have raised alarms that the number of business start-ups in the United States is falling.

The rate of new companies being started fell by nearly half from 1978 to 2011, according to a [May report from the Brookings Institution](#). Wisconsin ranked in the middle of the pack in terms of its rate of decline over that period, the report says.

An [April report by the Kauffman Foundation](#) shows a similar trend continuing, but it is particularly disconcerting for Wisconsin.

The Kauffman report shows that entrepreneurship dipped nationally in 2013 to 0.28% of the adult population, meaning 280 businesses were started for every 100,000 adults in the U.S. In Wisconsin, however, just 170 businesses were created for every 100,000 adults, ranking the state near the bottom in entrepreneurship, at 45th.

If the trends persist, the U.S. will experience "slow growth for the indefinite future," the authors of the Brookings report said.

The outlook is even more sobering for states like Wisconsin that lag behind their peers.

"When you rank near the bottom in start-up creation, you should expect to see poor performance in attracting venture capital," said Joe Kirgues, co-founder of gener8tor, a start-up accelerator that operates in Milwaukee and Madison.

Indeed, Wisconsin companies in 2013 raised only \$35.9 million of venture capital, according to the [National Venture Capital Association Yearbook](#). Neighboring states including Michigan (\$108.2 million) and Minnesota (\$270 million) raised substantially more.

"Based on 2013 numbers alone, if we were to just match Minnesota's performance, that would result in an increase of more than \$2 billion of capital into the state over the next decade," Kirgues said.

Retaining young talent

The lack of start-ups that compounds the venture capital shortage also affects the decisions young, talented university graduates make about where to live.

"We're able to attract to our universities a really high talent level that wants to do something different and innovative and make an impact on the state and the world — but a lot of them are leaving," said Johnston, whose Milwaukee company, [Find My Spot LLC](#), helps relocating professionals find premium rental accommodations.

When Johnston reached out to fellow UW-Madison graduates on the coasts to spread the word that her company was hiring, they suggested that she move her company to the East or West Coast. That's where most start-ups are, and that's where potential employees are most easily attracted.

She chose to stay in Milwaukee — and it is clear that the area needs to nurture many more entrepreneurs like her if its economy is to grow significantly in the decade ahead.

"We need more start-ups in the pipeline because new companies historically are job creators. Older, more mature companies ebb and flow in terms of their job creation," said Tom Still, president of the Wisconsin Technology Council.

Despite the state's struggles, many in the entrepreneurial community point to a sector they say is ready-made to help Wisconsin pull itself up: health care information technology.

"It's an area where Madison has a clear competitive advantage relative to the rest of the country," said [Greg Robinson](#), who heads 4490 Ventures, a new \$30 million venture capital fund based in Madison. "We can try to compete in other sectors, but this is where we have the clear advantage."

The health care IT sector has a wildly successful anchor company in Epic Systems, a medical records software maker headquartered in Verona that employs nearly 7,000 people. Also, GE Healthcare's information technology arm has a large presence in Wauwatosa, and a growing number of start-ups in this sector are getting venture funding.

Aver Informatics, a De Pere health care data analysis company, is the most recent health care IT company to raise money. Aver [said last week](#) it had raised \$8.5 million in a round led by GE Ventures

and [Drive Capital](#), a relatively new Columbus, Ohio, firm started by two Silicon Valley veterans. There are many more companies emerging in this area, and often their founders or business ideas have [connections to Epic](#).

"We have all the raw ingredients here," said Mark Bakken, co-founder of [Nordic Consulting Partners Inc.](#), the biggest Wisconsin-based Epic consulting firm. Venture capitalists around the country are seeing Madison as one of the hubs for health care solutions, he said.

Also, there seem to be more and more people in Wisconsin willing to leave big companies to found or work at start-ups, said Laura King, a three-time entrepreneur who left an executive position at GE Healthcare to start her last company.

King's current venture is Elucent Medical LLC, a Madison company that is developing a system for tagging breast cancer tumors that could help surgeons locate and remove the masses.

"But there's still a huge dearth of venture capital," King said. And that stymies some of the larger, higher-growth businesses, she added.

Positive signs for state

Many point to the success of the state's Act 255 tax credits, which encourage and reward investments in qualified young companies. There is new money coming from out-of-state investors, and just getting started are the state-sponsored \$30 million [Badger Jobs Fund](#) and the 4490 fund, which received funding from the State of Wisconsin Investment Board and the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation.

"Activity is clearly up," said Tim Keane, director of the [Golden Angels](#) investing network and entrepreneur in residence at Carroll University. "There are more people who show up and understand the whole picture, the growth side, the investment side and the customer acquisition side." Investment levels are a trailing indicator, said Keane, who predicts there are "good times coming up here."

Johnston, of Find My Spot, said she has found it easier in Wisconsin to access the human resources managers and relocation coordinators who are key to gaining customers for her business.

"The positive of growing a company here is that even though the entire business community may not understand start-ups, many business leaders in this community are very welcoming and will take the 20 minutes to sit down with you and listen to what you're doing," she said.

Continuing to grow the state's entrepreneurial efforts will take time, but Keane says he believes the opportunity is there.

"There are a lot of people in Wisconsin who have opportunities to change their lives and the community in good ways because this environment is more supportive than it was before," he said.

Contest finalists

Elucent Medical LLC and Find My Spot LLC are among 13 finalists in the Governor's Business Plan Competition. Winners will be announced at a lunch on Wednesday at the Alliant Energy Center in Madison. The lunch is part of the 2014 Wisconsin Entrepreneur's Conference, which is organized by the Wisconsin Technology Council. For [more information](#) about the conference, or to register to attend, go to wisconsintechcouncil.com.

<http://www.jsonline.com/business/alarm-sounded-over-wisconsins-lack-of-start-ups-venture-capital-b99279993z1-261467221.html>

Milwaukee Kayak Co. opens a watery path to explore the city

By Tom Held



Published June 1, 2013 1:04 p.m.

Beth Handle and her father, Dave Kyte, head to the Milwaukee Kayak Co. launch on the Milwaukee River.

From a small, wooden pier, along a brushy riverbank on the Milwaukee River, Beth Handle is opening a watery passage to unexplored parts of Milwaukee.

It's the backside of the city, the walkways and facades that face the water, not the street: along the Milwaukee River from the Historic Third Ward to the Lakefront Brewery and beyond; along the Menomonee from the Harley Davidson Museum to Miller Park, and along the Kinnickinnic to Barnacle Bud's and Baran Park.

Starting Saturday morning, Handle's Milwaukee Kayak Co. will rent canoes and kayaks for paddling excursions on the city's rivers. A kayak rental will cost \$25 for four hours. A canoe goes for \$35. Add \$10 for each additional hour.

It's a business start-up in pure form.

Handle saved her pennies from a six-year stint as marketing manager at Laacke & Joy's to buy 15 kayaks, two canoes and two stand-up paddleboards.

They're available for rent from a small bit of space Handle leases in Jerry's Docks, a marina in the 300 block of S. Water St.

Follow the gravel drive across from the Next Act Theatre and you'll find the Milwaukee Kayak Co. - Handle and the boats and personal flotation devices. A small shed for the business was still a work in progress on Thursday.

"It's going to be an organic experience," said the 38-year-old from Bay View.

Handle began pursuing her business plan over the winter, when Laacke & Joy's announced that it would close its downtown store in 2014. Without the shop on the Milwaukee River, the downtown area would be surrounded by water, but with no easy access for people who wanted to rent a canoe or kayak.

"My main goal is to keep people on the water in Milwaukee," Handle said. "I'm excited to share my passion for paddle sports. On the water, you're interacting with nature and the city on a different level."

During her time at Laacke & Joy's, Handle paddled the local rivers three times a week. Those trips and her new business are extensions of the enjoyment she found on the water as a young girl, during family trips to Crivitz. The days in a canoe were the best days of the summer.

Juli Kaufmann, owner of Fix Development LLC and developer of the Clock Shadow Building in Walker's Point, also believes the Milwaukee Kayak Co. fills a gap in the city's recreational pursuits.

"Exploring the City of Milwaukee by boat is an exceptional experience and, unfortunately exceptionally rare," Kaufmann said. "I am amazed at how few people have taken the opportunity to travel by river through downtown."

"The addition of Milwaukee Kayak Co. will hopefully change this by making the river more affordable and easily accessible to many," she said.

"Much like riding a bike transforms your experiences of a city by shifting scale and site lines, traveling by kayak through Milwaukee is really also a transformative experience. The encounters with unexpected natural beauty are surprising and the views of the "backsides" of many landmarks is wonderful to take in."

Kaufmann also embraces Handle's start-up as a perfect fit for the Walker's Point and Historic Third Ward neighborhoods, where small entrepreneurs are rebuilding a business hub.

"It's really exciting to see another Milwaukee entrepreneur taking the leap to launch (pun intended) a business she believes in that will make Milwaukee a better, more sustainable place," Kaufmann said. "These are exactly the kinds of businesses Milwaukee needs - ones that marry our environmental and cultural assets to economic impact. The kayaks will be enjoyed by residents right in the city and will also attract those visiting - whether from suburbs or afar. There are opportunities to paddle up and down the River, making stops at other businesses along the ride - contributing a greater economic ripple to businesses along our amazing Riverwalk."

The Milwaukee Kayak Co. will be open Wednesday through Sunday.

Need to know: Canoes and kayaks, with paddles and PFDs, will be available for rent from 9:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday, and 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sundays. Renters must be 18 or older. Other rental times can be arranged. Check out the web site to make reservations.

<http://mobile.onmilwaukee.com/sports/articles/milwaukekayakco>