

ECONOMIC RESILIENCY

Business Spotlight

Molly Lewis and Sean Kelly opened Dog River Pet Supplies in Hood River on Valentine's Day in 2019, with the intention of bringing raw and natural pet foods, holistic remedies and expert nutrition advice to pets and their owners. While the shop caters to dogs and cats, they recently expanded to include products for wild bird and small animal enthusiasts. **In this Spotlight, we hear from Molly about their start and how they dealt with the pandemic.**



Do your research...



I have a background in nutrition and natural medicine for cats and dogs. My mom lives in Parkdale and had been driving to Portland to buy raw food for her dog Lolo, so I knew there was a market for this kind of product in Hood River. We did some demographic research and discovered that there are more dogs than children per household in Hood River County, so we decided it was a pretty good place to open a natural food store for dogs and cats.



Starting up

We both had been business owners before, so we knew how to start a business and we drafted a business plan. We worked with the Oregon SBDC to help tailor our financials specifically to this market. We sought loans from family and MCEEDD (Molly and Sean were able to open, and later expand, Dog River Pet Supplies with the help of loans through the [Columbia River Gorge Oregon Investment Board](#), staffed by MCEEDD).



Pandemic



The pandemic was both a blessing and a curse. We hadn't been open very long when the pandemic struck. Pet supply stores are considered an essential business, so we stayed open. We did curbside pick-up only. It was incredibly stressful. We had our employees stay home and Sean and I ran the store by ourselves. We did receive a PPP loan, which allowed us to pay the employees that stayed home.

There were, and continue to be, so many supply chain issues. It's still very difficult to maintain inventory. Being a small business and working with other small businesses is helpful. These relationships were key to finding solutions.



"We are fierce advocates for the physical and psychological health and well-being of all animals. We run our business from a place of compassion, kindness, and respect for all creatures."

Thoughts on doing business online...

We are so focused on customer service and providing in-person support that we don't do business online. Maybe in the future, but that's a second business!



Recommendation to people wanting to start a business...

Just go for it! if you have something you're passionate about, there is a way. Be prepared to face challenges, be disappointed, and take on big commitments, but also be prepared for success!

If I had some free time...

I have another small business as a bookbinder, which is the opposite of this job – it is quiet, meticulous, and creative in a different way. I would love to give that more attention.



What's Next?

Our recent expansion includes a designated fear-free dog training area. We have a wonderful dog trainer on staff who runs puppy socialization classes and one-on-one positive reinforcement dog training sessions. Next, we plan to build out a small treatment room so we can host holistic veterinary practitioners who do acupuncture, cold laser therapy, massage, and chiropractic work for dogs and cats.

Thank you to our funders:



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