



Wyoming Ranked #1 Entrepreneurial State In Country, Sheridan County Tops In State

Wyoming is the No. 1 entrepreneurial state in the nation according to U.S. Census Bureau data. Sheridan lies at the heart of the state's most entrepreneurial county, where 51% of residents are self-employed.



Renée Jean

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Annie and Chuck Magera own Carrol's Furniture in Sheridan. They feel that Sheridan's entrepreneurial spirit stems from the very heart and soul of the community, where lifelong residents are not just willing but eager to help others succeed. It's a rising tide lifts all boats type of mentality. (Renée Jean, Cowboy State Daily)

It turns out, entrepreneurship is catching like a virus.

It spreads from friend to friend in Sheridan, Wyoming, a city within the state's biggest entrepreneurial county.

Wyoming is the No. 1 entrepreneurial state in the nation, with 283 new businesses per 100,000 so far in 2024, according to U.S. Census Bureau data.



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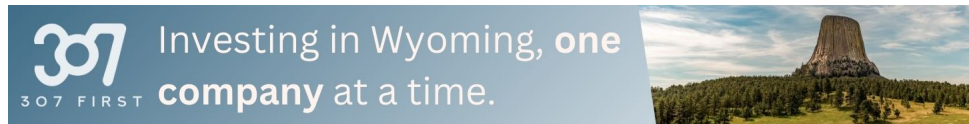
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Folks like Candice and Matt Kindred.

The two didn't know each other at all when they moved to Sheridan. They came for their regular old day jobs, Matt with the oil and gas industry and Candace as general manager for a local automotive and power sports industry dealership.

The two fell in love with Sheridan first, then met through mutual friends and fell in love with each other, eventually getting married.

Neither had ever really thought about owning a business before. But there's something about Sheridan that encourages people to dream big.



And that something, for the Kindreds, was all the entrepreneur friends around them.

"We were exposed very quickly in Sheridan after moving here to that entrepreneurial spirit," Matt said. "Everything ranging from the majority of our friends being business owners, to now watching their kids starting their own businesses that grew up in this community. It's a very unique aspect of this community. You don't often see that in a community this small."

Many Hands Make Light Work

No sooner had Candace and Matt mentioned the idea of owning a business someday during what Candace describes as a "professional transition," than their friends, who own a bike shop, were not only embracing the idea, but actively spurring it on.

"They were like, 'Well, what does Sheridan need?'" Candace recalled.

As the Kindreds thought about that, they decided it was food.

Not just any food though.

Fast-casual, healthy food is what they most find lacking in their own Wyoming experiences.

"So, then they were asking, 'Have you thought about this franchise or thought about that franchise?'" Candace said. "That really opened our eyes to here's an interesting way to look at it. What does the community need. And then, what does all of Wyoming need?"

Now the two have signed onto a franchise called Teriyaki Madness, a fast-casual option with rising popularity in other states that hasn't shown up in Wyoming yet.

"We have purchased a three-store development with Teriyaki Madness, and we're starting No. 1 in Sheridan, which is our backyard," Candace said. "And then we're looking at opening up one in Gillette and Casper in the next three to five years."

The Kindreds have found plenty of help along the way, from picking the brains of the owner of the Java Moon coffee shop, who transitioned from finance to food, to a temporary job at a friend's restaurant, the Killy's Smokehouse & Irish Pub. Candace asked for the job to get some hands-on experience before Teriyaki Madness is open.

In return for that favor, Candace is going to let her friend from Killy's shadow her franchise, to get ideas for their business.

"That's the attitude in this community," Candace said. "If you win, we all win. So, no one is standoffish or coy or secretive about what they're doing. It's been more of a we'll promote your business, even though we are another food establishment."

Where Things Just Fall Into Place

Calie LeDuc, co-owner of the Sheridan Bicycle Co. that helped the Kindreds become business owners, doesn't think she and her husband, Jordan, would have ever owned a bike shop at all if they hadn't moved to Sheridan.

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"We ended up seeing more opportunity here," LeDuc said. "Things just fell into place better."

Among the things that fell into place were entrepreneur friends who, when they heard the LeDucs might want to own a bike shop someday, were quick to offer their help.

Their riding buddy was suddenly on board to be their banker, helping them get a Small Business Administration (SBA) loan, while a hiking buddy, who was a realtor, jumped at the chance to find them find the perfect starter shop on a side street in downtown Sheridan.

"It wasn't far off Main Street and the rent was affordable for us," LeDuc recalled. "And it's very easy to start businesses in Wyoming. You just get on the Secretary of State's website, enter your information, and you get an EIN — your tax ID — and then you make your Articles of Organization. So, all of that seemed very easy."

A different friend, meanwhile, agreed to be their silent business partner, helping them with some of the early financing, although LeDuc recalls refinancing her car as well, to free up some money.

Now, after 10 years, the Leducs have not only paid back their angel investor and then some, but they've been able to move to a bigger, nicer shop in downtown Sheridan. They're doing well so far, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, and despite changes to their industry — although they're always thinking about where to take the business next. Conversations their entrepreneurial friends are always up for.



Teriyaki Madness couple Matt and Candice Kindred in the new store they are preparing to open soon in Sheridan. (Renee Jean, Cowboy State Daily)



A Shop At Home Culture

Right next door to the LeDuc's bike shop is a little candle shop with a statewide customer base. WYO Candle Co. is owned by Megan and Dwight Stanislaw and has found boutique stores across the state to carry their candles.

Megan wasn't surprised to learn that Sheridan is the most entrepreneurial city in the state.

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That includes shopping events to draw people downtown, as well as startup challenges, which she and her husband entered five years ago.

Megan started out pouring candles for a fundraiser. After so many people asked her to make more candles, she realized she had a business idea on her hands.

Like the LeDucs and the Kindreds, the moment she started talking about this idea, the entrepreneurs around them were eager to help.

The couple decided to participate in the 307 Impact's startup challenge, since discontinued, to access the wider community of entrepreneurs. Through that they found a strong network of people willing to share ideas and help them make their dreams come true.

"We've got such a strong sense of community," she said. "And the idea of shopping local and supporting your local businesses first if you can. I know that's not always possible, but a lot of people here really think about that."

Never Sitting In Traffic

Annie Magera, who served as a judge for 307 Impact, has been a lifelong Sheridan resident and an entrepreneur since her 20s. She and her husband, Chuck, own Carroll's furniture.

Annie believes her town has always had a strong core of business-minded folks, but she also believes it's more than that. It's about the very heart of Sheridan itself.

"For those of us who are born and raised here, like I will extend to you, 'Who do I know, what are my contacts? What can I do for you?'" she said.

Magera and Chuck have traveled the world, but because of that heart, Sheridan is where they always want to return to. There's the sense of community, as well as the beauty of the area.

It's also nice, Magera added, that there's no real traffic jams in Sheridan. Unlike big cities elsewhere.

"I just feel like we're very interconnected here," she said. "And all of our friends, like not intentionally, but it's like, 'I know somebody who knows somebody. Let me introduce you to this person.' We're very supportive. Not in competition, but to lift each other up."

Chuck, sees it similarly, even though he's not a lifelong resident.

"Sheridan is like come here, share with us," he said. "Bring what you know, bring what you have to offer and celebrate. It's awesome. I just love it. I didn't grow up here, but this is definitely home.

"It's given us so many different opportunities to really embrace like the American Dream," he continued. "It's hard work and there are risks, but to be able to bear the fruit and reap the reward and give back to the community, it's extraordinary."

"We have a mindset where we know there's no glass ceiling," Magera added. "As long as we continue to put our money in front of each other, into each other, all we can do is continue. And then we can also paddle board and take our kids to dance and do all the things — and never sit in traffic."

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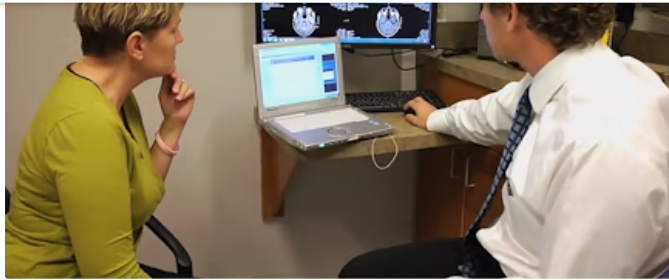
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