

Meat, cheese, UWO: Perfect recipe for alumna's small business launch

by Derek Paulus - Wednesday, April 03, 2013

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Few things represent Wisconsin – America’s Dairyland – as well as quality cheese.

“I’ve been a cheese geek forever,” said University of Wisconsin Oshkosh alumna MariBeth Theusch ‘84, who owns one of Oshkosh’s newest businesses, Butcher Block Meats and Cheese, 234 N. Koeller St., Oshkosh.

Theusch owns the business with her husband, Kim, who has had a longtime hobby making sausage for family members. Combining their two interests, the Theusches opened up their own store on Nov. 5, 2012.

To accomplish this, the couple employed the help of UW Oshkosh’s Business Success Center and a team of University students and faculty to create and implement a marketing plan for the new shop.

“I knew that the resources were there from having been a student and I knew how good the business school... is here, and so they were very helpful,” said MariBeth Theusch, a finance major during her time at UW Oshkosh. “We had already kind of started on our business plan but then working with them took it to that next step.”

Meridith Jaeger, the outreach program manager for UW Oshkosh’s Business Success Center, said the partnership with the Theusches represented the University’s aim to connect with the community.

“Our mission here at the Business Success Center is to grow our community by uniting our University resources with local businesses,” Jaeger said. “In the case of Butcher Block Meats and Cheese, we were able to utilize the talents of our students, our full service survey center and several faculty to provide a well researched and thought out marketing plan to get Kim and MariBeth off to the start they needed to be successful.”

Former UW Oshkosh adjunct professor and marketer-in-residence Dana Baumgart, who assisted with the marketing plan, said a student marketing team did preliminary research before the shop opened. This team inquired about what products the shop should carry, public interest in such a shop outside of a traditional grocery store and how much money customers would be willing to spend on quality meat and cheese. Another student developed and implemented a communications plan aimed at advertisements and promotions for the store.

UW Oshkosh alumna Samantha Gehl ’12, was the Business Success Center intern who implemented this communications plan. Gehl, who now works as a technology assistant for the Hortonville Area School District, said working with Butcher Block Meats and Cheese helped her prepare for her current role by providing experience working with web pages and writing online content. She said she also had the

chance to work with people who were enthusiastic about their work.

“Kim and MariBeth are great people,” she said. “When you talk to them you get a sense of how passionate they are about their business.”

This passion seems to be reflected in the products they provide, which MariBeth Theusch described as differentiating from the rest in quality and freshness. Butcher Block Meats and Cheese only sells meat that is hormone and preservative free, and works to buy from suppliers who raise their animals humanely. MariBeth Theusch said their cut-to-order cheese is also a step above the rest, offering a greater variety from small producers whose stories she said she enjoys sharing.

“I like to tell the story of the cheese makers,” she said. “That’s even more important to me is that these people that are out there making... unique cheese and original cheese, I like being able to tell their story, what they do and how they do it.”

The shop also provides fresh and smoked sausages that are smoked in their own smokehouse, frozen prepared food items and recipes and cooking suggestions for the products they carry. In addition to Wisconsin cows, sheep and goats also provide milk used for some of the store’s cheeses.

After having lived in other parts of the country, the Theusches wanted to get back to Wisconsin to open their new store. MariBeth Theusch said Oshkosh was the pro-business city they were searching for.

“We were looking for a city that had some sense of community... so we really fell in love here,” she said. “We just fell in love with Oshkosh and the people. Everybody was always friendly when we came here. We liked the fact that there were lots of events going on, always something going on here.”

Jaeger said this emphasis on community is something UW Oshkosh faculty can expand by utilizing their expertise to support this type of economic and community development, as displayed in the establishment of Butcher Block Meats and Cheese.

“Oshkosh is blessed to have them as part of our community,” Jaeger said. “We at the Business Success Center look forward to helping many more local businesses start, grow and prosper.”

Learn more:

- [UW Oshkosh Business Success Center](#)
- [Butcher Block Meats & Cheese](#)