

Business & Ag

Durkeegirl jewelry: a new company with local ties

By Kerry McQuisten
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Michelle Richwine of Bend hasn't forgotten her Baker County roots. In fact, those roots run so deep that she named her new company Durkeegirl Designs—after the place she was raised.

A Baker High School graduate from the class of 1990, Richwine said she caught the jewelry-making bug about two years ago.

"Being a stay-at-home mom is what inspired me to start making jewelry. I wanted to have a hobby that I could make a little money doing something that I like and still be able to take care of my girls at home. I love doing arts and crafts and making things so jewelry became a fun hobby for me. I now make jewelry for my friends, my kids, and their teachers at school," Richwine said.

She went on to take some jewelry design classes in Bend, to hone her skills. Her materials of choice are primarily hammered copper and silver, but recently she began incorporating specialty beads and gemstones, particularly for her earrings. Lately she has branched out into leather-based bracelets that also utilize those beads and gems.

After taking those classes? "I learned some cool techniques and I was



Submitted Photo.

Michelle Richwine displays some of her handcrafted jewelry.

hooked," Richwine said. "I learned the different gauges of wire and how to wire wrap along with hand-forging jewelry... I started out making jewelry for my friends and family. I would give them jewelry for their birthdays or special events. Then my friends started asking me to sell the items I create."

Thus, Durkeegirl Designs was born.

Richwine emphasizes how important being able to stay at home with her children is. She's even begun taking business and marketing classes to create "a successful job that I can

do at home."

Richwine's parents, Ted and Diane Bloomer, still reside on the Durkee cattle ranch that was her childhood home.

"I worked fighting fires out of Baker City and then on the Union Hotshot firefighting crew out of La Grande for a couple summers, which is how I met my husband Dan," Richwine said. "We both went to Oregon State University and I got a Bachelors of Science in Natural Resources. We both graduated from OSU and have resided in Bend, Oregon since then."

Richwine worked for USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service for approximately 16 years.

She added, "Then, I had two girls and when I had my second daughter I decided to be a stay-at-home mom."

Richwine offers her line of jewelry online. Those interested can visit www.durkeegirl.etsy.com.

"I also have a Facebook page called Durkeegirl Designs and it will direct folks to my Etsy site," she said. Major credit cards and even Paypal are accepted.

Big dream for a new sawmill on hold for time being

By Kerry McQuisten
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For the past three years, Rory Leonard, formerly of Haines, has dreamed about putting together the pieces for a new sawmill in Baker County that will bring jobs to the area.

After making some big moves toward making that dream a reality, he finds his project on hold—at least for the moment.

Though currently residing in Spokane, Leonard still owns a small portable mill in Haines—a micro-mill that focuses on lumber and split rails primarily. A new sawmill would be quite an expansion, directly employing between five and 10 people, and indirectly involving between 40 and 50, he estimates.

"We're trying to locate in Baker County," he said two weeks ago. "I'd like to create some jobs there."

Then this week, Leonard said his biggest roadblock—finding a steady supply of red fir—has put the breaks on his project for a bit.

"I figure it'll take around 1,200 (log truck) loads per year," he said.

Leonard was in contact with a third party who works with Union Pacific and is a purchasing agent for railroad ties. A signed contract with a railroad would potentially mean an ongoing annual cash infusion of over \$1 million wherever a new mill producing ties locates.

Moving forward with formal contract negotiations is on hold unless

Leonard finds a welcome location for his mill with the timber supply he needs, and purchases that mill to put into production.

Leonard explained that he had talked with the local Small Woodlands Association about their timber supply, and was told that the Association was under contract to Boise Cascade. Thus, their local supply of red fir wouldn't be available for his project.

A railroad contract would primarily involve the cutting of railroad ties. From the leftover wood product, items such as skid cabins and variously sized lumber could potentially be created.

Leonard pointed out an additional hurdle.

"I also believe Baker County can only support about 15% of what we would produce and need to sell. So we need to find an outside market."

Leonard said he welcomes assistance, especially now, to revitalize his idea.

Leonard called the Baker County Economic Development Department, which is co-funded by the County and City in a contract with Rep. Greg Smith's company. Leonard said he was called back with information about loans and financing options, and directed to a web site.

Leonard is unsure of Baker County's level of interest at this early stage, but hopes that interest will grow.

When asked if the County would support Leonard's specific project and if so,

how, Commissioner Bill Harvey wrote in an email, "I look forward to many opportunities for all of Baker County to have our forest industry start back up. I believe that the best way for us to begin is to start with small companies and to help them build up as they go. The need for our forests to be truly managed is urgent and we must act together to bring our forests to a healthy condition once again."

Leonard says his plans are on hold for now until he can find that coveted red fir supply for those railroad ties.

Still, Leonard says he isn't giving up yet. They way he sees it, he's just begun.

Recently, he began talking with a gentleman about a large Morbark portable mill that came from South Carolina and was transported all the way to Oregon. Should a timber supply be located, Leonard intends to purchase the mill using his own

personal funds—no loans required.

Leonard also has a lead on a location and timber supply in another area. "I'm really trying to locate in Baker County, but ... I'm not sure where we'll end up. I have 30 years in the business, and I'm employed. I don't need to do this, but I'd sure like to create some jobs."

He said the timber industry is inside his "comfort zone."

He paused and then added with optimism that even if aspects of his project are a long-shot, he's giving the idea his best try, still with hopes of triggering enough enthusiasm within Baker County to end up seeing his dream come to fruition here.

Leonard was back in Baker County last week. He says he spoke to Haines' Mayor Jim Brown further about the idea. Brown discussed the mill idea during Wednesday's County Commissioners' meeting. (See page 10.)

— WEEKLY HAY REPORT —

Friday, February 27, 2015 — Eastern Oregon

Prices trended generally steady compared to the same quality last week. Trade activity and demand have picked up a little this week. The good weather in several areas of Oregon has slowed down demand, as the pasture grasses are growing causing end users to be able to turn animals out on pasture rather than purchase and feed additional hay. Fewer containers available at the shipping ports has slowed down the ability to export hay overseas. Several producers have told all that they plan to sell for this season.

Alfalfa - Large Square good
100 (tons) 185.00 (price)

USDA Market News Service—AMS.USDA.gov

— CATTLE MARKET REPORT —

Wednesday, February 25, 2015
Vale, Oregon

Cattle sold through the auction: 759

Steer Calves

300-400# Bulk 268.00 - 319.00 Top 338.00
400-500# Bulk 278.00 - 306.00 Top 315.00
500-600# Bulk 242.00 - 278.00 Top 280.00

Heifer Calves

300-400# Bulk 229.00 - 253.00 Top 264.00
400-500# Bulk 228.00 - 253.00 Top 260.00
500-600# Bulk 221.00 - 245.00 Top 248.00

Yearling Steers

600-700# Bulk 216.00 - 228.00 Top 229.00
700-800# Bulk 188.00 - 208.00 Top 209.00
800-900# Bulk 184.00 - 193.00 Top 194.00
900-1,000# Bulk 183.00 - 179.00 Top 183.00

Yearling Heifers

600-700# Bulk 202.00 - 217.00 Top 219.00
700-800# Bulk 178.00 - 193.00 Top 198.00
800-900# Bulk N/A Top N/A
900-1,000# Bulk N/A Top N/A

Thin Shelly Cows 82.00 - 94.00
Butcher Cows 96.00 - 109.00
Butcher Bulls 106.00 - 119.00
Stock Cows 1425.00 - 1775.00
Younger Hfrts. 16.00 - 146.00
Stock Cows Yng. - N/A

ProducersLivestock.com
541-473-3136

— LOG PRICE REPORT —

Price per 1,000 board feet: Northeast Oregon

Delivered to Elgin

Doug Fir / Larch 6"+ \$370/m
White Fir/Sp 6"+ \$380/m
LPP 6"+ \$350/m

Delivered to La Grande

P. Pine 6-11" \$290/m
12-17" \$340/m
18-23" \$390/m
24'+ \$420/m

Delivered to Pilot Rock

12-17" \$390/m
18-23" \$440/m
24'+ \$480/m

Delivered pulp

\$28/ton to Elgin
\$28/ton to La Grande
Courtesy of Arvid Andersen,
Andersen Forestry Consulting

— PRECIOUS METALS REPORT —

Price per ounce, USD

Gold: \$1204.80

Silver: \$16.30

Platinum: \$1,190.25

Palladium: \$831.90

Bloomberg.com

— AG COMMODITIES —

Corn: \$390.75/bu/USD
Wheat: \$504.50/bu/USD
Soybeans: \$1007.50/bu/USD
Oats: \$284.00 bu/USD
Rough Rice: \$10.77/cwt/USD
Canola: \$467.70 CAD/mwt
Live Cattle: \$151.75/lb./USD
Feeder Cattle: \$198.53/lb./USD
Lean Hogs: \$66.63/lb./USD

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