Speakeasy thrives with marketing basics

By PHIL WRIGHT
EO Media Group

Katie Jones moved her Speakeasy Salon and Boutique from her home to 215 S.W. 10th St., Pendleton, and pushed for growth from day one.

"We are currently bursting out of the seams and already planning for building a bigger salon in the future," she said.

Growing a small business isn't easy. According to a study by the U.S. Small Business Administration, four out of five businesses that started in 2014 survived until 2015, the best rate since 2005. About half of all small businesses survive five years or longer, and one in three survive 10 years or longer.

Jones moved to the Pendleton area five years ago from Seattle after marrying Keegan Jones of Helix. She said her husband was not so enthusiastic about an outsider's chances of making a small business successful in the local market. But she did not back off.

"I'm that kind of person," she said.

She advised would-be entrepreneurs to "just be all in, to know your hand and to be all-in and go for it." But also said they need to work on making the business work.

"It is all about marketing, 100 percent about marketing," Jones said. "You cannot rely on word of mouth. I think that's the biggest misconception in a small town."

In addition to basic marketing principles, she said, small business owners cannot stop working, whether that's at the shop or at home.

About half of all small businesses are home-based, as the Speakeasy started out, and about 60 percent without any employees are based in the home. The Speakeasy now employs six people.

Jones said her hours at the salon vary week to week, but she constantly thinks about developing her business, researching products and looking for the next idea or thing. The Speakeasy this week is getting a state-of-art tanning bed, she said, unlike anything else in Pendleton.

Embracing customers and not taking them for granted is another basic tenant the Speakeasy follows.

"Our customers are our friends," she said.

November was the Speakeasy's best month as its customers readied for Christmas, Jones said, and the recent wave of winter storms has not put a dent in work. Jones said that was a big difference coming from Seattle.

"In Eastern Oregon," she said, "people do not cancel their hair appointments."

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Stylists Katie Jones, owner of the Speakeasy Salon and Boutique, and Melissa Braniff blow dry client Sara Reyburn's hair at Jones' shop in December in Pendleton.

More building permits issued in 2016

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Building permits increased in both Hermiston and Pendleton in 2016 over the previous year, though single-family housing permits grew slightly in Hermiston while being cut in half in Pendleton.

As a whole, Pendleton's building department issued 159 permits in 2016, five more than the previous year. In Hermiston, the city issued 205 permits in 2016, seven more than in 2015.

Permits are issued by the city for everything from installing flag poles and handrails to building new schools and hotels.

Jutta Haliewicz of the Pendleton public works office said many of the permits for 2016 were for remodels from folks expanding their homes. The city issued 10 permits for single-family dwellings with a valuation of about $2.46 million, according to the city's report, while in 2015 there were 21 permits for homes worth about $4.21 million.

Permits overall saw a valuation boost in 2015 to $42 million, thanks to construction of big-ticket items including new elementary schools and an expansion at Hill Meat, but decreased from about $42 million in 2015 to $15.4 million in 2016.

Commercial permits also dropped in Pendleton from seven in 2015 worth more than $28.6 million to four in 2016 worth $4.65 million.

In Hermiston, permits were issued for 46 new single-family homes in 2016 with a valuation of $31.8 million, up from 43 valued at $29.4 million in 2015.