



541 • 999 • 6078

OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK

FACEBOOK.COM/PETERSENAUTODETAIL

OREGON COAST'S SUPERSTORE
DIVERSIFIED MARINE & EQUIPMENT SALES
 WHERE YOU ALWAYS GET A WHALE OF A DEAL!




For all your Boat & Trailer Needs
 Sales and Consignments Wanted
 ATV's, Rv's, Boats, Cars & Trucks
 Metal Buildings/Wooden Sheds

★★ AUTOMOTIVE DETAILING ★★

Complete Interior & Exterior Detailing
 Hand Wash • Auto • RV • Boat • ATV • Air Brushing • Pin Stripping
 Headlight/ Wheel Restoration and polishing.

U-HAUL We offer Full line U-Haul and Storage Containers.

541-997-4505
 diversifiedmarineandequipmentsales.com



To help you navigate all the Florence art community has to offer

Pick Up YOURS Today!

Passports are available at the following locations:

- Florence Area Chamber of Commerce
- The Siuslaw News
- FRAA - Florence Regional Arts Alliance
- Backstreet Gallery
- Vardanian Gallery
- The River Gallery
- Rodger Bennett Photography
- Purple Pelican
- Siuslaw Public Library
- Florence Events Center
- Florence City Hall
- BeauxArts Fine Art Materials & Gallery

Workforce from 8A

its biggest clients coming from places like Dubai and the United Arab Emirates. The company is owned by married couple Klaus and Maria Witte.

"Top Hydraulics could be called a manufacturer," co-owner Klaus said. "We actually are remanufacturing, meaning rebuilding and repairing, hydraulic parts for fancy cars."

Fancy cars, in this case, means convertibles.

Modern convertibles have automatic tops that, when a button is pushed, automatically opens and closes. But after 10 years, the parts can wear down and the convertible top stops working.

Owners can take the car into a manufacturer to fix, but that can cost around \$7,000.

Top Hydraulics offers another solution.

Owners find Top Hydraulics through the internet, send in the broken parts and Witte's team rebuilds them and then ships them back. The cost?

"We charge \$550 to rebuild them, so it's a no-brainer," Klaus said.

It's a complicated process. Top Hydraulics works on more than 30 brands of cars, with each brand having around 30 convertible models. With the millions of used convertibles on the road, that's a lot of broken car tops.

"We're just hitting the tip of the iceberg," Klaus said. "All of these fancy hydraulic parts started being used in the late 1990s, and now we're really getting hit with a wave of these parts failing."

The Wittes experiences in Florence have been extraordinarily positive, they said.

The business started in 2010 out of their garage, but last year they decided to expand.

They built their new manufacturing hub in Florence's long-dormant Pacific View Business Park, which itself is seeing a renaissance with the recent sale of lots to businesses like Siuslaw Broadband and Component Central Inc., another online business.

The community rallied around the Wittes when they decided to have the building completed in 2017.

"The awesome part is the attentiveness," Klaus said. "To see the excitement in everyone I interfaced with in the city about getting our business into the park, and the enthusiasm and helpfulness. We contacted the city in September about the lots around here. We were able to break ground in November and this had this facility ready to move in by late March. It was just amazing that it could have all fallen into place like that."

And it's not just the community and governmental support that the Wittes appreciate, particularly when it comes to being an internet-based business.

"We have an incredible post office here, along with the UPS and Fed-Ex carriers. As somebody whose business is shipping and receiving things,

that kind of attention and care we get from the local carriers is not something you would get in Eugene," Klaus said.

And then there's fiber optics, a cable connection that can deliver internet speeds 20 times faster than broadband. Siuslaw Broadband, doing business as Hyak, is rolling out fiber to Florence businesses, which is unique for a small community. Currently, only 25 percent of the nation has fiber, according to BroadbandNow.

"It's key to us," Maria said.

It's small businesses like Top Hydraulics that could be the future of the region, those interviewed believe — small manufacturers, graphic designers, telecommuters and boutique shops that sell face to face while shipping their goods out can thrive in an isolated area like the Siuslaw region.

It could be the third stool that could provide year-round jobs.

And the innovation and infrastructure that the Wittes see in the region will be vital in the coming years.

In a 2016 report by the World Economic Forum, the challenges facing the entirety of the world's workforce is brought into stark view. The verdict? Life as we know it will soon find itself fundamentally different. "We are today at the beginning of a Fourth Industrial Revolution," the report stated. "Developments in previously disjointed fields such as artificial intelligence and machine learning, robotics, nanotechnology, 3D printing and genetics and biotechnology are all building on and applying one another."

Because of those changes, 7.1 million jobs could be lost to disruptive labor market changes by 2020.

The World Economic Forum quoted an estimate that said, "65 percent of children entering primary school today will ultimately end up working in completely new job types that don't exist yet."

The report stresses that the members of the workforce need to be dynamic in what they learn. Skilled workers should not be experts in just one portion of their field, but of the entire field so they can apply their knowledge to ever-changing trends. Interpersonal skills will also be highly valued. As technology changes rapidly, skilled workers will have to work closely and clearly with each other to navigate the future.

Top Hydraulics seems perfectly set up for this.

While the Wittes have the capacity to have 100 employees, they're taking it slow. Their hiring process is exact. They're not just looking for skilled workers, but workers who fit within the mold of the company. The decision to be hired isn't made by the owners alone, but by the entire company.

"The type of employees that we now have are somewhat experienced," Klaus said. "Some less, some more experienced mechanics. We're looking for experienced machinists, but that's a tall order because there's only a few of those people around in this area. We're constantly looking for mechanics that have some experience and enthusiasm for fixing things."

The people Top Hydraulics hires are either highly skilled or extremely receptive to learning new skills. And, with the Wittes meticulous hiring process, the workers get along. These are exactly the types of dynamics the World Economic Summit suggested.

But finding the perfect employee can be difficult.

"It's a retirement community, so you have a mostly older population," Maria said. "You have people with those skills that, during the recession, went elsewhere. It has been a challenge of finding the right combination of the exact right skill set and the team family kind of connection that we're looking for."

Maria said that they're not seeing everyone in town, but applicants have been coming in "drips and drabs."

They've advertised in the newspaper for workers.

"We're constantly in contact with work source and elsewhere," Maria said.

But again, she stresses, they're particular.

Where will they find their extra employees?

"They are not all currently in Florence, to answer that question," Klaus said.

But as of right now, attracting those skilled workers, particularly if they're younger, is still a tall order.

"Because it's worth it"

A recent article in Forbes reported that 22 percent of skilled manufacturing workers, or 2.7 million employees, are retiring over the next decade. The problem is, there aren't enough new skilled workers to replace them. Unfortunately, the industry is projected to fall short of the workers it needs to replace them. Young graduates are focusing more on the humanities instead of STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics). Forbes also stated that there's an under-appreciation of the U.S. manufacturing business as a whole, even though jobs can average \$77,500 a year in some markets.

As the market for skilled workers becomes tighter, communities will have to look for amenities to attract those younger skilled workers that are coming into the marketplace.

The Wittes are confident that younger workers will be attracted to the region because of its natural beauty, and current trends for millennials show that they are wanting to move from urban areas to more rural, pristine areas like the coast. But that doesn't mean that beautiful hiking trails and the beach will fully capture the attention of workers when they come here.

"There needs to be something here they enjoy doing," Khufu said. "Something that brings them together so they interact with each other. There's gotta be something more for kids to do here in town. They have energy, but nowhere to put it. No place to really hang out."

Because of this, Khufu and many others interviewed for this series see a lot of the young workforce leave the area all together.

"They usually make enough money to move to Eugene or Portland, because they're just bored out of their freakin' minds here," Khufu said.

Easton agreed. "We're not offering the things that are needed by the younger generation," she said. "My son is in the same boat. He's 25 and working at the casino. He'd like to stay here too, but there's just not a lot to offer."

The problem is, building businesses that attract younger people is a tricky proposition for investors.

For example, an entrepreneur wants to build a video game bar

geared toward millennials, a style of business that's currently popular in cities like Eugene and Portland. But in a retirement community, it's fraught with risk.

"We don't have enough people to frequent that bar to keep it in there," Jensen said. "The market's not there, the investors know that, and nobody's going to throw money at it. Everybody is going to see it as a potential fail."

But on the flipside, if establishments like that don't exist, then a younger workforce won't be attracted to the community, particularly in the winter months when outdoor recreational activities are limited.

It ends up being a chicken-and-the-egg problem, said Jensen who believes there are three ways to tackle this problem.

The first would be an investor making a bet that the Florence economy will grow, build these type of youth-oriented businesses and take a possible financial hit until the workforce arrives; The second way would have existing businesses expand their amenities to serve this younger population; The third way would entail having the entire community, along with outside investors, coming together and creating and implementing a vision that would cater to this group all at once.

"You have to have a whole bunch of people somewhere, somehow saying, 'We'll go there as soon as we have this service,'" Jensen said. "And then all the business developers saying, 'Okay, we're all going to open on this day.'"

But to be able to convince investors to do that, the region has to go through a fundamental shift in how it views itself.

"As a chamber president, I'm all about building business and progress," Jensen said. "There's a lot of people who come here to retire. They don't want any of that. 'We're a retirement community, we have to keep it quiet.' But, do we want to (keep it quiet)? That's the real question."

To keep the community viable in the future, the culture of the community has to become more inclusive, Jensen believes. This doesn't have to be a zero-sum game.

"Progress is inspiring," Jensen said. "Seeing things move forward and get better, it's evolution. As a species, that's what we're designed to do. By not doing that, you're dead. So, then it's not sustainable. We need to get the groups together and start changing the direction of this community. We will still be able to keep our little town charm. But then we can grow in another area. We can all coexist very nicely. Everybody can have their place. It's all about balance."

It's that inspiration of progress that keeps business owners like Khufu excited about the possibilities for the region. He envisions a place that would allow him to not only keep a staff on full-time, but grow.

"I would really like to expand," he said.

Khufu's restaurant overlooks the river, and it's a constant solace to him, even in the leaner times.

"Every day I come in here and look out there and my troubles just disappear when I look out the window," he said. "For a moment, my troubles are gone. And it's very blissful. I'm willing to struggle to keep this."

"Because it's worth it."



Congratulations

JOANNE FORSBERG
on your retirement!

Thank you for being a part of our OPB family for 19 years.
 You have left a legacy that will be with us forever!

Dementia Educational Group

Know the 10 Signs - Early Detection Matters!

Wednesday December 27th at 6pm

Learn the 10-signs of Dementia-related behaviors and what to do if you recognize them!

Join us for our Caregiver Series

The Last Wednesday of Each Month

At 6pm

Call to book your spot now! 541-997-6111

