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as well. In keeping the DQ business in the family, Michele's son runs the Creswell location.

Ann Jensen-Bradley started working at the Florence A&W as a 16-year-old back in 1974. She made her way up to manager and eventually became the fourth owner and second consecutive woman to run the restaurant in Florence, when she bought the A&W on Jan. 1, 2000.

"I love the business and I love people," she said. "I didn't want a sit-down job. I have to be on the move. As long as I still like going to work, I'll hang on to it."

Women owned 33 percent of small businesses in the U.S. according to the 2015 Census. As defined by the Small Business Administration, a small business is a firm with fewer than 500 employees. Overall, small businesses employ nearly half of the nation's workforce (47.5 percent), with 99 percent of women-owned

businesses falling into the "small business" definition, according to the U.S. Department of Labor.

This means women are employing a lot of people in the nation — and here in Florence, Ann and Michele shared what it's like to be women in business.

Both Michele and Ann have owned small businesses in Florence for more than 20 years and have helped the local community by donating time, money and food to causes of their choice.

"You have that freedom to help with the projects that you want," Michele said. "I do stuff for the elementary school kids, the library, the Boys and Girls Club."

Ann says one of her favorite parts of running a business is the life skills young adults learn while working for her.

"I've hired high school kids, I've hired kids from the special education class,

I've hired people who have served time before. I believe anybody can work if you just find the right job," said Ann, who still works a shift along with her employees. "I'm on the schedule like a regular employee, but I pay someone else to do office work."

"I'm the other way around," said Michele. "I'm

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— Ann Jensen-Bradley, Owner of Florence A&W Restaurant

on the floor and I do my own office work, so I hardly ever get to leave."

As business owners, Ann and Michele are responsible for payroll, garnishing paychecks for employees and doing all the paperwork that accompanies that, along with setting money aside for the new sick-pay law, which requires Oregon employers with 10 or more employees to provide full-time workers with 40 hours of paid sick leave per year. They are at their restaurants almost every day of the week.

"I still work 40 to 50 hours a week. I feel like I have to in order to keep things going," Ann said.

When anything goes wrong at their restaurants, Ann and Michele are there to fix it.

"People have stolen my plumbing fixtures for our sink and our toilet, they steal the batteries out of our smoke detectors," Michele said. "They camp in our dumpster area."

"The stories we could tell you," Ann laughs.

When they decided to start families, balancing home and work life meant sometimes combining the two.

"In a small town, you get a sense of connection and identity. Then there's the freedom of choice," Michele said. "Or then, when

you have kids, they come to work with you."

"Making your own schedule," Ann said.

"And when you can't make your own schedule, you just have to drag them into your schedule," Michele said. "Mine came to work with me every day, but I met a lot of really nice people because your kids never cry until it's the lunch rush."

"I'm dragging the grandkids in now," Ann said.

Being a woman in charge has presented the two with challenges over the years. "I will say one thing. You can have a restaurant full of employees and yourself and one 12-year old boy — and they always go to the boy as the owner or the manager," Michele said. "It doesn't matter, it's always the guy. They still gravitate towards 'it must be a guy.'"

"Same thing happens to me daily," Ann said. "You know someone wants to talk to the manager, and I say 'Well, I'm the manager.' And they say, 'Well, I want to talk to the owner' and I go, 'I'm the owner, what do you have to say?' Then they go 'I want corporate's number' and I say, 'Just go online, tell Kevin hello — I know the president personally.'"

"My dad was really cool to work for because salesmen or whatever would come in and they would want something. Then they would find out that you're not the owner or that you're a female and they would want to go to the top," Michele said. "So, then they would go to my dad and he'd send them back. 'If you want

anything, you have to go ask her,' he'd say. Then you have the power to get rid of them if you didn't like them."

The two business owners talked about the issues currently facing the fast food industry, such as minimum wage increases and employee turnaround.

"I think the hardest thing about hiring people now is, when they start working — even minimum wage — if they work 40 hours a week, they are taken off food stamps. They are taken off free health care," Ann said. "I mean who would want to lose their healthcare? You can't blame them for not wanting to work."

"Then they say 'Well, thank you for the raise but I only want 20 hours because then I won't get housing, food stamps or health insurance,'" Michele added.

Currently Oregon's minimum wage is \$11.25 an hour.

"The ones who have the best deal are the single parents who make their kids go out and work and contribute because they can make a lot of money and only spend 20 or 25 hours a week working," Michele said. "And we are not the only ones that start at minimum wage. Almost every single business does. And I swear some kids make more than their mothers do working at the banks."

"We are not lower class just because we are fast food. It is meant to be an entry-level job," Ann said.

"And fast food is not the one who invented minimum wage. We aren't the ones who perpetuate minimum wage," Michele said. "We pay just as much as the bank, or the other places around here — if not more. My highest employee is paid \$18 an hour."

"That's what people don't get; it's not really easy work. You're there around the clock, you don't get 9 to 5, Monday through Friday. That's the only downfall," she continued. "And we could afford to offer insurance if we didn't have to pay all this extra stuff for the people who don't really want to work anyway. Like the sick leave."

Ann said, "We transferred our paid vacation

program to the sick leave program. Sometimes people take advantage of the sick leave. When someone calls in sick, I say 'Come in and if you have a fever I'll send you home.' It's such a hardship when somebody doesn't come to work and they're not sick. That's the hardest thing."

"Everyone just throws us in there as that 'minimum wage is a dead-end job,'" Michele said.

"Yeah, I've heard that so many times," Ann agreed. "This is a dead-end job," I say, 'You know what? make a good living and this was my first job and it wasn't dead end for me. You just have to love what you do.'

Michele added, "I just wish people realized that even though we're supposedly minimum wage, we contribute a ton, as all small businesses do, to the community."

"I think because it's also a retirement community, there's not enough people young enough," Ann said. "There's so many service industry jobs here but there's not enough people to fill those positions."

For Michele, working with young employees comes with rewards that can be a real positive.

"The other good thing in the community is that you can teach the young employees how to be strong enough to stand up for themselves," she said.

"That's right," Ann said. "That's part of what I like — teaching people. I like teaching kids responsibility and just everyday manners. Just teaching them about life in general."

But for all the ups and downs, the challenges of combining work and home life along with the everlasting challenges as women in the business world, Ann and Michele say they find strength, power and enjoyment in the businesses they own and run.

"You can also be viewed as being large and powerful even if you're not," Michele said.

"You just learn as you go," Ann said.

"Just like being a parent," Michele said. "You learn what you don't want your kids to be like when they grow up."

"And you learn to be thankful for what you have," Ann said.



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Hours Open: Mon 10am-2pm, Wed-Fri 11am-5pm, Sat 10am-5pm, Sun. 11am-5pm

Classes, Workshops & Events

2nd Saturday Gallery Tour Reception
Saturday, August 10, 2019 3 pm - 5 pm
August's Featured Artists are Craig Shreeve (Photography Artwork) and Alyssa Lydick (Ceramics, Youth Artist, FRAA Scholarship Winner)

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Painting with John Leasure
Saturdays 9 am - 12 pm
No painting experience required.
Contact: jleasure@hotmail.com or 541-991-2754 for details and fees.

FRAA Hosts Chamber After Hours
FRAA will host this event on Thursday, August 15th, 5-6:30 pm. It is a great time to visit FRAA, enjoy good food, refreshments and music by Denny Weaver and get to know the FRAA members and artists.

BRAND NEW CLASS! Writers on the River - Creative Writing Workshop w/ Catherineourke
Writers' Summer Boot Camp: Simple Steps for Better Writing
Learn tips from the Amazon pros
Sat., August 24, 2019 10 am - 12 noon
All writing levels and genres, Contact: CJReditor@gmail.com, 541-708-2120

Big Wave Poetry 1st Tuesday Open Mic
Tuesday, August 6, 2019 at 7:00 pm
Admission is free and refreshments will be available.

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Small group meeting of poets to enhance their written word.
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Write fraaoregon@gmail.com if you are interested in joining.

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