

## SURFER'S SUP



»» Dave Chun, who owns Bend Surf, surfs the standing wave on the Deschutes River in Bend Thursday.

Dean Guernsey/Bulletin photos

## Local outdoor sports icon lends expertise to Bend businesses

BY SUZANNE ROIG  
The Bulletin

**N**ecessity may be the mother of invention, but it is also the spark that leads to collaboration and eventually a business.

Bend resident and former business owner Dave Chun was at the Bend Whitewater Park by the Old Mill District and realized that he could build a surfboard designed for the waves in the Deschutes River. With collaboration from standing wave surfers and from big wave surfer Gerry Lopez, Chun perfected his craft and now sells his boards under the banner of Bend Surf.

Lopez, a Bend resident, is often out in the community, surfing or snowboarding. He also shares his board know-how with James Nicol, owner of SnoPlanks, a Bend snowboard and skateboard manufacturing company. Nicol sells Lopez-inspired skateboards that are based on designs created by Lopez after the pair met while at a Big Wave Challenge at Mt. Bachelor more than five years ago.

The craft snowboard and skateboard maker said that business has been good and part of the mission is to give back to the community. In years past, he's donated proceeds for various charities, and this summer he is donating all the proceeds from the sale of skateboards to the Conservation Alliance in Bend.

From beer making to the art and craft of making snowboards and surfboards, collaboration is at the heart of what makes Bend a mecca for entrepreneurship, bringing about a broader range of available services than what is usually found in a city the size of Bend, said Ben Hemson, city of Bend business advocate. It also



»» Dave Chun, owner of Bend Surf, shapes a surfboard in his shop in Bend Thursday.

makes people become business owners who are willing to take on the risk and the angst of owning and operating a business.

"At their core, entrepreneurs are passionate problem solvers," said Adam Krynicki, Oregon State University-Cascades Innovation Co-Lab executive director. "They tinker, they make and they solve. It's what they love."

"The business is just a vehicle that allows them to work on their passion and fund their livelihood."

As a startup coach, Krynicki said he tells aspiring entrepreneurs to find the key to unlocking that passion.

In the Bend-Redmond area there were five sporting goods manufacturers paying about \$1.1 million in wages in the fourth quarter of 2020, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Statewide there were 55 sporting goods manufacturers pay-

ing \$12.4 million in wages during the same period, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

In the first six months of 2021, there were more than 3,200 business registrations filed, Hemson said. Less than 10% of those registrations are for new businesses, he said.

### Surfboarding building in Bend

Chun and his wife, Meg Chun, already have the knowledge of a building a successful outdoor recreational business in Bend. They are the founders of Kialoa Paddles, the maker of outrigger and stand-up paddleboard paddles, which was forged in their Hawaii backyard and moved to Bend in 1992. At the end of 2018, the Chuns merged their business with Werner Paddles.

The Chuns continued working for the new company, overseeing the transition, until January 2021 when

Bend Surf was born, Dave Chun said. After years of standing in the lineup at the standing wave, Chun decided he would try his hand at shaping new boards designed just for river waters.

He reached out to his friend, Lopez, and together they crafted a surfboard that allowed for the uniqueness of the standing wave and freshwater.

"Dave Chun and I share many mutual interests," Lopez said in an email. "We liked stand-up paddling when that sport was just beginning and worked together as it developed and specialized into racing, SUP surfing and recreational paddling."

"We became friends because we were two local Hawaii boys loving the Central Oregon lifestyle. The river wave at the Bend Whitewater Park became more common ground."

Chun asked Lopez about opening up a surfboard shop in the middle of Oregon, far from the rip curls off the coast, Lopez said.

"I said, well ... you're good at building things, you know how to make surfboards and there's a lot of surfers in town who need boards for the river and the coast. ... It's probably not a bad idea. And Bend Surf came to be."

Chun said he likes to build things and had watched Lopez shape countless surfboards. Thinking that this would likely be his last job, the 64-year-old Chun saw surfboard building as work that gave him deep satisfaction, he said.

"With this custom surfboard business, I spend a lot of time with the customer," Chun said. "For me, it's always been about the connection and contributing to the customer having fun."

"The added benefit is how much the surfer would be part of our community."

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