

Worx

Continued from C1

Small business is the backbone of Oregon's economy with more than 377,000 registered in 2019, employing 55% of the population, according to the most recent data from the U.S. Small Business administration.

In Oregon, there were 3,800 startups, or new businesses, creating at least 11,000 new jobs in 2017, the most current year data are available.

Bend Outdoor Worx supports startups understand why they're in business, as well as the importance of sales and marketing, finance, supply chain, pricing and profit margins. Training and consultations occur depending on the needs of the startup, Bracelin said.

"Every one is like a puzzle. Some have 50 pieces, others have hundreds," Bracelin said. "We help them identify what the missing pieces are and strengthen what they have."

Esplori's vision

With the help of the team of volunteers at Bend Outdoor Worx, Esplori founders Bates and Clark hope to learn how to scale their business at a rate that will produce results.

"We've never accomplished this before," Clark said. "We are opening up geographically and lowering our price point to make the product more accessible to people."

In transitioning from doing the installation themselves, Esplori's founders need to find manufacturers and packaging that will allow them to ship parts quickly. In addition, they need to learn how to market and sell their products on a bigger scale.

"The sheer horsepower available to us at BOW in the mentor group is hefty based upon what our needs are," Clark said. "And that they are local and in Bend is amazing."

The concept for their business was sparked by a chat in a Bend park while their kids were playing. They wanted an RV kind of vehicle that was easy to maneuver, stock and



Dean Guernsey/The Bulletin

Colin Clark, left, and Brian Bates, co-founders of Esplori, place a wall panel in a Sprinter van at their shop in Bend.

maintain, but without the hassle of a traditional RV.

Customized vans usually use carpeted wood, which adds to the weight and takes up space. Esplori uses lightweight aluminum component parts that create walls and platforms for sleeping. Bates and Clark built their first van in the rain and elements in the front of Clark's Bend home on spec.

It took about 10 months before their first two customers arrived.

"We wanted a van to take our family out camping, spur of the moment, and thought we could do it ourselves," Bates said. "With a van, you can park it in the driveway and just grab your clothes and toys and go."

"We feel there's a lot of people who want to do that and this lowers the bar."

Experience helps

With three decades of experience under her belt, Bend resident Meg Chun has a deep well to draw from. As the for-

mer co-owner of Kialoa paddles, Chun serves as a Bend Outdoor Worx adviser to outdoor startups, particularly those trying to scale up a business.

"It gets tougher at this stage," Chun said. "You need a lot of support and to surround yourself with great people to the best of your ability and budget."

Funding issues can limit how a business tries to grow, she said.

"We grew our company and self-funded it, which made for slower growth at times, but it was comfortable for us," Chun said. "If you're jonesing to build and scale really quickly you also need to learn how to manage the growth."

That's where Bend Outdoor

Worx comes in, Bracelin said. By supporting new outdoor businesses, startups can learn from the experience offered by established entities and experienced CEOs, Bracelin said.

The accelerator took two years off in 2020 and 2021 because of the pandemic, Bracelin said. During that time it worked to revamp its format to include an in-person and

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— Meg Chun, serves as a Bend Outdoor Worx adviser to outdoor startups

virtual platform. Bend has a wealth of help from Opportunity Knocks, a community resource that brings together small business owners and managers to assist startups in solving business problems, to Economic Development for Central Oregon, the Central Oregon Community College Small Business Development Center and the Bend Chamber of Commerce. "I learned some much from these groups," Chun said. "It was never scary to ask for help. I often wonder if one of the reasons is that foundationally so many people in Central Oregon share a value that is so important to them — the outdoor lifestyle."

Starting a business is deeply personal, which is where the mentorship comes in. Scaling a business involves precision and skill, that's where the mentorship comes in.

■ Reporter: 541-633-2117, sroig@bendbulletin.com

Solve these puzzles on C4

**SOLUTION TO TODAY'S SUDOKU**

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| 9 | 5 | 6 | 8 | 4 | 1 | 7 | 3 | 2 |
| 1 | 4 | 8 | 3 | 7 | 2 | 6 | 5 | 9 |
| 3 | 2 | 7 | 5 | 6 | 9 | 8 | 4 | 1 |

**SOLUTION TO TODAY'S JUMBLE**

**JUMBLE**

**Answer:**

RESUME    COUSIN    FORAGE  
ABRUPT    MYSELF    WILLOW

To create scripts for westerns like "Rio Bravo" and "True Grit," they had to —

**"WRITE" 'EM COWBOY**

**NYT CROSSWORD SOLUTION**

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**LAT CROSSWORD SOLUTION**

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| L | I | D | O | S |   | C | U | F | F | L |   | A | C | T | O | N | A | T |   |
| M | A | S | A | L |   | S | C | A | F | L | E |   | A | C | T | O | N | A |   |
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