

Bathing in success

Local handmade soap company gains in popularity

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

For Emily Oden, the path to building her business started with a move to Montana and dry skin.

After getting out of the Air Force and moving to the Big Sky State with her boyfriend, Wayne Simmons, a Grant County native, Oden said she could not find a soap that did not dry out her skin, so she began making bath bombs at home in 2017.

Coupled with a desire to get out of retail, Oden said making soap is “much more fun than dealing with Black Friday customers.” She said she worked at Shopco in Montana before moving to Mt.Vernon last year with Simmons.

Her business, “Hank In The Way Soap Company,” is named after her black lab, Hank.

“He’s just always in my way,” she said, “like the name says.”

She said her soap is both “pretty” and “good,” and it will get you clean.

“It’s pretty soap, but it’s also really good soap, and it feels great on your hands,” she said. “So I know grandma always said not to use the pretty soap, but I am using the pretty soap anyway.”

Oden, originally from Sioux City, Iowa, said the scenery in the county is impressive. One of her soaps was inspired by Strawberry Mountain while Magone Lake inspired another.

She said other soaps came from customers’ requests, such as “Mountain Man” for a customer who asked for the closest thing to “Irish Spring.”

Oden said she likes to come up with fun names for her soaps. Her “Rainbow” and “Saturday Morning” soaps are fruit scented because it reminds her of waking on Saturday morning as a child to watch cartoons and eat cereal.

Oden has recently has added a lip balm, which, she said, is made with beeswax, cocoa butter, and shea butter, as well as a hard lotion that took her a few tries to perfect.

Oden said she is surprised to have a product that is in demand.

“It’s awesome, but it’s just kind of weird,” she said. “I didn’t expect it when I first started making it for family and friends, and now I have strangers telling me they love my stuff.”



Emily Oden, owner of Hank In The Way Soap Company, makes bath bombs.

Eagle photos/Steven Mitchell

ON THE WEB

For more information, visit Hank In The Way Soap Company on Facebook.



A bath bomb fizzes in a bowl of water at Hank In The Way Soap Company in Mt. Vernon.



Emily Oden makes bath bombs.



Lip balm is Hank In The Way Soap Company owner Emily Oden’s newest product.



A nearly-finished batch of bath bombs.



Emily Oden’s dog Hank, the namesake of her soap company, gnaws on a bone.



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