

Downtown business stretches west

Woman works to expand downtown to SW Third Street

By **JADE McDOWELL**
STAFF WRITER

When Hermiston residents talk about the need to revitalize downtown, Cyndie Traner is working to expand their definition of “downtown.”

The word tends to bring to mind a few blocks of Main Street that are home to such longtime staples as Hermiston Drug. But Traner owns C and R Mercantile, one of a growing number of businesses finding a home on the other side of the tracks.

“You don’t necessarily have to be on 395 and Main Street,” she said.

The Quonset hut where Traner sells vintage clothing, kitchenware and other items sits along a two-block portion of Southwest Third Street that recently became home to gourmet salad shop Veg Out and boutique Creations with Santana. The neighborhood — located behind Bi-Mart — is also home to a salon, accountant, attorney, translation service and a taco truck, with a Mexican bakery around the corner.

Where the street intersects with Hermiston Avenue sits Julissa’s Meat Market, which is just down the street from Feelingstone Gifts, a block from the Maxwell Siding Event Center — all of which opened their doors within the last six months.

Traner recently purchased the re-purposed house that holds Veg Out and Creations with Santana, and said there is still a room available in the building to lease for office space. Traner said she envisions the whole building as a place where entrepreneurs can get their start and build up a clientele before risking a lease on a larger, more visible space.

“I feel really sad when I



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Julissa’s Meat Market is a recent addition to the West Third Street business boom in Hermiston.



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Veg Out co-owner Jaclyn Crowder cuts lettuce during the lunch rush Wednesday at her restaurant in Hermiston.

see other small businesses close their doors,” she said. “I just think, what does that say to our young people who want to be entrepreneurs? Dream your dream, but not in Hermiston?”

Santana Layton, who opened Creations with Santana on Third Street just weeks ago, said she has wanted to open her own store for years but startup money was always an issue.

After she decided to start going after her goal in earnest she saw a post on Facebook by Traner advertising the space next to Veg Out and responded.

“It’s hard to find something affordable when you’re

starting out and don’t really have money,” she said.

Her boutique sells makeup, skincare products and clothing for women. Although her official hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., she’s a single mother of three working two jobs, so she said it’s always a good idea to check the Creations with Santana Facebook page before coming in for unscheduled closures.

Layton said she hopes that people will start realizing that the neighborhood around Bi-Mart is a good place to get out and do some shopping.

“I like the location,” she

said. “I wish there was more traffic, obviously, and I’m hoping people will find out about the area, because it is growing.”

Traner is doing her part to help the area grow. She has taken it upon herself to help market the commercially zoned house next to the mercantile and an old bank building on Third Street, both of which are up for sale. She said she hopes both spaces are used for something like a bistro, wedding supply store or bakery.

“Growth is good, but you still want to hold onto those small-town, mom-and-pop businesses with that small-town customer service,” she said.

Traner plans to start a side business called History Reclaimed using another space on Third Street to store antique doors, light fixtures and other items that local contractors have removed from homes during remodels but would be of interest to others going for a more vintage feel.

Revitalizing downtown has been a top goal of the city for years. now. The city did include parts of Hermiston Avenue and Third Street west of the tracks when it drew the boundaries for the urban renewal district four years ago.

Some of the district’s planned projects, like a festival street next to City Hall, focus on the east side of Highway 395, but assistant city manager Mark Morgan pointed out that several of the district’s facade grants have gone west of the tracks, including grants for the Holiday Inn Express, Julissa’s Meat Market and attorney John Ballard’s office on Third Street. The city also provided developer Mitch Meyers with a \$10,000 grant out of its community enhancement fund for the landscaping and parking improvements next to the Maxwell Siding Event Center, and Morgan said the city would like to continue collaborating with developers on projects in that area.

Brother, sister open gourmet salad shop

By **JADE McDOWELL**
STAFF WRITER

A Hermiston woman has turned a healthy habit into a much-anticipated business venture with the opening of a gourmet salad shop.

Jaclyn Crowder opened Veg Out with her brother Ben Millard this week, and the small salad shop at 319 W. Locust Avenue already has 75 reviews on its Facebook page, all but one of them for five stars.

“It’s been awesome,” Crowder said. “We’ve been kind of overwhelmed.”

Positive comments on Facebook were what spurred the business venture in the first place. Crowder said after the birth of her kids she struggled with her weight, especially since being a stay-at-home mom meant she had access to food all day long. To combat the problem she started experimenting with creating different types of salads, and found she enjoyed them more if she made them “pretty” too. It was only natural, in this day and age, that she then share her handiwork on social



STAFF PHOTO BY JADE McDOWELL

Ben Millard, left, and Jaclyn Crowder opened Veg Out this week at 319 W. Locust Avenue, Hermiston.

media before eating it.

“I started posting on Facebook for friends to see and they started asking me to make them for them,” she said.

Originally Crowder just wanted to sell the colorful salads from home, but soon realized the law required her to make them in a commercial kitchen. She posted on a public Facebook forum asking if anyone would be interested in a salad shop and hundreds of enthusiastic comments

poured in. She asked her brother if he wanted to join in on the venture and he agreed.

“We felt we owed it to Hermiston,” he said. “That response (on Facebook) is what’s kept us going.”

The small shop, located just behind Bi-Mart, is takeout and delivery only, although the business’s Facebook page points out it is only half a block from McKenzie Park’s picnic shelter.

Millard said from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. business slows down, but if the first few days are an indication, when someone wants to pick up a salad during the lunch or dinner rush they should call ahead by at least an hour if they don’t want a long wait to pick up their order. Delivery of orders of at least three salads is available for a \$3 charge.

Veg Out’s menu currently features five salads, ranging from the \$7 classic chicken caesar salad to the \$13 steak taco salad with cilantro lime dressing. Brazilian cheese bread, a fruit bowl and bottled beverages are also available.

Millard said since the kitchen is so small, the menu will likely always be limited to five or six salads, but the selection will change depending on what fruits and vegetables are in season. He said to start out the business is getting its ingredients from one vendor, but that will probably change.

“We’ve checked out some local lettuce places, and we might start getting some of our berries local,” he said. “We might try to source some more local produce, as much as we can.”

Christina Martinez, who ordered the berry nutty salad recently, said they had just moved into town a few weeks ago and found Veg Out on Yelp.

“We’re excited to try it,” she said. “Our salads look amazing.”

Veg Out is open 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday and 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

Contact Jade McDowell at jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4536.

BRIEFCASE

Library district hires new director

Erin McCusker was recently hired as the new director of the Umatilla County Special Library District.

McCusker has extensive experience in a variety of library service fields. Starting her library career in 1992, she spent 11 years in the Boise Basin Library District, the last six as director. She then became the library consultant for the Idaho Commission for Libraries in Boise. After moving to Flagstaff, Arizona, when her husband was transferred with the U.S. Forest Service, she worked at the Flagstaff City-Coconino County Public Library as an adult and youth services librarian for a year before becoming a branch supervisor.

The library district board views McCusker’s background as an asset in working collaboratively with the independent libraries in the district. Working in Pendleton for a private firm in records management for the past three years, McCusker is excited to return working

with the public in library services.

Formed in 1986, the library district supports public libraries in Umatilla County in providing services, programs and educational opportunities. For more information, visit www.ucslid.org.

Conference highlights workplace safety

A two-day conference focuses on safe and healthy workplaces, including a keynote address by an electrician who survived being electrocuted by a 12,500-volt, 200-amp overhead power line.

Gary Norland’s opening keynote speech, “The Impact of an Injury: What are You Risking?,” is Tuesday, Sept. 19, at 11:30 a.m. The conference is Sept. 19-20 at Riverhouse on the Deschutes in Bend.

Registration is \$145 or one day for \$100. For more information or to register, visit <https://safetyseries.event.com/central17>. For questions, call 503-947-7411.

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