

# Business owners open next chapter in Hermiston

By ERICK PETERSON  
EDITOR/SENIOR REPORTER

Angela Pursel and Alexis McCarthy, owners of a new Hermiston bookstore, are surprised by their success.

The mother-and-daughter team started The Next Chapter Bookstore at 1000 S. Highway 395, Suite C, in Hermiston. They are now open six days a week, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., but this was not their original plan. Neither was it their expectation they would average 40 customers per day. "It was just this crazy idea," Pursel said.

Pursel wanted another family project, something to fill her days. With her daughters grown and out of her house, she needed something in addition to the radio station and the dance studio she owns. This additional business would be part of the "next chapter" of her life, hence the shop's name.

This idea, which came to her on a driving trip through the Columbia Gorge, appealed



Erick Peterson/Hermiston Herald  
**Alexis McCarthy and her mother, Angela Pursel, on Aug. 25, 2021, browse the shelves of their new shop, The Next Chapter Bookstore. The store opened at the end of April and business has been brisk.**

to daughter McCarthy. It also attracted McCarthy's younger sister, Melani, who created the shop's logo, works in the store, and plans to display her artwork there soon.

Pursel and McCarthy's plan was to build a bookstore in the spacious lobby of their dance studio, Dance Unlimited, where they serve around 200 students with lessons in jazz, hip hop, contemporary, tap and other dance styles.

Their five dance teachers and their students, who had all come to accept the studio as their own special place, liked the idea of the bookstore.

They didn't mind that the books would occupy their studio. After all, the bookshelves would be out of the way. Many of the shelves would be attached to the wall. A few other shelves would be on wheels, moved out for the few days when there were no dance

classes and then returned to storage for most of the week.

This is how The Next Chapter opened — at the end of April — with a Saturday-to-Monday schedule, mobile shelves, and low expectations.

"That lasted for two weeks," Pursel said.

Business started hot. They were busy during their limited hours, and their customers were requesting longer store hours and more of them.

Even their dance students were wanting the store open during weekdays, so they could shop before and after classes. And the parents wanted the store open, so they could have something to do while their children were in class. Pursel and McCarthy decided to increase the hours.

"We hoped people loved books as much as we did," Pursel said.

So far, it seems she was right.

Pursel and McCarthy said locals prefer the community and feel of a bookstore. They

also like getting their books without having to pay shipping costs. The Next Chapter obtains customer orders without charging for shipping. They enjoy making recommendations and sharing some of their favorite books.

Pursel, who likes books from every genre, said she has been recommending "The Push" by Ashley Audrain. It is a suspense novel. Typically, though, her preferred books include literary fiction and business biographies.

McCarthy, meanwhile, reads a lot of young adult and middle grade books so she can make recommendations to her students. She also reads fantasy, true crime, and romantic comedies. "One Last Stop" by Casey McQuiston is one of her recent favorites, as is "Midnight Library" by Matt Haig.

Pursel and McCarthy also recommend books from the shop's most popular genres, such as action, fantasy and science fiction.

"We live in such crazy times, people want to escape

reality for a moment," Pursel said. Some of the wilder genres allow that escape. Manga, Japanese graphic novels, also are selling well with readers of all ages.

The co-owners said their biggest challenges are promotion and filling their shelves. These days, they are ordering books for the holiday season. Industry experts have told them shipping and supply will be issues in the coming months. It might be difficult to have everything customers need if books are not ordered now.

They also are planning to start a couple of book clubs this fall and perhaps some author events later this year or the beginning of next year. McCarthy reads to children at gatherings every Saturday at 11 a.m., and she said she wants to have more store activities.

Pursel said she and her daughter are grateful for the community support.

"We love to chat with them and see them come in," she said.

## 'Dining Dollars' coupons, gift cards to encourage restaurant visits

HERMISTON HERALD

A program to encourage visits to the city's restaurants soon begins under a partnership between the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce and city of Hermiston.

With a theme of "Giv-

ing Back to the Hermiston Community," \$50,000 in funding the city received through the American Rescue Plan Act will be used to provide coupons for residents to use at any eating establishment in the city.

To administer the pro-

gram, the chamber has created "Dining Dollars" coupons for local participating restaurants, purchased bulk gift cards from chain restaurants and purchased prepaid Visa cards for restaurants that don't fall into either option.

Dining Dollars vouchers and restaurant direct gift cards will be in \$10 increments.

Utility holders will receive 20% of the Dining Dollars and restaurant direct gift cards. The Hermiston Chamber will distribute the

remainder through Feature Fridays, Facebook promotions and other public activities and events.

Distribution of coupons and gift cards will begin within the next two weeks. Watch the chamber's online and other commu-

nication channels for more information.

The program will run through December and beyond. All Direct Dining coupons will expire Dec. 31, while chain restaurant and Visa gift cards may have extended expiration dates.

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