



SBDC helps Worden restaurant open, partner with competitor to grow community

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WORDEN - A Worden native turned entrepreneur is already showing her heart for building community and growing tourism in and around her hometown.

With invaluable assistance from the Illinois Metro East Small Business Development Center, Beth Behme Adkison is well on her way to pursuing her dream. On Saturday, May 6, she will celebrate the grand opening of The Wild Turkey, a family restaurant and bar she debuted in February. Rather than being a direct competitor of The Yellow Dog Cafe & Bar, a similar establishment that reopened last fall across the street from The Wild Turkey, Adkison is working together with her neighboring business to increase traffic into Worden. The day's festivities include a pig roast and live entertainment.

"We've been friends since we were kids," Adkison said of Yellow Dog owner Nikki Scheiber-Settles, also an SBDC client. "When I was considering buying the building and opening The Wild Turkey, I first met with Nikki and asked her if she felt that two similar businesses could be successful in a town of 1,200 people. Nikki said absolutely. Our thought is that if we work together, we have the potential to bring in a lot of different events to Worden ... and in doing so, we can help make Worden a destination for other businesses, too."

Adkison's dream accelerated quickly once she purchased the property on Dec. 29, 2016. Her significant other, Errol, took a leave of absence from his full-time job to renovate the building.

"Between January 1 and the day of our soft opening on February 11, we completely renovated the place," Adkison said. "We opened it up, erected new walls, put in new flooring, updated the kitchen, built a gaming room, and we created a separate entrance for the restaurant, so families will feel welcome."

While the updates to the building give the establishment a fresh look, Adkison held onto the nostalgic class photographs from Worden High School, ranging from 1945 to 1988, when the high school closed and the district was annexed by Edwardsville Community School District 7.

"We're proudly displaying these photos throughout The Wild Turkey's dining area," she said. "They've attracted visitors from all over the country. Children, grandchildren and friends come to see pictures of their loved ones."

The Wild Turkey's menu offerings - pizza, entrees, bar appetizers and full breakfasts - are homemade based upon family-tested recipes from Adkison. "I've also added items

to our menu that I discovered from my travels such as the hot brown sandwich from Kentucky and poutine fries from Canada,” she added. “We feature a full menu with daily specials, including BBQ on Monday and Saturday, tacos on Tuesday, pasta on Wednesday, fish on Friday and pizza on Sunday.”

The Illinois Metro East SBDC, under the direction of Interim Director and Small Business Specialist Jo Ann DiMaggio May, met with Adkison to walk her through potential obstacles, fine-tune her business plan and provide references for attorneys, accountants and insurance agents. The SBDC also helped Adkison apply for an SBA loan.

“I’m grateful to Jo Ann at the SBDC for all the resources she brought to the table,” said Adkison. “Thanks to the SBDC, I had the vital information I needed to travel to Springfield and obtain my liquor license in just 35 minutes. The SBA loan took a lot longer than that and was super stressful, but Jo Ann and Chad Davis with Scott Credit Union were there to support me and guide me through the process. I’m so grateful to both of them.”

According to DiMaggio May, it was a pleasure and honor to assist Adkison in achieving her business goal of opening the establishment. “Beth was highly receptive to all the advice offered, and I know her drive will breed success in The Wild Turkey,” she said.

The new restaurant and bar’s name is in recognition and in memory of Adkison’s cousin, Doug Behme, an equipment operator who died as a result of the April 6, 2016 gas line explosion in Maryville. As kids, Adkison, Behme and Leann Behme Eckhardt – Doug’s sister – often set off on adventures in the woods near their homes in the country near Worden.

“Doug, who was five at the time, was the protector of Leann and me, who were several years older,” she said. “We were playing in the woods and were crossing the creek, when a flock of wild turkeys surrounded us and began pecking at us. Doug met the turkeys head on and scared them away. It was a story we all recalled and enjoyed many times through the years, and it was the subject of the last conversation I had with Doug. Leann jokingly said I should name my business The Wild Turkey. The more I thought about it, the name fit.”

In March, Adkison lent her support to Doug’s family as they formed the Doug Behme Foundation. The organization collects, assembles and delivers personal care kits to Mercy Burn Center in St. Louis. The foundation provides cell phone chargers and items necessary for the first 24 hours of the family’s stay as they wait with their loved one and prepare for the road to recovery. It is Adkison’s goal to leverage the support of The Wild Turkey patrons to continue assisting this new foundation in memory of her cousin.

The Wild Turkey is located at 115 East Wall Street in Worden. Hours are Monday-Thursday from 11 a.m.-midnight (kitchen closes at 9 p.m.), Fridays from 11 a.m.-2 a.m. (kitchen closes at midnight), Saturdays from 7 a.m.-2 a.m. (kitchen closes at midnight) and Sundays from 7 a.m.-midnight (kitchen closes at 9 p.m.).

For more information about The Wild Turkey, visit facebook.com/thewildturkeyinc/ or call [\(618\) 459-3215](tel:6184593215).

[The Metro East SBDC](#) assists new ventures like The Wild Turkey as well as existing businesses headquartered in the nine-county Metro East region of Calhoun, Jersey, Madison, Bond, Clinton, St. Clair, Washington, Monroe and Randolph. It is a no-cost service to the community supported by the U.S. Small Business Administration, Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity, and [Southern Illinois University Edwardsville](#).

By aiding entrepreneurs and companies in defining their path to success, the SBDC network positively impacts the Metro East by strengthening the business community, creating and retaining jobs and encouraging capital investment. It enhances the region's economic interests by providing one-stop assistance to individuals by means of counseling, training, research and advocacy for new ventures and existing small businesses. When appropriate, the SBDC strives to affiliate its ties to the region to support the goals and objectives of both the [SIUE School of Business](#) and the University at large. To learn how the SBDC can help your small business, contact the Metro East SBDC at [\(618\) 650-2929](tel:6186502929) or sbdcedw@gmail.com.