

REACT – RECOVERY – RESILIENCE

SBDC IOWA CLIENTS SHARE THEIR COVID-19 JOURNEY

Hair Designers of Corning, Backgrounds Coffee Sherry Keefe, Owner



How did you come up with the idea for your business?

I came up with the idea for Backgrounds due to the fact I love coffee and there was no place in Corning to get a true coffeehouse type of coffee or anywhere to purchase fresh roasted coffee for home use. It was totally a self-centered idea to begin with. After doing some serious thinking, I realized I had a gravel parking spot behind the salon that wasn't generating any income, so the dreaming, researching and planning began.

How has the SBDC helped you with your business?

The SBDC was instrumental in helping me with both businesses, the salon and the coffeebar. In 2013, when I was in the process of purchasing the salon from the previous owner, I reached out to SBDC to help with my business plan, feasibility questions and basically all my questions of conversion from an employee to an owner and employer.

For Backgrounds, I needed the same type of assistance, and even more questions arose as this was a new idea for a business from the ground up. I had no prior business experience and numbers are not my favorite area to dive into. It was all of these numbers and paperwork advice that I so appreciated.

How has COVID-19 impacted your business? Have you pivoted your operations? How are you helping others through this time?

COVID-19 has impacted the salon a lot by being forced to be closed with no income coming in. I had many bills needing to be paid, and when the shutdown happened, there was not enough money to take care of all the bills. I was very fortunate to receive 2 grants that helped tremendously. I am very appreciative and feel fortunate to have been a recipient of these 2 relief funds. Backgrounds was able to remain open for carryout and delivery. We still missed out on

our dine-in traffic and our retail sales took a big nose dive. I was able to be approved for the PPP loan, so I can utilize that for payroll. I was also very thankful for this.

We adjusted to the salon being closed by getting our website up and going with an online store for product purchases. We remained connected to our clients via social media and offered options of curbside pickup, or delivery of products. We really worked to get the word out about our online store being available. We purchased some products in high demand (such as hand sanitizers, root touch ups, etc.) to help generate some more sales.

For Backgrounds, upon closure of dine-in options, we immediately started offering delivery options. We had plans of launching smoothies the first of May, but we brought those on early and promoted them. That proved to be a wise decision as we have gotten a great response to our smoothies.

Our way of helping others out at this time would include continuing to remind people to support small businesses in any way they can, including encouraging take out, purchase of gift cards, and other ways of supporting financially our small business neighbors during this time of closed doors, and limited shopping experiences. As for my role as a business owner, I have stayed in contact with the salon staff and trying to stay positive and be upbeat for them, since we can't be together at all. I see the baristas more often since the coffee bar is open. I am trying to balance doing what I can workwise, along with enjoying some time at home, doing things around the house and yard, and enjoying more time with my family. I have enjoyed conversations with suppliers, consultants and those I do business with, understanding this is hard for everyone, and we are all navigating territory that is new to us all. We are all in this together, in different ways and all doing the best we can.

Find Hair Designers of Corning at hairdesignerssalonspa.com and Backgrounds Coffee at <https://www.facebook.com/backgroundscoffee/>.

