

ECONOMIC RESILIENCY

Business Spotlight

Caroline and David Lipps opened Thunder Island Brewing Company in 2013 in Cascade Locks. Thunder Island is an adventure-based 7-barrel brewery that handcrafts creative and innovative beers. They are also founding members of Breweries in the Gorge. **In this Spotlight, we hear from Caroline about Thunder Island's start and how they remain resilient, even while moving to a new location during the pandemic!**




The Gorge is the place to be...



The brewery was originally an idea of a husband and a friend who were homebrewing together in Portland. At the time, some friends in Portland State's Masters

of Urban Planning Program did an economic assessment of Cascade Locks and had identified that it was missing key amenities for those recreating in the Gorge. Portland was saturated with new breweries and we decided to give it a shot in Cascade Locks. At first it was just a tiny

 two-barrel system, which for context is enough for a wedding or a big party. Very small!



Starting up

We have always had a business plan since the start. We saved up and got personal loans from our family. Initially we had \$35,000 in seed money – we were 27 and thought this was so much money!



We always knew that our original location was not going to be our forever location. In 2016, we really started making moves to purchase a downtown property and get the concept put into place.



Recommendation to people wanting to start a business...

Take an accounting class! Having a solid understanding of business finances is important, especially in the Gorge because things are so seasonal. It's easy just to run on cash flow, but it makes it harder to plan and save for things.



Being resilient...

The winter storms of 2016 and the Eagle Creek Fire in 2017 were really difficult for our business. We were closed for at least six weeks that year between the two disasters. We really had to rebuild our savings after those events. And now with the pandemic, we've realized we need a better cash management program because at any moment you can be shut down for three weeks or more. This has made us track more closely how and what we're saving.



Rolling with the punches...

We broke ground on our new location in October of 2019...the same month I gave birth to twin boys! While navigating that project, we also had to adapt our original location for COVID and deal with having less staff. We were just trying to figure out how to keep a sense of normalcy for our team and keep the business afloat. We had been through disasters before, so we were used to rolling with the punches.

We put some of our original vision for the new location on hold to cut back on expenses. We applied for any grants and loans I could find. Everyone has been burning the candle at both ends and we are trying to find a more sustainable path forward for our workers.



"Be ready and willing to work any position at the business. It's humbling and helps me learn what tools my employees need."



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