

# Need more jobs in McKinley County?

THURSDAY, 26 NOVEMBER 2020 10:03 BY MIKE DALY GUEST COLUMNIST



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## Invent a — whatchamacallit

A refrain from an old Arlo Guthrie tune is “I don’t want a pickle, I just want to ride my motorcycle.” With the closing of the power plant at Prewitt and the shutdown at the refinery, what our county could use is a motorcycle manufacturing facility. The county and the state are laying out a number of aids to help existing businesses to improve and to encourage new business ideas that can flourish as going concerns.

To get your entrepreneurial juices flowing I’ve listed below several very successful ventures started by individuals who in dealing with problems in their lives made transformative innovations – and made themselves lots of money. Remember, there are many paths to success. Here are some examples:



### **PUTTING A GOOD EDUCATION TO USE**

An example of a person putting her education to use to solve a real world problem at home is the NMSU Civil Engineering graduate who realized she could design a solar operated water pump for a well to serve a portion of her family ranch that needed water with no other power source nearby. It worked so well that she and her father started a business manufacturing and installing these.

### **SHIPPING CONTAINERS**

For those of us living in Gallup, shipping containers hauled by the BNSF and trucks are a common sight. What we might not know is that these containers which have revolutionized worldwide shipping were developed by high-school graduate Malcolm McLean. After high school in 1935 Malcolm, together with his brother, bought a used truck and founded McLean Trucking Co. in Red Springs, N.C. In order to improve his own trucking business, he came up with these containers which have revolutionized world trade. The idea came to him when he had to wait in his truck while longshoremen laboriously moved cargo one piece at a time out of the truck in front of his.

### **A BETTER FIT FOR MY SHOES**

Maureen Stockton’s shoes hurt her feet. She started a business making shoe stretchers to make them fit better when she couldn’t find a product on the market that worked for her. She purchased a pair of shoe trees and they destroyed her shoes because the mechanism did not allow her to adjust the pressure. So she invented a new product specifically for women’s footwear. That was eight years ago. She launched her firm in 2018 and took in \$1 million in sales last year with her shoe shapers retailing for \$48.95.

### **SOAP IN THE SHOWER**

Sixty-year-old Jimmy Gould who had back trouble, also had trouble retrieving a bar of soap that dropped on the shower floor. He created a device that hooks to the soap and keeps it from slipping. His business, SoapStandle, was launched in 2016. He made his first sales the next year amounting to \$500. That figure quickly rose to \$112,000 last year, at a price of \$4.99.

### **A FIREPLACE ANYWHERE**

Elena Colombo wanted a fire on the beach in front of her cottage in Greenport, N.Y., but fires were frowned upon by the town. She improvised a gas-fueled “comfort fire” from a garbage can and a gas-grill propane tank. Thinking others might want the same thing she started Fire Features to sell “fire-bowls,” a more elegant version of the original. Her gross revenue for 2002 was about \$20,000. By 2019 she was bringing in \$1.5 million selling fire pits ranging in price from \$5,000 to \$400,000.

### **UBER TECHNOLOGIES INC.**

Garett Camp, a Canadian software engineer, was standing on a San Francisco street waiting for a cab. He was fed up with haphazard taxi service. As he looked at the iPhone in his hand, he realized that it could be the alternative to trying to hail a cab. Uber and its competitors are now common worldwide — A total transportation transformation for many. And Uber and companies like it are working to develop self-driving cars to further automate this driving option.

### **KEEP THE SPRAY OUT OF YOUR FACE**

Jim DeCasper, distribution foreman for the Bradford City Water Authority [Penn.], developed *Crack Pipe* to deflect water when crews are working over a live water line leak. A worker holds the device and it deflects the water away from the crew, while they prepare a repair clamp for installation.

## **SAVE YOUR FEET FOR DANCING**

Steve Bell does maintenance at an airport. His team's work requires them to lift a lot of aircraft rated drain/valve, manhole chamber covers and grates. To make his team's life easier, he developed a new product *Hitch Lifter*, a Class 3 hitch-mounted winch attached to a magnet that allows lifting grates up to 600 pounds. He has now expanded and has developed another version with greater lifting power.

Still with me? Do I have your attention? Businesses generally do best when the start-up has experience in the particular business planned and in how to run a business.

There are a number of resources available to help those who need help in either area. First and foremost is Gallup MainStreet, which is opening a Business Support Center at 231-A Coal Ave. this month. For the time being Covid restrictions will limit on site usage. The Center is intended to provide:

- Boots on the ground one-on-one consultation
- Basic business development ideas
- Payroll system setup assistance
- Facebook interfacing
- Advertising and marketing strategies
- Start-up and co-working space opportunities

This resource is for small existing business owners who don't have a business education background and for those who want to expand their businesses. There are mentorship opportunities so you can consult with existing successful business owners, and get help with accounting and advertising.

Will you need help getting your ideas translated into products for sale?

Need help selling — developing a successful "pitch?"

These resources are designed to help you obtain the confidence in yourself and your products.

Gallup MainStreet is hosting a two-day virtual workshop Entrepreneur Bootcamp Dec. 1 and 3.

To register, contact MainStreet's director, Kara Smith either by email [director@gallupmainstreet.org](mailto:director@gallupmainstreet.org) or call (505) 879-0333.

A second powerful resource is available through UNM. They have created the NM Rainforest University Center. This program provides entrepreneurial training and technical assistance at UNM and branch campuses via in person or web access. They also have a certificate program in Entrepreneurial Capabilities through their Innovation Academy.

If you want to test the waters, enter their website: <http://loborainforest.com/nmrainforest/> to access seminar and webinar video recordings on entrepreneurial topics. The first few are business idea generation, pathways to success — small business ownership and taxes and business startups and how to start and file an LLC.

Well, you get the idea. These are on-topic and practical training sessions. Once you have gone this far, try these two options offered at Rainforest:

Create. Sell. Bank! This is an online course which can be taken on your own time. No set meeting times. Topics include, Need funding, Problem definition, Ideation/brainstorming, Rapid prototyping, Testing and how to set up accounts for Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube and PayPal, as well as a rather complete overview of E-Commerce and how to create a 90-second pitch video to *Pitch Your Business*.

Total cost is \$17. Go to the Rainforest University Center website to register.

Monthly on-line seminars are free and open to UNM, as well as the greater New Mexico community in person or online. Participants who view seven or more seminars/webinars either livestream or via their YouTube channel and complete associated quizzes, can receive a Certificate in Entrepreneurial Capabilities.

What are you waiting for? The best place to start is where you are with what you have!

If, on the other hand, you would like a ready-made business, there are many franchise opportunities. The GGEDC and City of Gallup recently completed a Market Analysis Study that pinpoints business opportunities that the study's authors determined are a good match for Gallup.

**By Mike Daly**

