

Balancing Businesses

Finding Happiness Managing a Hardware Store and Yoga Studio

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The town of Troy, Montana, is home to about 1,000 people. If you passed through, you wouldn't find a traffic light, but any local could point you toward the combination drug and hardware store or the yoga studio.

Tyann Hermes grew up in this picturesque mountain town. She worked in Portland, Oregon, as a graphic designer for two years after graduating college and then moved to a few other cities before she returned to work at and eventually gain co-ownership of Kootenai Drug True Value.

"My business partner, Chris Hermes, had been working at Kootenai Drug True Value for many years," she says. "I moved back to Troy and began working in the store, but we didn't purchase the business until 2006."

A lot has changed in the time since her journey as an entrepreneur began, but for Hermes, she has found balance in running two different businesses and helping bring together people from all walks of life.

And last year, Hermes received an award for her entrepreneurial endeavors, and from that, she continues to grow and help others in her town come together.





The staff at **Kootenai Drug True Value** includes 15 employees, many of whom have been working for the business for 15 years or more. **Hermes** says the loyal staff is more like family, and if she can't answer a customer's question, she knows one of her employees can.

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—*Tyann Hermes,*
Kootenai Drug True Value

Mixing Creativity and Knowledge

While Hermes had never worked in the hardware industry or any other retail environment prior to 2000, she gained first hand knowledge from her dad.

Hermes says before purchasing the store, she was building her house with help from her father, a professional contractor. Through this work, she learned as much as she could about home improvement projects.

“I did a lot of work with my dad—tiling, wiring, everything you would need to know in order to build a house,” Hermes says.

“By working with him on my home, I built equity to buy the store, and it gave me firsthand knowledge I now have to help a customer in the store.”

Although her previous jobs range from being a firefighter in the summers to being a graphic designer, entering the world of retail and later owning and operating a retail business gave Hermes the flexibility she wants and needs.

Plus, she says working with her staff of 15 employees, many of whom have been with the business for 15-plus years, is even more special.

“The employees we have are loyal and hardworking, and we’ve seen hardly any turnover,” she says. “Although I’ve learned a lot about home improvement since I began, I have a great staff that can help any customer find what they need.”

For Hermes, co-owning and operating Kootenai Drug True Value has allowed her to learn and grow, and she can use her creativity to make the store even more appealing to her customers.

“There are many things I enjoy about being in this industry, like going to hardware markets and buying new items and trying them out at the store,” she says. “I love resetting and making things look good inside the store and constantly refreshing the layout.”



Top: Hardware manager Dana Wallace, owner Tyann Hermes and business partner and pharmacist Chris Hermes keep things running smoothly.



Right: The Montana Ambassadors honored Hermes as the 2015 Entrepreneur of the Year at an award ceremony in early 2016.



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—Tyann Hermes,
Kootenai Drug True Value

Bringing Peace to Town

While Hermes enjoyed the everyday changes in the world of retail, in 2009, she was going through a hard time in her life personally. It was at this point that she was searching for an outlet to bring her happiness and strength. That’s when the practice of yoga became a large part of her life.

“I needed something to get me through some tough times, and I found yoga,” Hermes says. “However, I was driving an hour away to take classes once a week.”

After doing this for nearly a year, Hermes decided she wanted to explore the idea of opening a yoga studio of her own in town.

“I was searching for a building in town, and there was an old, abandoned gas station that had been vacant for years,” Hermes says. “I decided to refurbish and create my space in this building using my hardware talents and knowledge.”

In 2013, Hermes completed renovations and opened her studio, Shakti Soul Yoga & Movement, in the old gas station. The property also offers space to another local business, and behind the studio, Hermes built a two-story loft space that she calls home now as well.



“The beauty of opening and running my yoga studio while also co-owning the hardware store is that I’m able to offer classes and take instructor training, but my work at the hardware store helps cover expenses that a yoga studio wouldn’t be able to on its own,” she says. “These two businesses work very well together, and my yoga studio gives me another outlet.”

Recognition Leads to Empowerment

After a few years of running both the hardware store and yoga studio, in 2016, the Montana Ambassadors, a non-profit group of leaders in business and education and state and local government in Montana, honored Hermes as the 2015 Entrepreneur of the Year.

“I received a call in December 2015 from the governor of Montana telling me I won the award,”

she says. “And about a month later, I got an email detailing the award and what went along with it.”

For Hermes, receiving the award helped her step up and take risks, although she says she prefers to be behind the scenes.

“A community member nominated me, and from this, I feel like I found myself in a much more stable place,” she says. “Before the awards ceremony, they created a video and filmed me at the store and the yoga studio. My staff and all of my students I instruct were very supportive and excited for me.”

Although Hermes says she isn’t always the best at public speaking, prior to speaking to the crowd at the awards ceremony, she gained inspiration from simply watching the video they put together.

“After watching my video, I was so moved and I stood up and was able to speak to

everyone naturally,” Hermes says. “I didn’t feel like the younger, shy Tyann. It was great.”

Since receiving the award, Hermes continues to manage both businesses, but she says she has found a way to slow down and give her body and mind a break.



Since winning the 2015 Entrepreneur of the Year award, **Hermes** says she will no longer hold herself back.

“I have overdone it in the past and even got sick from trying to do too much,” Hermes says. “I’ve learned to balance and slow down and not go in to the store all the time. I have amazing employees who I know can get the job done even if I’m not there.”

At both the hardware store and yoga studio, Hermes says she enjoys being able to bring people together who may not have otherwise interacted or met.

“The yoga studio has become a community in itself, a gathering place for people, which I really am happy about,” Hermes says.

“The same thing is true in the hardware store, with people coming together and helping each other,” she says.

Juggling two businesses may not work for everyone, but Hermes says any retailer considering taking on the challenge should make sure their additional venture is something they are excited about.

“To find success owning and operating two businesses, you have to find something you’re passionate about,” she says. “If you can do that, it will be more than just another business.” ➡



When **Hermes** wanted to open her own yoga studio, she had a vision for transforming a long-abandoned gas station into a peaceful yoga retreat. She considers the former filling station a “filling station for the soul.”
