

STILLWATER OKLAHOMA



BLOCK 34 GETS ITS KICKS

Steve and Becky Irby bestow a record gift to transform downtown.

PIONEERING SPIRITS

Stillwater gets its first craft distillery.

PRECISION MEDICINE

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PICTURED: Steve Irby, KICKER® founder and president



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Where we've been and where we're going

Progress is more than numbers and pages of data.

While this is our annual progress report from the staff here, it's also the inaugural progress edition of Stillwater Oklahoma Magazine.

We wanted to dig deeper than demographics.

We wanted to look at the people and the production behind Stillwater's progress.

As you'll see, it has been a big year for production in Stillwater. Coming out of the pandemic, it's hard to recall periods that had this much expansion or reinvestment in Stillwater.

Among the greatest sparks that ignited downtown redevelopment was Steve and Becky Irby's donation to Block 34. The vacant lot just east of the Community Center had for decades gone through plan after plan but couldn't get any of those ideas over the finish line. We wanted to know what motivated the Kicker founder to create a space that's sure to attract the masses.

We also take a look at budding entrepreneurs who are realizing their dreams of starting a business. A distillery? In Stillwater? That would have been hard to imagine even three years ago.

Progress also can't be measured without knowing the success of one of the oldest companies in north-central Oklahoma, so we offer a bit of the history for Stillwater Milling.

Looking back, looking around and looking forward, Stillwater is a good place to do business because it's a place full of people who care. ●



BY Beau Simmons
EDITOR, STILLWATER OKLAHOMA MAGAZINE

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When distilling and aging whiskey, the local weather patterns influence the flavor, creating unique variations that reflect the time and place of its creation. **Mason and Allyson Jones** are excited to see what flavor profiles they will discover with their line of craft whiskey made in Stillwater.

SHOPPING SWO

PAGE 7 The effort called #ShopSWO began with a hashtag but has grown into special opportunities for small businesses.

OKLAHOMA FLAVORS

PAGE 10 Allyson and Mason Jones open a craft distillery that draws on pure Oklahoma nostalgia.

BLOCK 34 RE-IMAGINED

PAGE 16 The Block 34 transformation is a giant piece in what should soon be a hopping district.

CUTTING EDGE CANCER TREATMENT

PAGE 28 Stillwater Medical adds new technology that brings precision to radiation-based cancer therapy.

A SNACKING SUCCESS

PAGE 32 Cali Crissup's business went from a trial run at a downtown event to a Main Street shop.

SERVING AGRICULTURE

PAGE 36 Stillwater Milling's secret to longevity is being firmly behind their community and ag producers.

Q&A WITH VISIT STILLWATER

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Business Profile:
STILLY'S NUTRITION FIX

PAGE 42 New Stillwater eatery proves that healthy food doesn't haven't be dull and bland.




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Shopping local. Shopping small. *Shopping SWO.*

Every holiday season comes with reminders to “shop local” and “shop small.”



The push to shop locally goes a little deeper than marketing. In Oklahoma especially, municipalities are funded through sales tax. City Manager Norman McNickle pointed this out when the City successfully worked to get sales tax remitted from online shopping.

“Oklahoma is the only state where municipalities’ general fund relies almost entirely on sales tax and receives no ad valorem (or property) tax, which is why the Stillwater City Council and myself are advocating for changes in the sales tax laws,” McNickle said in 2017.

The City of Stillwater and Visit Stillwater launched an effort in 2021 called #ShopSWO as a hashtag for social media. That effort now goes beyond the holidays. SWO is a shorthand for Stillwater Oklahoma — it’s also how Stillwater Regional Airport is nationally identified.

“We are excited to continue our partnerships with local businesses by sharing and enhancing their marketing of special events and promotions with residents and potential visitors,” Visit Stillwater CEO Cristy Morrison said in November.

Last year it was a hashtag. Now, it’s a real movement. ShopSWO launched several events in June, including a promotion to stay open a bit later on Fridays called “Shop Until Dark.”

According to a 2021 report by the U.S. Small Business Administration Office of Advocacy, Oklahoma had 362,364 small businesses with 715,603 employees. That’s 99 percent of all Oklahoma businesses and accounts for 51.7 percent of all Oklahoma employees. Small businesses were defined in the report as firms with fewer than 500 employees.

Other benefits to shopping local, according to KeepItLocalOK:

- 68% percent of the money spent locally stays locally, compared to 43% for corporate chains
- Local businesses are more likely to use other local businesses for things like marketing, financing and accounting
- Local stores are more likely to special order or carry unique brands ●



BY Beau Simmons
EDITOR, STILLWATER OKLAHOMA MAGAZINE



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When Allyson and Mason Jones of Territory Distilling considered what their first product would be, they knew what they wanted to craft. They needed to distill an approachable rum-based liqueur with a flavor that would honor family tradition and tell their Oklahoma story.

Aunt Bill's Pecan Candy Liqueur grew out of an almost century-old candy recipe, grandma's newspaper clippings, Oklahoma State University and love.

When Oklahomans hear the name Aunt Bill's brown candy, you'll get two reactions — instant holiday candy nostalgia and memories of hard work with mom or grandma in the kitchen.

The Oklahoman originally shared the recipe in the late 1920s. Exhumed for a 2021 December article for *The Oklahoman*, Dave Cathey wrote, "The author, Edna Vance Adams Mueller wrote under the name Aunt

Susan, the second woman to do that for this publication. Her daily column covered many aspects of home-making, including cooking.

That first holiday recipe she published for Aunt Bill's Brown Candy proved so popular, Aunt Susan got fan mail: "One new housekeeper tells me she made that grand candy of ours last year for her lover and now since this same chap is her new husband she wants to feed him on it in their own little new home so won't I please tell her again how to make Aunt Bill's brown candy, Aunt Susan wrote."

Aunt Susan's recipe is a family tradition for many Oklahomans, one that Allyson and Mason discovered they shared while

A large, multi-tiered stainless steel distillation still stands in a wooden barn. The still has a large cylindrical body with several horizontal bands, a smaller section on top, and a copper-colored condenser at the very top. It is supported by a metal frame. To the left, there is another piece of equipment wrapped in silver insulation. The background shows the wooden walls and ceiling of the barn.

“IT’S VERY ROOTED IN OKLAHOMA.
IT’S ROOTED IN OUR FAMILY
HISTORY.” — ALLYSON JONES

To get approved for a license to distill in Oklahoma, the Joneses needed to have the distiller equipment set up on location with all of the various pieces and parts in place before they could legally produce one drop to drink.

attending Oklahoma State University. “This is actually one of the first things that we found in our relationship, that our families had in common. His grandma had clipped it out of the newspaper back in the 50s, and so had mine. And we still have the original newspaper clippings (recipes) that our grandmas have been making every year, and now (Mason’s) mom makes it every year. We’ve helped a few times ... we’ve got a few blisters to show because it’s quite a labor of love,” Allyson said. “It’s very rooted in Oklahoma. It’s rooted in our family history.”

Aunt Bill’s Pecan Candy Liqueur is a mildly sweet rum with a smokey pecan flavor. An enjoyable sipper on its own, the 60 proof – 30% ABV drink can be mixed into various cocktails. Territory Distilling recommends using the liqueur in sours, old fashioned, or to create a boozy pecan flavored cold brew coffee.

“You can start out with something, at least that is sort of familiar, has

things that you recognize, that might help you step into the spirits world,” Allyson said.

Gov. Brad Henry signed House Bill 2348 into law in 2010, legalizing homebrewed beer in the state, which kicked off efforts to modernize the state’s alcohol laws further. Those efforts have turned into business opportunities for local alcohol production, allowing a wave of craft beer to swell in Oklahoma over recent years. That wave hit Stillwater in 2014 with the opening of Iron Monk Brewing Company.

Territory Distilling is riding the next wave of the libation liberation thanks to updated laws – craft distilling. The young family has opened Stillwater’s first small-batch craft distillery. Tucked away in a light industrial zone in the south-central part of town, they are only the 11th licensed distiller operating in Oklahoma.

“We felt like there was a gap, I guess, in the market and that out on the West Coast, craft distilling has become bigger and bigger and bigger. And it seems like that’s how craft beer got started



Allyson and Mason Jones met in Stillwater while attending Oklahoma State University. Mason graduated with a BS in Finance and an MS in Quantitative Financial Economics. Allyson earned her BS in Civil Engineering and an MS in Food Process Engineering.

Look for Aunt Bill Pecan Candy Liqueur hitting liquor store shelves across the state. Customers can also purchase bottles directly from the distillery located at 1408 South Fern Street. Learn more at territorydistilling.com



If you want the complete sugary pecan experience, pair the liqueur with some of Aunt Bill's brown candy. Mason's mother surprised them with this homemade convection for the grand opening.

“... WHEN I STARTED THINKING ABOUT STARTING THIS BUSINESS AND WHERE DO WE WANT TO LIVE? ... IT WAS HERE (STILLWATER).” — ALLYSON JONES

was (on the) West Coast, ... and so we thought now's a good time to jump in,” Mason said.

Allyson's education was a natural fit for running a distillery. “I studied food process engineering at OSU, so this is definitely right in my wheelhouse, and this is fascinating,” she said.

“From the get-go, we decided on a rum/rum-based liqueur line, and we're going to have a whiskey line. So whiskey is obviously not something you can get out right away because it has to sit in a barrel. So then that makes our first release having to be from that rum line,” Jason said.

Territory Distilling doesn't take any shortcuts to keep to the spirit of craft products. If they can legally make the ingredients in-house, they will. “I kind of wanted to stress that we made the rum, we fermented and distilled the rum, which is not always the case,” Jason said.

“So we'll bring in 50-pound sacks of sugar, and we've got 50-pound bushel bags of grain for our first whiskey that we're trialing out right now. We do as much as we possibly can ourselves,” Allyson said.

Like many OSU graduates, career opportunities often call them to the metros, but for Allyson, Stillwater is where her heart is.

“This is where we met. We both went to OSU, and we have always loved it here. When I graduated college, I worked in Tulsa full-time, and I lived here because I just couldn't let go. When we got married, we moved to Tulsa. And when I started thinking about starting this business and where do we want to live? Of course, it was here.” ●



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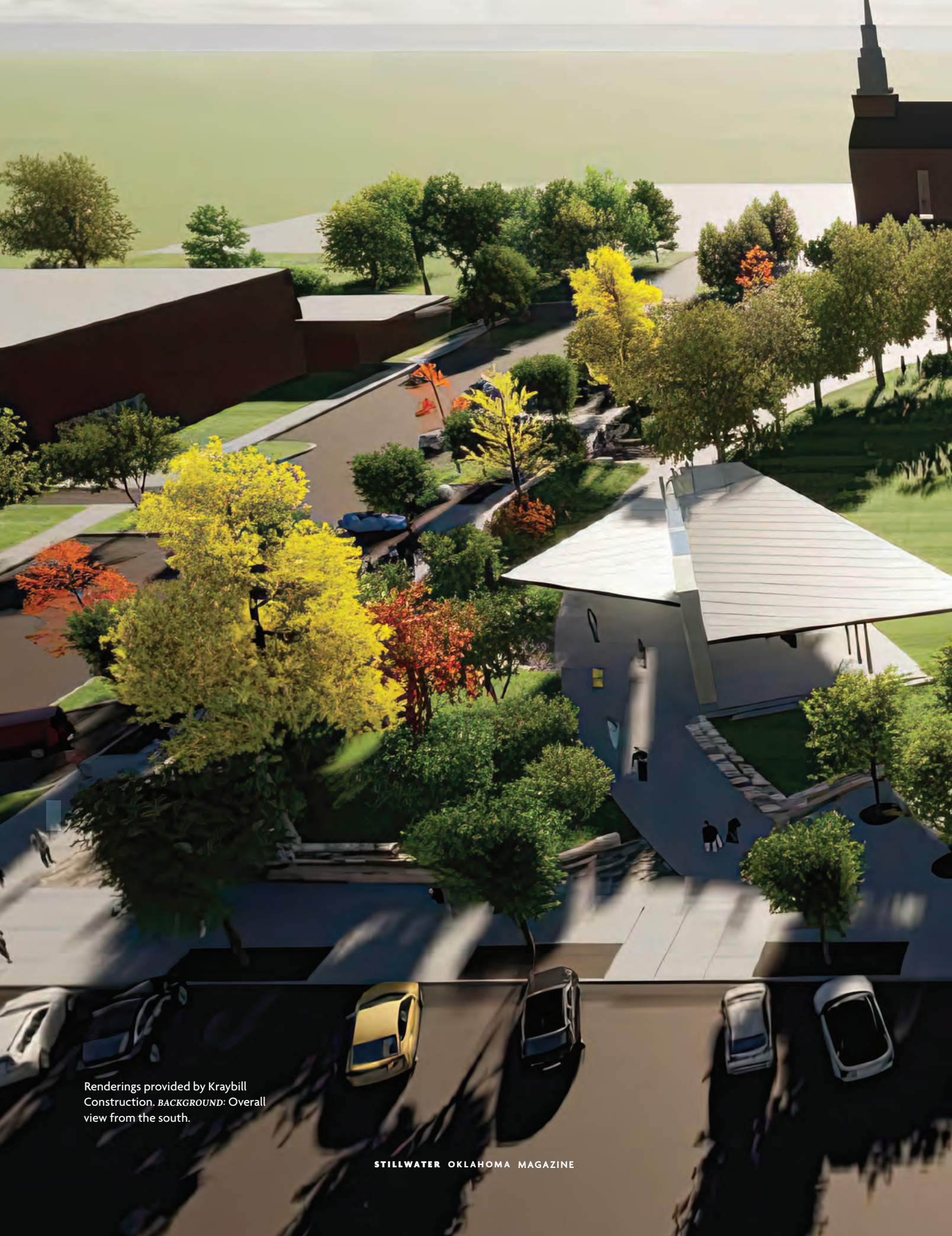


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Renderings provided by Kraybill Construction. *BACKGROUND:* Overall view from the south.



COVER
STORY

BUSINESS PROGRESS: *Block 34*

A TRANSFORMATIONAL GIFT:

Kicker's Steve and Becky Irby pledge \$3.8 million for Block 34



View of stage from water feature.



“... on Saturdays, they would have a big farmer’s market with food trucks and vendors and things like this at the park. We went there several times when we were in town and thought, “This is such a cool atmosphere, I wish we had this in Stillwater” — STEVE IRBY



View of stage from lawn.



As the founder of Kicker, a successful high-performance audio company that sells products on every continent, people tend to ask Steve Irby why he and his wife Becky choose to continue living in a small city like Stillwater. After all, they could have moved their headquarters anywhere.

But Irby says that question has always baffled him.

“I think, you know, why not? I was born here, I was raised here, this is my home and so I never thought of just picking up the business and moving it,” he said. “I mean, why on Earth would I even do that?”

“... And the quality of life here is so much better in Stillwater ... It costs more to be in a big city. People think, ‘Move to a big city.’ Well, you know, there’s big cities on both coasts too, so which one are you going to choose? Anyway, quality of life, that’s why we stayed here and it works, you know?”

THE OPPORTUNITY

For many years the Irbys and Kicker have quietly supported organizations working in the community.

But in December they stepped into the spotlight with a pledge of \$3.8 million for the development of Block 34, a full square block in downtown Stillwater that is owned by the City of Stillwater.

City leaders saw the two acres of vacant land that sits between Eighth and Ninth avenues just east of the Stillwater Community Center as a unique opportunity to transform downtown and spur new development. And they have been working on various plans to do something with the space for more than 10 years, but a lack of funding always stood in the way.

Now, thanks to the Irbys and Kicker, Block 34 is about to become the kind of public space that draws crowds and elevates the entire area around it.

With years passing and no deep pockets in sight, the Block 34 Trust Authority had adopted a piecemeal strategy for developing the space and were seeking grants and donations where they could find them to build the various elements of their vision for the block.

Trust Authority member Jim Beckstrom initially approached Steve Irby about donating money to build an outdoor stage on the block. It seemed like a natural fit for the owner of a company that makes audio equipment.

THE PLOT TWIST

Irby said as a musician who got into the audio business by way of playing in rock and roll bands and building speakers for bands, the idea appealed to him, but everything shut down as the COVID-19 pandemic began to spread across the country and work on the block stalled.

In a twist of fate, it would be the pandemic that created a windfall that allowed the Irbys to make a gift big enough to do much more than build a stage.

“So we were on board and then COVID hit,” he said. “Everything came to a screeching halt ... but as time went on, we applied for the Payroll Protection Plan. We’ve got a lot of employees and we ended up getting approved for that and getting a big check from the government. And I thought, ‘If we make it, I would like to use this to give something back to Stillwater.’”

“... as time went on, we were approved for the loan and then our business actually kicked off during COVID and did well because people wanted to do something ... the people that have been involved in car audio got back into it, installed systems in their cars. You can still drive your car, even though you’re locked down ... and our business really took off. In my mind, I kind of set that money aside thinking, ‘Let’s see how this goes, but if we come out of this OK I would like to use that in some way, for Block 34’”

Irby said once he determined his business was going to be OK, he got in touch with Beckstrom and said he would like to look at the entire concept for the block. He had an idea for a multi-use space inspired by a downtown park he had seen while visiting his son in Boulder, Colorado.

“It was right in the middle of Boulder and on Saturdays, they would have a big farmer’s market with food trucks and vendors and things like this at the park,” Irby said. “We went there several times when we were in town and thought, ‘This is such a cool atmosphere, I wish we had this in Stillwater that would bring people together where you could be outside, you could listen to some live music and

just enjoy locally grown produce or the food trucks or whatever you want to do, just hang out.’

“And so that was my inspiration to talk to Jim about, ‘Could we make something like this happen on Block 34?’”

Beckstrom told the News Press he nearly cried when Irby said he wanted to look at funding the entire project.

THE DETAILS

As it turned out, the design proposed by Irby’s architect was more costly than expected, but Kicker’s unused PPP funding provided a start.

The Irbys ultimately decided to kick in more money from Kicker, reaching a total of \$2.7 million for construction and \$800,000 — to be paid as \$80,000 per year over 10 years — for programming. They also threw in \$270,000 to cover engineering and design costs.

The design includes a lawn larger than Guthrie Green in Tulsa, a stage that is big enough to accommodate a full orchestra and has rigging for sound and lighting equipment, a covered pavilion, a paved plaza with a water feature, and tree-shaded tables. The entire space will be landscaped with trees and plantings around the perimeter.

Duncan Street, which runs between Block 34 and the Stillwater Community Center, will have the ability to be closed for the Farmer’s Market.

“I think the structures are pretty modern looking,” Irby said. “The park is not just a traditional square park, so it’s got angles, it’s got arcs and circles and everything is set at a diagonal ... The stage is in one corner, pavilion in another corner, and then park in the middle. We’ve got a plaza, we’ve got a splash pad with lighting.”

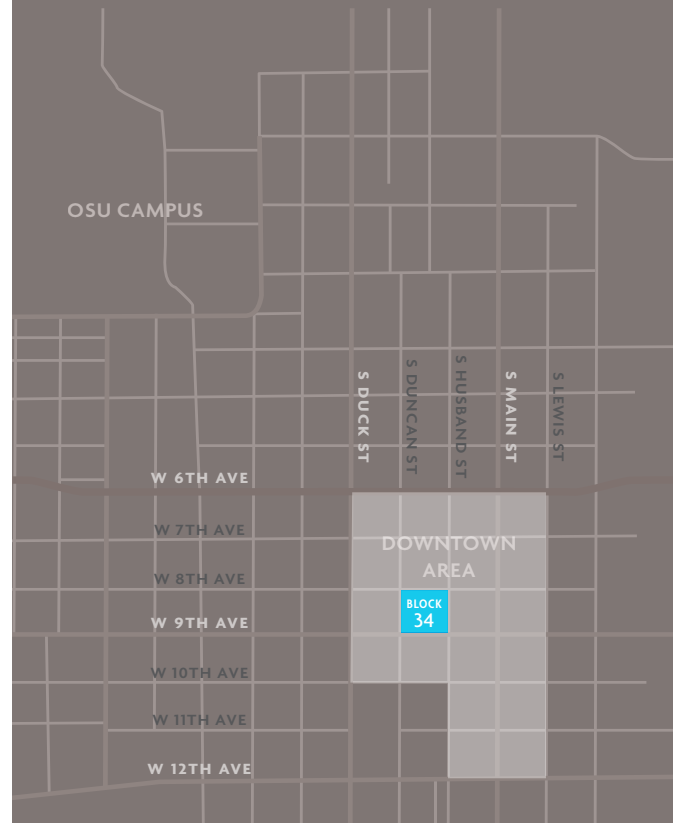
Irby credits Beckstrom as the guy who has been laboring on Block 34 for years and has the ability to make it happen.



View of back stage.

PRELIMINARY SITE PLAN

- 1 CENTRAL LAWN
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- 3 REST ROOMS
- 4 WATER FEATURE
- 5 PLAZA EVENTS / SEATING
- 6 KICKER PERFORMANCE STAGE
- 7 BACKSTAGE AREA
- 8 FARMERS MARKET STRUCTURE
- 9 FOOD TRUCK PARKING
- 10 BERMED LAWN SEATING
- 11 STONE BENCHES/ SEATING
- 12 SKY LIGHT
- 13 RAIN GARDEN / WATER DETENTION
- 14 FARMERS MARKET TRUCK PARKING





“I think it’s going to be a class act and it’s going to be a lot of fun for Stillwater, with potential to grow and to be added onto as well.” — STEVE IRBY



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Enjoy a flyover animation of the planned development at Block 34 by scanning QR code.





A HOPPING DISTRICT

Architect's rendering



Construction is already under way on the Stonecloud Brewing Company taproom at 917 S. Husband St. and an unnamed restaurant across from Block 34 at 205 W. Ninth Ave. More plans are in the works that will push the revitalization of downtown Stillwater further south and west.

Even with economic development incentives and the activities of the former business improvement district, redevelopment within downtown primarily stayed on Main Street

— or within a block of it — and has been concentrated between Sixth and Ninth avenues.

A cluster of funky, locally-owned businesses around the traffic circle at 10th Avenue and Main Street is already home to two unique restaurants, Tokyo Pot and Good Little Eater. Now that area is primed to become a magnet for foodies as Look Properties developer Cory Williams prepares to build out two more restaurant spaces.

Williams bought the former Uncle Mike's Mall, located at 923 S. Main Street, and plans to develop it as a restaurant. He's looking for the right tenant.

He's also redeveloping an old warehouse next door to Stonecloud Brewing Company at 116 W. 10th Avenue for the second location of TXMZ, a Tulsa-based Mexican restaurant that serves upscale street food and mezcals-based cocktails.

"I just feel so fortunate to be hooked up with him because I needed that," Irby said. "I have more the vision for it and what we'd like to do. He's got the know-how ... So I think we made a good team ... we have some really good people working on the design of this. I think it's going to be a class act and it's going to be a lot of fun for Stillwater, with potential to grow and to be added onto as well."

Irby said everyone is used to calling the space Block 34 so he thinks that should remain the name for the completed park.

"Hopefully it will be a very cool park and Block 34 will represent something very cool instead of an undone project," he said.

He has asked that the stage be called Kicker Soundstage.

The money the Irbys donated for programming was inspired by Oklahoma State University's McKnight Center for the Performing Arts, which also received a major gift to support programming.

"It is true, you build a facility like the McKnight Center and they don't just automatically come," Irby said " ... I think there has to be some seed money

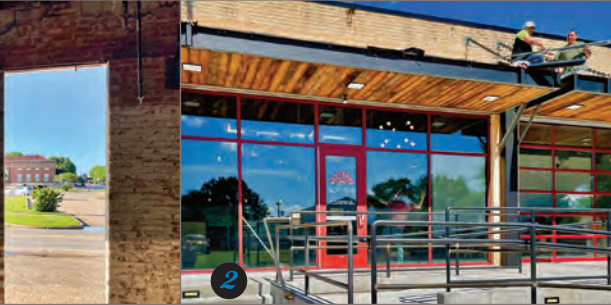
too and there has to be something happening on the block just to start, the catalyst to maybe (get) bigger things going ... Don't want to just let it sit there, right?"

THE BIG PICTURE

Irby said it may take more support to realize the full vision for Block 34 because everything is getting more expensive. He's looking at the design to see what can be scaled back initially and added later or what can be phased.

He wants to see the whole thing through, but says more donors may be needed to accomplish that. He's hoping others will be inspired and want to become a part of the effort that he believes will provide a gathering space for the whole community and serve as a catalyst for growth and development in Stillwater's core.

Construction on Block 34 hasn't started yet, but Irby expects ground to be broken in early summer. The construction process will take about a year, depending on supply chain issues.



Williams has big plans for a long-empty downtown landmark, the Lytton Building, at 907 and 909 S. Main St. Construction is a couple of years out, but he would eventually like to see another restaurant and a cozy, sophisticated bar in the bottom floor. The upper two floors would

provide space for apartments that could also be used for short-term rentals. If all goes according to plan, there will eventually be at least 11 restaurants and six bars within a few blocks of Blocks 34. 🌐

- 1 The building across from Block 34 that formerly housed **Causley Productions** is being built out as a restaurant. The new restaurant at Ninth Avenue and Husband Street features large windows to take advantage of the views that will be offered by Block 34.
- 2 **Stonecloud Brewing Company** was founded by Stillwater native Joel Irby, son of Kicker's Steve and Becky Irby. The Oklahoma City-based brewery launches its second taproom on Husband Street in downtown Stillwater. It will feature outdoor seating with a back patio and yard area. Finishing touches remained as it prepared for a mid-June opening.
- 3 **Tokyo Pot** Several unique, locally-owned eateries are already located in downtown Stillwater. Tokyo Pot, located just off the traffic circle at 10th Avenue and Main Street, specializes in a cook-your-own style of Japanese hotpot known as Shabu-Shabu. **Good Little Eater**, located next door, is known for its baked goods and Sunday brunch.

TOP LEFT: View of park from southwest corner. **TOP RIGHT:** View of park from northwest corner. **LOWER LEFT:** View of path looking south to stage **LOWER RIGHT:** View of lawn from back of stage.



But changes can already be seen in downtown, with new businesses coming to an area outside the traditional Main Street corridor.

Steve and Becky Irby aren't the only members of the family investing in Stillwater. Their son Joel is opening a taproom for his business, Stonecloud Brewery, just around the corner from Block 34 and TXMZ, a new Mexican restaurant, is going in next door to the taproom at 10th Avenue and Husband Street.

A building across the street from Block 34 is being renovated for another undetermined new restaurant that will overlook the park.

"You know, they say in real estate it's location, location, location," Irby said. "Well, Block 34 was

not a location, but I think when we're done with it, it will be a location. And that will be a location that adds value to the properties around it, whatever breweries or restaurants or anything that might go in there.

"I think it's just going to be a cool new space for Stillwater, but that's not too far away. Just a block off Main Street. I hope it will help benefit Main Street as well." ●



Story By Michelle Charles
michelle@stillwaternewspress.com

"... they say in real estate it's location, location, location. Well, Block 34 was not a location, but I think when we're done with it, it will be a location." — STEVE IRBY

TOP LEFT: View from pavilion looking west. **TOP RIGHT:** View of pavilion from northwest. **LOWER LEFT:** View of farmers market. **LOWER RIGHT:** View of farmers market from pavilion.





TOP: Kicker founder **Steve Irby** stands in front of a collage that tells the company story. It's part of a museum he is developing at the Kicker World Headquarters building. MIDDLE RIGHT: Irby stands with **Don Mitchell** (left), the man who built the cabinet for the first Kicker speaker in his wood shop. He would also be instrumental in selling the first units. LOWER LEFT: Kicker has been associated with custom car culture since its early days. Kirby said that's a natural fit because he has loved cars since he was a young boy building the go kart in this photo with his father. LOWER RIGHT: KICKER world headquarters graces the Stillwater skyline beside historic Boomer Lake. KICKER products are designed and shipped from a 280,000-square-foot facility that employs nearly 200. KICKER products are sold by approximately 1,200 dealers in the United States, and export sales are managed through a dealer network in approximately 50 countries.

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Stillwater Medical makes big investment to battle cancer

There is a new development to Stillwater's fight against cancer.

Stillwater Cancer Center will be home to the MR-LINAC, a machine on the cutting edge of cancer treatment. The MR-LINAC combines an MRI machine with a linear accelerator to apply radiation treatment more precisely to tumors in the body.



The thing that separates the MR-LINAC from a traditional linear accelerator is doctors can look at the tumor they are treating with radiation. Since they can see the tumor, they don't have to apply radiation to as much surrounding healthy tissue.

Michal Shaw is the Executive Director of the Stillwater Medical Foundation. She said it will be the only MR-LINAC in Oklahoma and the two nearest are in Dallas and The University of Iowa.

"We are so excited about this piece of equipment," Shaw said. "It is going to be huge for Stillwater Medical, but really for all of our cancer patients and the communities that we serve."

Shaw anticipates the MR-LINAC being up and running sometime in the spring of 2023. To house the machine, Stillwater Cancer Center is building a radiation vault that will be completed by the end of the calendar year.

The technology is still new. Only 28 MR-LINACs have been sold in the United States and 12 have been installed.

Vicki Branstetter is the Radiation Oncology Director at Stillwater Cancer Center.

"Stillwater Cancer Center physicians and staff have been watching and analyzing the best time to bring this groundbreaking technology to Stillwater, Oklahoma, and that time is now," Branstetter said. "With the MR-LINAC, we will have the ability to increase positive outcomes and treatment for our patients, their loved ones, and the entire community and region. In my 42 years of healthcare, I can think of nothing more monumental than this piece of equipment."

Such an important piece of equipment is a significant investment. The entire project is projected to cost almost \$10 million. The MR-LINAC is \$7 million and the surrounding vault around \$3 million.

Some of the project has been funded, and Shaw said Stillwater Cancer Center is trying to bridge the gap with a goal of raising \$2 million. There are naming right opportunities available, but no donation will be turned away.

Even with the cost, the decision to invest in a MR-LINAC was simple. Stillwater Medical wants the finest treatment modern technology offers for its patients.

“We want our patients to have the very best and we believe that this MRI guided radiation therapy is the future of radiation therapy,” Shaw said. “Stillwater Medical is on the cutting edge, and we again want the very best for our patients and our radiation oncology doctors believe that this equipment is the very best.”

Last year, Stillwater Medical had more than 20,000 cancer patient visits and more than 5,000 in the radiology department alone. Both numbers could rise as people from the surrounding

area won't have to travel to Texas or Iowa for top-notch treatment.

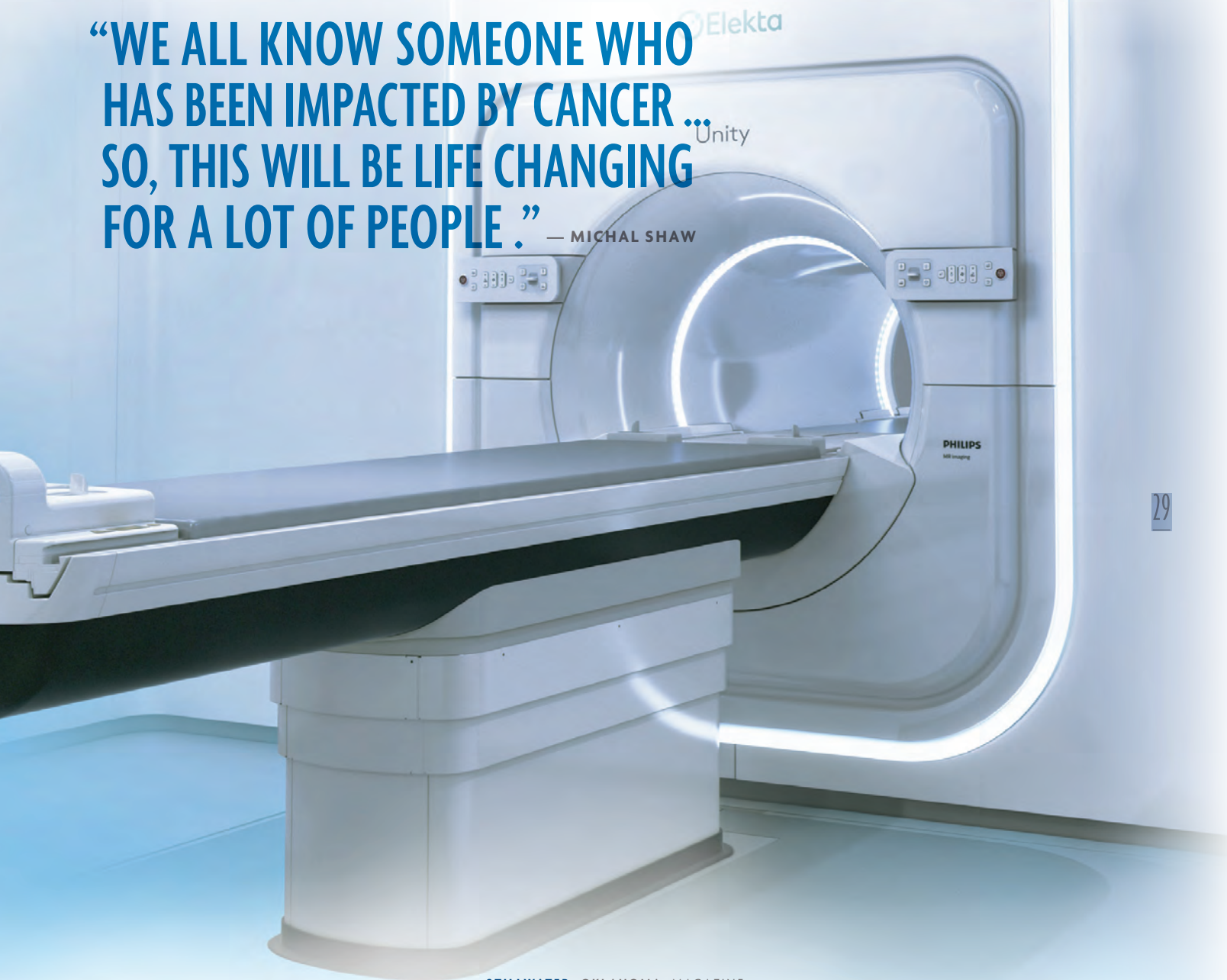
“We all know someone who has been impacted by cancer, whether directly or a family member or a friend,” Shaw said. “So this will be life changing for a lot of people.” ●



BY Ben Hutchens

“WE ALL KNOW SOMEONE WHO HAS BEEN IMPACTED BY CANCER ... SO, THIS WILL BE LIFE CHANGING FOR A LOT OF PEOPLE .”

— MICHAL SHAW





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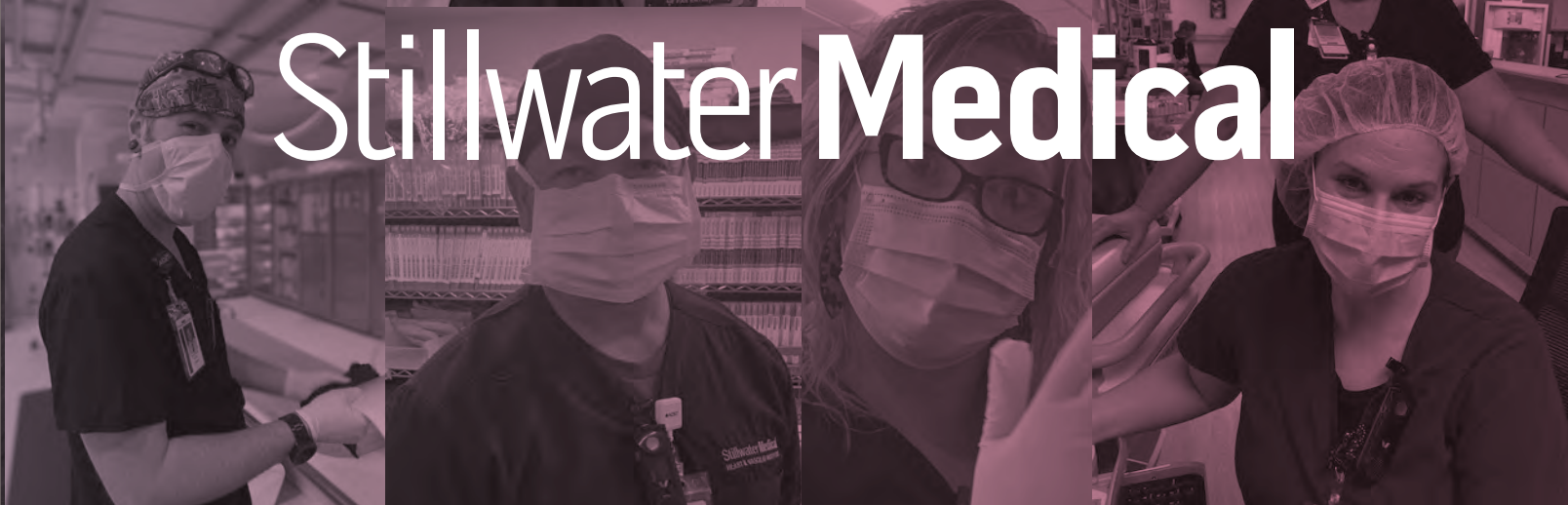
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Every moment of your stay is an opportunity for us to excel. It's why local residents are staying close to home for personal, first-rate healthcare. We're elevating the patient experience at Stillwater Medical.

Stillwater Medical



Small snack business makes big plans for Main Street

Cali Crissup didn't know what kind of business she wanted to create. Still, she knew her company would reflect her social personality and her hometown.

Like most good ideas, it all started on a long road trip with her girlfriends.

"So on the drive, I said something about Stilly in the name and so of course some people usually figure out pretty quickly I'm a social butterfly. So that's where social came from and 174 is the exit from (I-35) to get to Stillwater," Crissup said.

She shared her idea with her friends on that drive, "Hey guys, I think I want to open my own company. I'm not really sure what it's going to be ... but I'm thinking a charcuterie company would be great in Stillwater."

Crissup's need for social interaction was severely hampered in 2020 when the global pandemic shut down gatherings and impacted her full-time job in the auctioneering business.

"I work from home for myself and so during COVID, we went from having multiple auctioneer's conventions throughout the year to having none for several months at a time. So I went from having all these opportunities for social interaction to absolutely zero working from home, sitting at my house and not seeing anybody. Going to Walmart for social interaction and buying groceries, quite honestly," Crissup said.

Crissup took to social media, posting her Walmart sagas on Facebook, which morphed into live video streams of her cooking from home. Viewers started jokingly requesting if she would take to-go orders for dinner.

"I was like, 'absolutely not, I'm not cooking you dinner.' And then that's when it kind of transitioned to the charcuterie side of things. 'Cause I had a girls' night and took pictures (of the charcuterie spread) and posted them on Facebook.

Everybody thought it looked great. And so that's when it just started kind of clicking, maybe this is something that people would enjoy and something that people could use," Crissup said.

Since Crissup launched Social 174's Facebook page Sept. 1, 2020, the business has grown beyond her expectations.

"I wasn't planning on this being a full-time thing. It was supposed to be just kind of a side gig, a hobby for me in my free time because

I still have a full-time job on top of all of this," Crissup said.

Social 174 focuses on catering snack spreads and charcuterie packages that are approachable and can accommodate a variety of dietary restrictions. Demand for Crissup's snack service grew enough over the last year and a half to make her start thinking about a brick-and-mortar retail location.

"So first and foremost, I had always wanted an event venue. That's kind of been on my to-do list, like my entire life. I didn't think this was how it would happen. I definitely didn't see myself having a food business and then opening an event space, but that's kind of where this is all transitioned to."



Social 174 helps event organizers and party planners add an artistic style to snacks. They create elaborate displays of snacks ready to enjoy and even take on the go.

Crissup took advantage of two opportunities in Stillwater. First, she participated in last year's Merry Main Street Christmas event on Block 34. Her event in the hospitality dome allowed participants to get hands-on experience building charcuterie boxes.

"So I kind of made the decision between the second and third weekend (of Merry Main Street) and signed the lease the Monday after. So as soon as I had moved my things out of my (Merry) Main Street (dome), ... they just made their way to the new location," Crissup said.

Alane Zannotti was proud to see Crissup's online business be able to move so quickly to Main Street. "For both Shannon Williams and I, it was exciting because that means that every time we've had a dome, an online business has turned into a bricks and mortar."

Social 174 follows Twisted Horn as the second online business that has rented a dome at Merry Main Street to then move into a Main Street location downtown.

"I was thrilled for Cali because she literally moved the stuff out of the dome and to her bricks-and-mortar place. What a success story," Zannotti said.

The second opportunity Crissup leveraged was the small business enhancement assistance provided in the downtown/campus link TIF district. The program provides financial assistance not to exceed 50% of actual expenditure and up to \$15,000 for exterior building improvements.

"So of course, initially I didn't understand that section of it (TIF). I actually applied with a full remodel of the store and everything that I was doing ... and they had me redo the application for the TIF because it's only for the exterior," Crissup said. At the time of writing, Crissup has received approval through the downtown/campus link review committee for her project and is awaiting approval from the Stillwater Economic Development Authority.

"The goal is to turn this from looking like a commercial property to more like a house's front porch. So it'll have shiplap and double doors in the middle so that it's more comforting and welcoming from the street," Crissup said. "I want it to feel like your grandma's living room, but not creepy ... I want everything mismatched ... since I worked with auctioneers, I actually have purchased a lot of the things that I'm using in the store from different auctions across the country. So it's been cool to get to support the auctioneer's that I work with every day in the industry."

Crissup is in the final stretch of the remodel and has set June 1, 2022, as a target date to grand open Social 174's doors at 607 S. Main Street. ●



STORY BY Chris Peters
chris@stillwaternewspress.com
PHOTOS BY Comanche Spirit Photography
and Social 174

Cali Crissup, owner of **Social 174**, has a background in the auctioneering business. To furnish her brick-and-mortar store, she acquired various items from auctions around the country.



"The goal is to turn this from looking like a commercial property to ... a house's front porch."

Social 174 will be the next business to leverage financial assistance from the TIF to create a welcoming facade for downtown shoppers.



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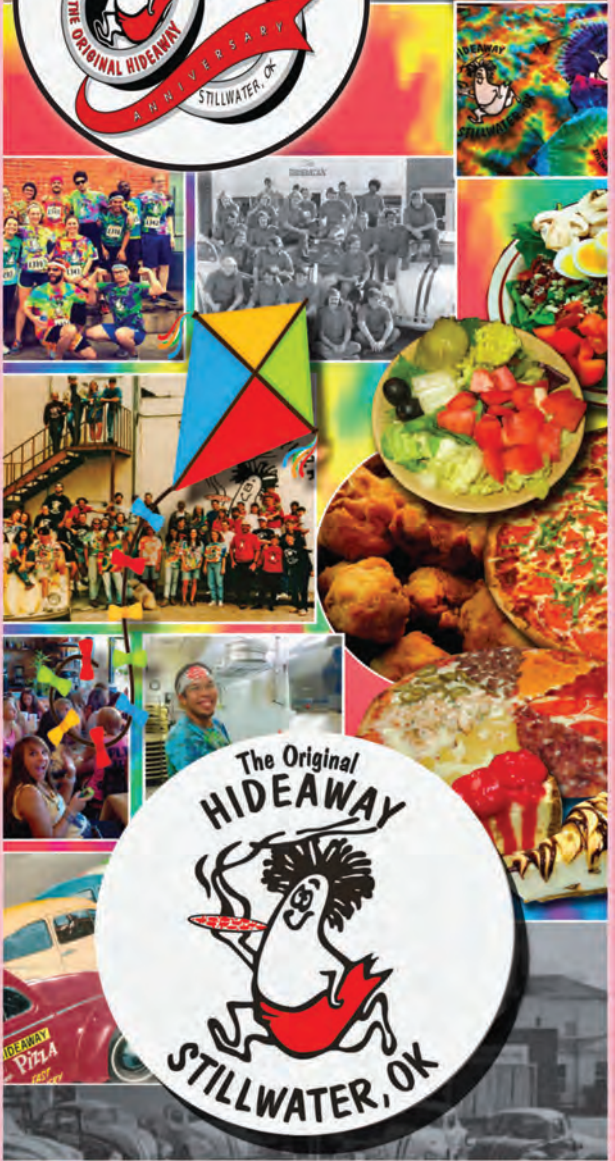


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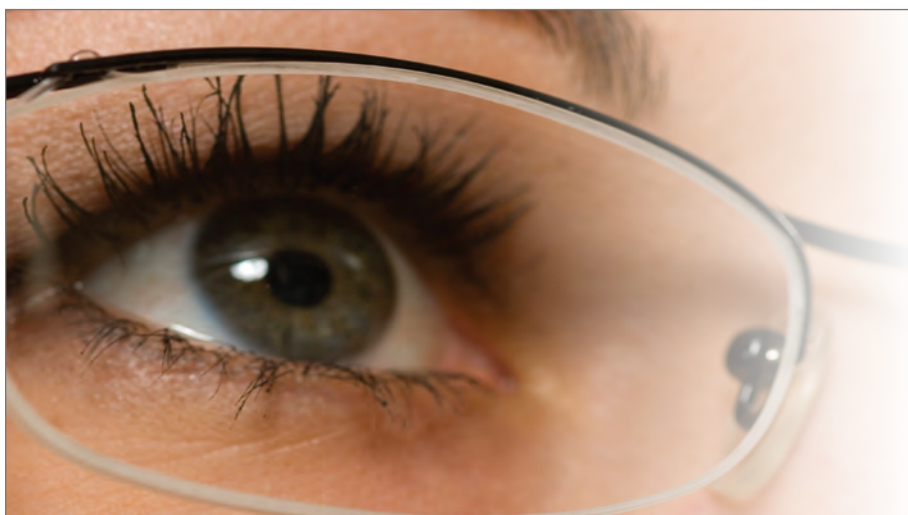
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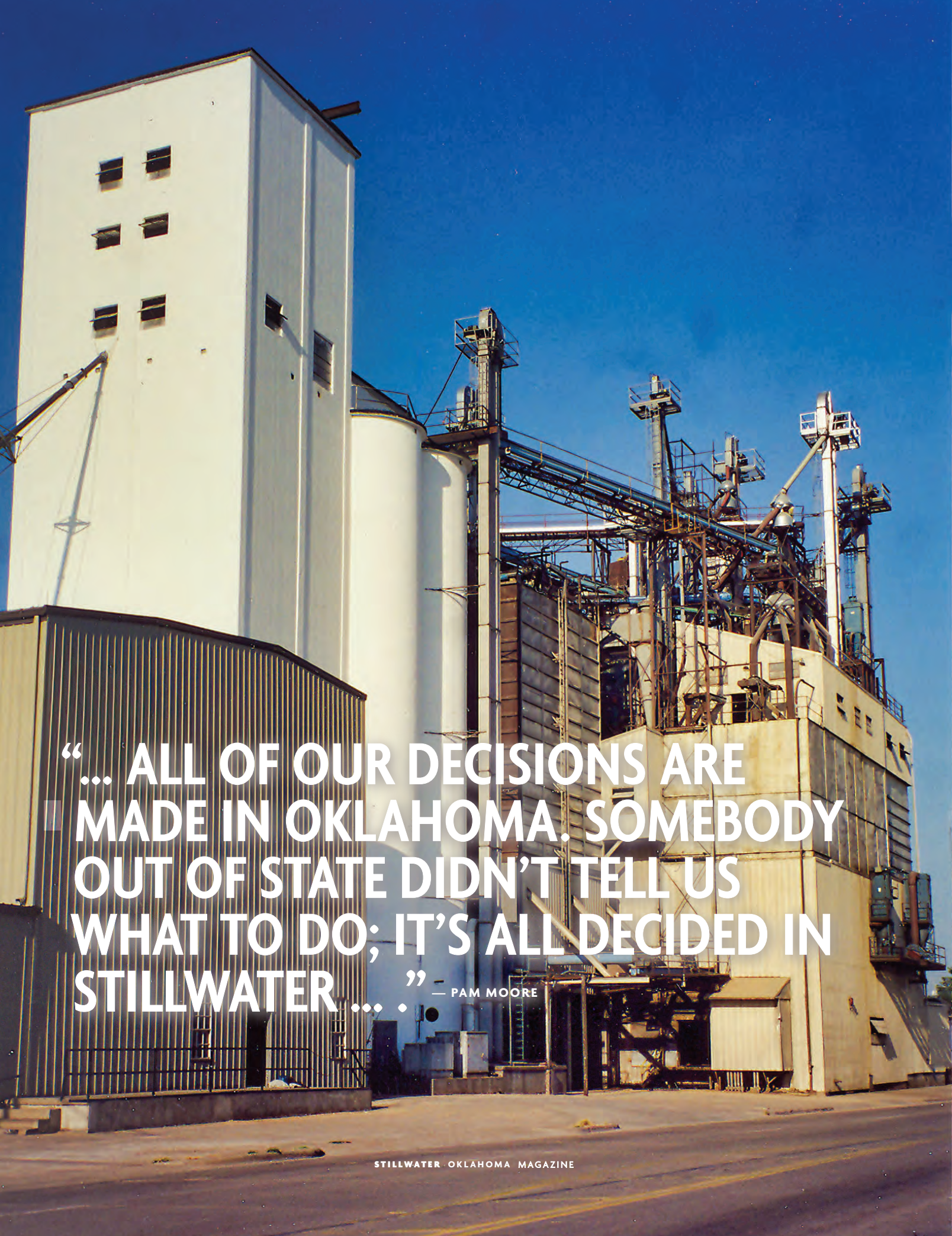
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“... ALL OF OUR DECISIONS ARE
MADE IN OKLAHOMA. SOMEBODY
OUT OF STATE DIDN'T TELL US
WHAT TO DO; IT'S ALL DECIDED IN
STILLWATER”

— PAM MOORE

Stillwater Milling ENDURES BY TREATING CUSTOMERS LIKE *Family*

For more than 100 years, the Stillwater Milling Company has been a staple for the community. Being one of the area's oldest businesses gives it a rich history.

The business was founded in 1891, grined wheat and flour as the Thomas and Plummer Perfection Mills.

The Babcock family then incorporated the company in 1906. The family produced flour under the name "Stillwater's Best Flour."

The company was purchased again a few years later by Andy Goodholm, and he added a line of flour called Good Home Flour.

The Stillwater Milling Company continued developing flour until the 1950s. Shortly before flour businesses started declining, Stillwater Milling began manufacturing feed for poultry and livestock with its brand A&M. It was named after Goodholm and his wife.

The flour mill closed in 1958, and the company began focusing more on animal products.

The Perry branch was opened in 1938 to receive grains and sell fertilizer. By 1970 a branch in Davis was opened, followed by an addition in Claremore in the mid-1970s.

The Agri-Center was established in August of 1975 in Stillwater and later added to the other three locations.

Over time, the company has grown and adapted in various ways. They went from selling only flour or manufacturing feed to what they have now.

Pam Moore took over as CEO in 2019, but she started working as a nutritionist at Stillwater Milling in 1990. She has seen the company grow and advance over the last 30 years.

UPGRADED TECHNOLOGY

Moore said the same way technological advances make life easier in everyday settings, farming has grown exponentially due to technology.

The vehicles used for farming now have GPS that can help the operator drive a straight line when they plant a field, testing on fields and advances on what feed to give animals have all changed.

"The testing that they can do now on fields as far as what nutrients they need to put down, and then cattle too or livestock in general of what they actually need and how to monitor what they need, that's changed a lot over the years," she said.

Just like technology has helped farming in general, it has also helped the Stillwater Mill.

"We just do things to be more efficient. A couple of years ago, we added a robotic stacker, so it stacks all the bags for you. So you don't have a person

throwing 50-pound bags. Instead, they're driving a forklift to move the pallets that the robot put on," Moore said. "So then you can do more things in the course of a day because you're not counting on a person to do that."

The robotic arm isn't the only upgrade they made. Many years ago, they also computerized their feed plant.

"If you have a feed formula or recipe. Basically, if you tell it you want 200 pounds of this to go into it, it gets 200 pounds out of that bin and weighs it and puts it in the mixer," she said. "It's done that for several years."

The Stillwater Milling Company had the first computerized feed mill in the state and the largest independently owned feed mill.

The feed mill can manufacture 1,400 tons a day, and all the feed sold is manufactured right here in Stillwater.

ADAPTING TO CHANGES

Walking into the Agri Center, they have an overflow of various items to buy. The business may have started with flour and livestock feed, but they've grown to sell anything someone may need.

"Well, there's the store ... a whole line of everything. Clothing, clothing that's for the farmer but clothing that's not. There are shoes in there. There's home goods, (and) they have barbecue grills," Moore said. "And then there's animal vaccines for a horse, but there are for (a) dog and a cat. And dog and cat food, we sell a lot of birdseed."

They have also opened stores in Davis, Claremore, and Perry. Moore said they have thought about opening another store but haven't found the right location and community.

"We've talked about it for a long time. We just haven't ever found the right community. And right now, with labor as tight as it is, I'm kind of glad because it'd be hard," she said. "It's hard enough to keep people in full in all four stores."

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE COMMUNITY

The company has undergone many changes to keep up with the ever-growing world of agriculture. However, Moore said one thing that hasn't changed is the relationship built with the community.

"We're owned by Oklahomans, so all of our decisions are made in Oklahoma. Somebody out of state didn't tell us what to do; it's all decided in Stillwater, what we're gonna do, not a corporate office in Minnesota or somewhere," she said. "So we invest in the community, want to do what's good for the community and the farmers and around this area. Well, across the state too, but mostly (in) this area. We're all over the state, and we serve farmers all over the state."

She said knowing your customers is vital because, between the four stores, every community has different needs and wants.

"Because we know what their products they might need. We have the four stores, but they each buy for themselves because their markets are different. What we sell in Perry versus what we sell in Stillwater is different," she said. "Whereas if we had somebody out of state just sending the same thing to every store the same mix of products, then you wouldn't be taking care of your customers."

Moore not only knows her customers, but she also said it resembles a family bond. Most often, she knows generations of families.

"It's neat to see that they've passed that on. Now, the younger generation they're changing it, and they should be making improvements," she said. "The technology improvements that they have now, their grandparents never could have dreamed of."

The employees at Stillwater Milling know their customers and their needs, but they also are big supporters of agriculture, helping with youth activities in Stillwater and surrounding areas.

Some of the things Moore said they do for youth are helping with the junior livestock shows and scholarships through Future Farmers of America or anything else related to agriculture.





THE STILLWATER MILLING COMPANY HAD THE FIRST COMPUTERIZED FEED MILL IN THE STATE.

“The kids that go through agriculture, I think, learn a lot as far as growing up. They need to know they have that support because they’re the ones who are gonna feed us all,” she said.

The Stillwater Milling company has faced challenges like most businesses during the pandemic. Moore said they were fortunate not to have to close during that period. Although business is thriving, Moore said she knows it wouldn’t be possible without the support of the communities and loyal customers.

“We have about 80 employees here. So we have a lot of people in Stillwater and in the surrounding areas as far as supporting the community or

supporting the area,” she said. “We want the farmer and rancher to do good. If they don’t do good, we’re not going to be in business either, and we realize that.” ●



STORY BY Ashlynd Huffman
ashlynd@stwnewspress.com

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“A COMMUNITY WHERE PEOPLE LIKE TO VISIT IS A COMMUNITY WHERE PEOPLE WANT TO LIVE AND WORK.” — CRISTY MORRISON



TOURISM IS THE “*First Date*” IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Visit with Cristy Morrison and odds are you will be talking tourism in a matter of moments.

As the President and CEO of Visit Stillwater, Cristy and her staff spend their days and many nights as the first contact many people will have with the city.

Look up Stillwater Oklahoma online and Visit Stillwater often pops up first in the search list. In the course of a day, they often answer questions from around the globe about anything and everything Stillwater, not just tourism. Just part of their role that goes well beyond where people stay when coming to town.

SWO **Is tourism economic development?**

CM Absolutely! All forms of economic development begin with a visit. A visit to Stillwater is the first step to a great first impression and introduction to the community which will likely lead to repeat visits and potential future students, residents, workforce, and business owners.

- 1. EPOS: 2018** was the first EPOS mainstream sports camp for youth. (2020 and 2021 were canceled, so this is the 3rd year)
- 2. Bob Childers’ Gypsy Cafe** brings more than 60 songwriters together annually for the organization’s largest annual benefit music festival
- 3. Cowboy Stampede – OSU Rodeo Team:** In 2018, The Cowboy Stampede was Central Plains Region Rodeo of the year
- 4. Oklahoma Beef Expo & Oklahoma Cattlemen’s Summer Preview Show** attracts exhibitors from at least 6 different States – New Mexico, Iowa, Illinois, Texas, Arkansas, Kansas, and Missouri

SWO **So it sounds a bit like tourism kind of serves as a first date?**

CM Exactly, destination marketing plays an increasingly important role as an economic engine and has expanded across all areas of economic development. A community where people like to visit is a community where people want to live and work. This means it is also a community where businesses will want to be located.

SWO **Is your job at Visit Stillwater part matchmaker?**

CM As the official destination marketing organization for Stillwater, we’ve evolved over the years. Our goal is to enhance Stillwater’s economy, image, and quality of life through the promotion, marketing, and development of the region’s visitor economy. And when we are successful that provides jobs and increases tax dollars for the improvement in services and infrastructure that everyone in Stillwater can enjoy.

SWO **I had a CEO of a large company tell me that quality of life issues are vital for employee recruitment and retention.**

CM Visit Stillwater increases community awareness and opens the door for opportunities within all areas of economic development, such as business relocation, expansion, and entrepreneurial opportunities, not to mention retail, restaurants,

and cultural and sporting venues that cater to both visitors and locals.

SWO Sounds like the value of tourism... and what can result from it, may be a bit under appreciated?

CM As the third-largest economic driver for Oklahoma, and the largest industry in the world, tourism is the fastest-growing economic sector and is instrumental in stimulating and enhancing economic activities community-wide.

The Visit Stillwater team is ingrained into the fabric of the community which enables them to better assist consultants, developers, investors, meeting and event planners, and leisure travelers while generating wealth for our local business partners. As a result, Visit Stillwater drives economic success and enhances the quality of life for our residents.

SWO Stillwater voters overwhelmingly approved a three percent increase in the visitor's tax in February, how will that help?

CM When communities invest in destination marketing development, it becomes the catalyst for a cycle of economic benefits. Greater visitor spending supports more local jobs and generates additional sales tax revenue for local government. Investments in the visitor development cycle provide results that far surpass the initial investment.

The return on investment for the efforts of a destination marketing organization is typically felt much faster than within other economic development segments. It can also be a less expensive investment because the infrastructure is generally already in place with no need for costly and time-consuming utilities and capital projects. ●

Cristy Morrison has served as the President and CEO of Stillwater's Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) since 1995. In 2018 she was recognized with the state's highest tourism honor — the Lifetime Achievement Award for her life's work educating and promoting tourism in Oklahoma.



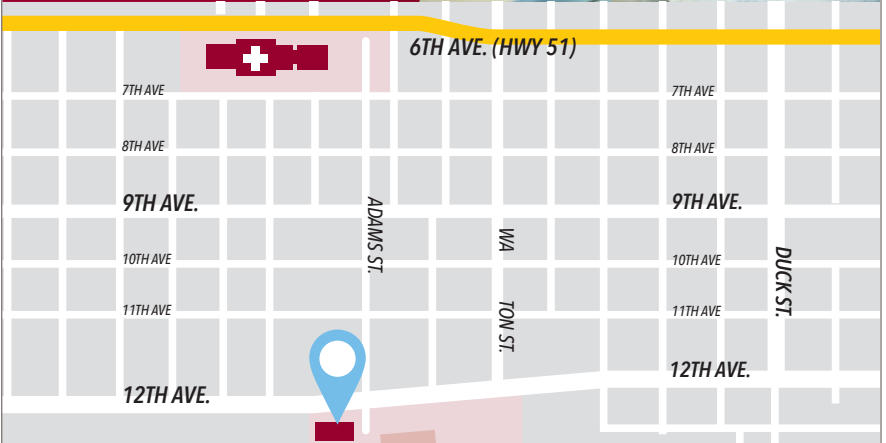
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BUSINESS PROGRESS: *Stillys Nutrition Fix*

Stillys Nutrition Fix ties into Stillwater's local area

Stillys Nutrition Fix is an all protein based nutrition store with drinks, protein donuts, Belgian waffles, cake balls and other delicious items. All these foods are made with healthy sugars and protein.

The Goal of Stillys Nutrition Fix is to create a place that you can stop and feel replenished with healthy foods, drinks and great service.

They are located at 1116 S Main St and they chose this location so people from out of town and in the local area can reach them with ease.

When asked why they decided to move to Stillwater and open the store, the owners Ashley Catlin and Michael Catlin responded with "Stillwater chose us. We loved to visit here and we were having trouble with building our new home. So we saw it as a sign and got a opportunity to move to Stillwater. We fell in the love with the building and set up shop." ●



"STILLWATER CHOSE US."

— ASHLEY AND MICHAEL CATLIN

SUMMER FUN AT FORMAL FANTASY



PARTY WEAR DESTINATION

Formal Fantasy has been fulfilling dress and accessory needs of wedding parties and prom goers for nearly 25 years. Owner Stacia Smith received her degree in clothing design from OSU. Her shop's inventory includes gowns, tuxedos, shoes, accessories and more. Smith also offers alteration services by appointment.

CRAZY DAYS

Stillwater's annual Crazy Days Sale will be extra exciting at Formal Fantasy this summer. Smith says she's marking "literally hundreds" of select formal dresses, shoes and men's tuxedo components to as low as \$9.99 each. The sale will be Wednesday, July 20th through Saturday, July 23rd.

AUGUST SORORITY RECRUITMENT

Summer's also a great time to find the perfect sorority recruitment dresses at Formal Fantasy. Whether you're on the recruitment side or attending in-person recruitment rounds, you'll find the dress just made for the occasion. House recruitment coordinators needing more information on purchases can call Stacia Smith at 405-780-7720.

Formal Fantasy's clothing selection and expertise in alterations will have you looking your best on your special day.

Formal Fantasy is located at 121 E. 9th in downtown Stillwater. Hours are Monday-Friday 11-6:30 and 11-4 on Saturdays.



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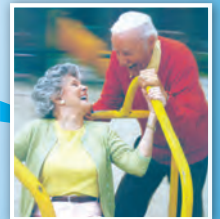
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STUCK ON *Stillwater*

Magnet plant would be the first of its kind in the U.S.

By late 2023, USA Rare Earth LLC should begin producing powerful magnets formed from alloys of rare earth minerals that have strong conductive and magnetic properties in its new facility at 100 W. Airport Road. The magnets are found in almost all modern electronics, from the consumer market to medical equipment and military technology.



Banners at the entrance to the industrial facility at 100 W. Airport Road reflect its new ownership. The USA Rare Earth factory, which will produce powerful magnets used in most electronics, expects to be producing prototypes in 2023.

“The phone you’re talking on contains about 10 of them, an iPad contains about 100,” USARE CEO Thayer Smith said.

Until now, China has dominated both the mining and manufacturing of rare earth elements, putting other nations in a dependent position.

In recent years, China has begun using more of the magnets in finished products as opposed to exporting them, even as the global market continues to grow.

In 2020, the company announced it had acquired manufacturing equipment to re-establish rare earth magnet production in the U.S.

The U.S. government has made establishing a reliable domestic supply chain for them a national priority and is backing that with tax incentives for companies that mine and manufacture the critical materials.

USARE is also receiving economic development incentives from the Oklahoma Department of Commerce and the City of Stillwater for the Stillwater project, which will move into a 350,000-square-foot industrial building formerly occupied by Total Energy.

Company representatives say the factory, which will produce permanent magnets — meaning they don’t lose their charge — from neodymium, iron and boron, will be the first of its kind in the Americas. The NdFeB magnets are the most powerful commercially available.

The production line will be able to produce 2,000 tons of high-performance magnets annually, according to the company. That’s about 17% of the 2019 U.S. demand. It plans to be in full operation within 12-18 months.

USARE looked at more than 50 sites in the southern part of the country but Smith said the final decision to locate their manufacturing facility in Stillwater was based on a combination of factors. Finding a suitable facility that could be renovated instead of building was a major selling point, as was having access to sufficient electric power at reasonable rates and a local workforce.

The educational system, including Oklahoma State University and Meridian Technology Center, was another attractive thing about Stillwater.

But in the end, it was Oklahoma’s business environment that ultimately sealed the deal.

“Oklahoma was the most proactive,” Smith said. “I can’t compliment the city and state enough.”

When at full capacity, it should employ at least 100 people. ●



STORY AND PHOTO BY Michelle Charles
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