



Montana

Business and Cooperative Programs • Rural Energy for America

Distillery is Making a Splash Mixing Community with Commerce

In the midst of the pandemic, while juggling work, civic leadership and homeschooling, friends Shawna Kelsey and Kristina Boyd decided to double down on their plans to launch Pink Bench Distilling in Troy, Montana.

In early 2020, they acquired a 100-year-old building from a local resident who was hoping to see this old general store on Troy's Main St. morph into something special.

With a substantial focus on distilling and distribution, Shawna, a Troy native, mentioned that, "Our biggest resource is all this public land. It's full of wild botanicals that aren't used, so we're planning on sourcing our botanicals off the forest. We have a lot of fruit trees that aren't picked and a distillery would be a great way to encourage people to glean their trees and reduce bear conflict." With a production and distilling space, a small tasting room that will offer Thai food samples, and a vast outdoor area, their goal is to open the doors in 2022.



Almost two decades ago, residents painted Troy's park benches pink during a town beautification project. With no push-back from this logging community, these seats have become a symbol of peaceful coexistence.

But, rehabbing an historic building takes capital, so they applied for funding through the USDA Rural Development Rural Energy for America Program to help pay for insulation, double pane windows, exterior doors and an air source heat pump.

The pair holds a keen awareness of the struggles that accompany alcohol and are working to build a family-friendly establishment where anyone can come and feel safe. "It's all about moderation, and the two-shot limit (which, by law, is what may be consumed on premises) provides an opportunity to practice this," said Shawna. They will also offer non-alcoholic options, created from the same botanicals that the community will help harvest. As Shawna and Kristina envision their dream, their considerations include getting residents and tourists to care about the environment, while creating jobs within the community. "Everyone struggles with employment," noted Kristina. "Hopefully this is something where we can create jobs and make our community a more fun place. It's a mix between passion and pragmatism."

Obligation Amount: \$11,615

Date of Obligation: 7/12/2021

Congressional District: Representative Rosendale Senators Daines and Tester

Partners: None

Demographics: Troy is a logging community, approximately 100 miles west of Kalispell, in Lincoln County.

Impact: This project will help with the revitalization of this small, rural town which has suffered as a result of the decline of the timber and mining industries.