

Small Business Spotlight

| Magnolia Scents by Design

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Every business begins with a story. For Brian Hight and his partner Ryan McDiarmid, the journey to entrepreneurship began several years before their business was actually launched.

During college, Hight and McDiarmid made candles in their home as gifts for family and friends during the holidays. Several years later, the two returned to the Independence area to begin their entrepreneurship journey with hopes of opening The Magnolia Bed and Breakfast in their massive, historic home. As with most entrepreneurs, plans changed along the way. Instead of using the home for lodging, the two launched Magnolia – Scents by Design in 2006.

“We started making candles again, and put together a catalog,” Hight said. “It took over our kitchen, then our breakfast nook, and then the dining room. People were coming over to our home to smell our candles that were quickly taking over the house.”

In March of 2008, Magnolia Scents by Design’s retail location opened at 106 N Pennsylvania Ave in historic downtown Independence, Kansas. The business began with candles, teas, herbs and spices and has expanded to offer home décor, gift items and more.

“We recently started representing local artists with some of our inventory,” Hight said.

Although COVID-19 caused a temporary closure of their retail location in Independence, the company was able to expand their product line in a way they truly never expected.

“We had a customer donate a large amount of alcohol, and the city was offering some small business grants right when COVID-19 started causing closures,” Hight said. “We took the donation and the funds available to create a new line of hand sanitizer for Magnolia Scents by Design. It has been very successful.”

Right before the start of school, the company offered free hand sanitizers to all employees of schools in the Independence area.

“We love this community. The cost of living is low in Southeast Kansas and we truly love all the people in our community,” Hight said.

In addition to the physical store, products can be purchased and shipped nationwide at www.magnoliascents.com. There are currently a couple dozen distributors that purchase product at wholesale and offer in their respective businesses.

Magnolia Scents by Design employs three full time and one-part time position, in addition to Brian who spends as much time as he can in the store.

Store hours are Monday-Friday 9am-6pm and Saturday 9am-5pm.