



May 5, 2020 Transcript

Kate Kennedy of the Kane Area Development Center interviews Andrea Lanich of the Laughing Owl Press Co.

(Editor's Note: Technological issues caused the introduction to be cut out of the recording. The text is shown below.)

Kate: Hello, this is Kate from the Kane Area Development Center, serving as a PA Wilds Ambassador for the "Wilds are Working" series. I'm here today with Andrea Lanich from Laughing Owl Press Company. Welcome Andrea - we are glad to have you with us to share how you are pivoting your company amid these uncharted times.

Kate: What brought you here to open your business?

Andrea: Well, when we started the Laughing Owl, we still lived out of state. I'm from the Wilds originally, and we knew that we wanted to run the business full time, and we knew that we wanted to be somewhere that had a slower pace of living and a more affordable cost of living. And also our families were here. So altogether, everything brought us back here, and we've never looked back.

Kate: And we're so glad you are here. Right now, we're kind of experiencing an unprecedented time for us with a covered 19. How are you pivoting your operations amid the crisis?

Andrea: Well, for the first couple of weeks after the shutdown started, we spent a lot of time researching and looking into all of the different resources that the state and federal governments were offering. After we kind of got that under control, we focused a lot on projects that we've been putting off, like some updates to our website. We're currently working on a software project that we're developing to let people order letterpress printing online. And then we also have been focusing on some design work and some fun projects that we've been kind of putting off and now have the time to do.

Kate: Sounds like you're making the most of this downtime that you've had, but you also still have customers. How are you staying in touch with your customers?

Andrea: Yeah, surprisingly, throughout the whole shut down, we've been in touch with customers and we still had a few orders coming through. Not what we would usually have for this time of year, but it helped us to remain really hopeful that we still had orders coming through. So we're staying in touch with them the same way that we kind of always process orders, which is through our website, or e-mail and phone.

Kate: How about with social media? How have you been using that during this time? Yeah, especially at the beginning.

Andrea: We just wanted to put ourselves out there and make sure that everybody knew we were here and we were okay. So we focused a lot on just staying in touch on Instagram and Facebook and, you know, posting some of the fun stuff we've been doing and some past projects and just remaining visible.

Kate: Yeah, and positive to you. I've seen some of your posts that are great. And so right now your physical location is closed, but people are still able to be in touch with you through phone, email, website. When you guys open back up, what are some of the operational pivots or approaches that you will take once things reopen, but while we're still kind of maybe in the yellow zone or figuring things out?

Andrea: So currently our retail area is still closed, but we're back in the shop kind of getting our footing back, getting back into routine, while making sure we're all still following health and safety recommendations. But, for now, we're just focusing on getting us back and getting everybody comfortable with being back in the flow of things.

Kate: Yeah, right. So what are some of the silver linings that you've seen?

Andrea: I think that it's been really great to see how the community has reacted. Everybody's been really supportive and really helpful. Another thing that we are really appreciative of is our employees. They're great. You know, ever since the beginning, nobody panicked. Everybody's still on board and everybody's doing what they can from where and when they can. And we just have such a great team that we're so happy to be back with and seeing their faces again.

Kate: Yes, it's nice to start slowly making that process to getting back to having your place open eventually. And your team has been wonderful during this time. Is there some advice like what's the best advice that you've received that has helped you?

Andrea: Well, I think that goes back to the social media again. When the shutdown first started, we just wanted our customers to know that we're still here. We're thinking of them. We're here for them. So just to remain visible and let everybody know that whatever they need, we're here, we see them, and we're ready to help in whatever way we can.

Kate: Well, yeah, because you want to be top of mind for them. And in April, you even did a little promotional thing...

Andrea: Though, of course, one of the first markets that we thought of was the wedding industry, because we knew that a lot of people were going to have to be changing plans. So for a while, we were offering a sale for people who had to reschedule their weddings and just reaching out and making sure that they knew that if they wanted to have something printed that we could help them with that and just make sure that they get what they need to help their plans go smoothly.

Kate: Right. What a change for them to have to cancel or postpone that. So having you out must have helped.

Andrea: We've had people call in tears. So it's nice that they feel comfortable to do that. Of course, we feel bad that they're having a hard time, but we're happy that we can at least make one thing easy for them.

Kate: That's right. Absolutely. Are there any programs or resources or organizations that you found helpful during this time, especially that you'd like to share?

Andrea: Yeah. Well, aside from you know, I mentioned the different state and government programs, of course, it's been great being in touch with the Peter through all of this or always supportive. And they really love their group of business in the PA Wilds. So it's great just to know that they hear us. And that they're there. Also to the Chamber of Commerce in Kane for supporting all the businesses and making sure that we all have what we need has been really great.

Kate: Yeah, well, it has been a weird time for all of us. So it's nice to hear that you received some support and resources during that time. And finally, do you have any moments of humanity or inspiration that really touched you during this time?

Andrea: Yeah, well, a lot of people have remained so positive and a lot of people just want to make sure that they're being supportive. I know for us and for other businesses in the town, some people locally every reached

out and donated time and money to different businesses. I know specifically for us or some individuals here in Kane who have paid for projects early and maybe gave a little bit extra just to make sure that they were supporting us in every way they can, which we really appreciate. And that's why we love Kane.

Kate: Yeah, and that's what the Wilds is all about, right? Where a lot of small rural towns and so businesses are personal to us. We know the owners. We know the people. We care about them. And so it's kind of neat to see the community reach up in those ways.

Andrea: So as a business owner, it's easy to have your first instinct in a time like this to be to panic. But we never really got there because we knew that we had the support system that we needed to make it through.

Kate: Yes. That's awesome. Was there anything else you'd like to share before we wrap up?

Andrea: Just looking forward to getting things back to normal and getting to see everybody come into the shop again.

Kate: I know, I can't wait. Well, thanks again so much for your time. For those watching, the questions and answers and others like it, and information on how to support small businesses in the PA Wilds, can be found at WildsCoPA.org. There you can also learn more about how to share your story. Take care. Thanks!