



JAMIE GILCREASE-HEUPEL

BY MONICA ALBERS

AGE: 34 // HOMETOWN: ETONVILLE, WASH. // SPECIALTY: ENTREPRENEUR

JAMIE GILCREASE-HEUPEL has wandered from Etonville, Wash. to Missoula, Mont., but she says it's Lead that feels most like home. Since 2010, she's been using her coffee shop, LOTUS UP ESPRESSO & DELI, as an opportunity to give back to the community, and the town of Lead has been paying attention.

What brought you to the coffee scene in Lead?

Jamie Gilcrease-Heupel: I had been in coffee for eight years before I moved to Lead, and I knew I had found my niche in coffee. You can start someone's day off with the best that you can – a smile, a great cup of coffee, maybe some kind of inspiration, and you can change somebody's whole day.

What's special about Lotus Up?

JGH: I wanted to create a space that doesn't just feed your body – it feeds your mind, body, and soul. So I wanted a place where anybody and everybody could walk through the door and feel like they were at home and like they were welcome.

What's the menu like?

JGH: Our food is the highest quality I could find. We serve Panini sandwiches – that's our specialty – grilled sandwiches, and we use the highest grade of Swiss cheese, fruit, and really good ingredients. Almost all of my vegetables are organic. We offer gluten-free products and vegetarian options. If somebody is vegan, I will go out of my way,

even taking it out of my own lunch, to give them what they need. It's all about catering to that person.

Why is that important to you?

JGH: Everybody is welcome at my door. My employees are all trained in high customer service – I want people to feel like they belong. I have a pretty big backstory of where I came from, kind of a rough background, and that wasn't always the case with me. I wanted people who went through what I did or are going through things to be able to come here and just have a rest. A soul rest.

How important has it been to get involved in the community?

JGH: I think I didn't really understand the community part until I moved [here]. I saw things that I thought could be better, and so I got involved. I became part of the **Chamber Board**... and I also sat on the **Visitor Center Board**, I sit on the **Boys and Girls Club Board**, I sit on the **Kiwanis Board**. So what I saw happening was that this small town had united people, and that there was a calling for connection, a calling for a bigger possibility, and I felt that I could help with that.

MORE FUN FACTS ABOUT LOTUS UP...

- Lotus Up's mural took over 200 volunteered hours to create by artists **Geri Hill** and **Suhdi Baumberger** and features recreational areas in the Black Hills.
- The piano is owned by the **Kiwanis Club** and is available to everyone to play.
- The owl painting was painted with actual coffee for Jamie's dear friend that passed away of cancer.
- The railing for the staircase and the second level was built with repurposed wood that came out of a Montana saw mill that was over 100 years old.

And the community has responded?

JGH: Even when we were building this building, we had customers come and help us. They were staining the window trim, and helping paint when we were painting things ourselves, and people were helping us do the decking. They helped lay flooring because we'd helped them do projects. They just came and volunteered. I don't feel like this building belongs to me, it belongs to my community.

What's that like to experience as a small business owner?

JGH: I think it's Lead. It's the Lead people. It's the love. I've never seen anything like that. It's the family that I've never had. I was adopted later on in life, and I never had that connection with people, and these people have it. They're amazing. This building was built and the community rallied behind me, and they gave me land [for the building] for a dollar. So it's phenomenal. It's been really a dream come true.

What do you think has been key to Lotus Up's success so far?

JGH: In the first three years I owned [the business], I was able to triple the gross income, and [that was because of] my thought process, which is about the way you treat people. So I made them feel like they were important, which they are.

For more information on Lotus Up Espresso & Deli, visit lotusuplead.com.