



Creating the Coffeehouse

Mason Yarnell | 510 words

Being a small-business owner can come with its fair share of challenges. Belle Whipple could attest to that while she shared the journey of opening her coffeehouse. Whether it be potentially irreparable plumbing issues or malfunctioning machines during a grand opening, resilience is a necessity when it comes to starting a business.

Back in February 2024, Belle was walking through downtown Big Rapids with her mom when they spotted a for-lease sign posted in the window of a building. She realized that this could be the opportunity she was waiting for. With encouragement from her mom, and a little jump of faith, Belle decided to sign the lease and start bringing the dream of opening her own coffeeshop, into reality.

Working as a barista prior to opening her own shop, Belle had a good sense of what she wanted to achieve through her coffeehouse. She would notice whenever something might not have been running smoothly, or when improvements could be made. Taking note of all those little things, Belle was able to create the image of a perfect coffeehouse in her mind. Now, she was able to release all these thoughts into this empty building and create something that hadn't been seen before.

With the help of her friends and family, Belle worked on

remodeling the soon-to-be coffeehouse. One of the most memorable days during this time is when she gathered her friends, and they all joined in to help re-paint the shop. After they left, however, Belle had a feeling that something might be off. She grabbed the sample shade of paint and held it up to the wall, seeing that they had been given the wrong shade. Realizing how all their hard work was in vain, a heartbroken Belle spent the rest of the night repainting everything they had accomplished that day.

During the renovation process, some things weren't able to be completed due to the limited time before the grand opening. As the first anniversary approaches this June, Belle plans to make changes at the coffeehouse. Right now, it has a good atmosphere for customers, but Belle wants to incorporate more aspects that will build it as a brand. From a logo and color refresh to creating characters that can be associated with the coffeehouse, the opportunities to build on what started nearly a year ago are endless.

The level of dedication and hard work that Belle put into her coffeeshop can be seen throughout the building. From the bright blue wall to the cool woody tones of the tables and counter, a perfect setting has been crafted at Belle's. Big Rapids doesn't have many places where students can get off campus to hang out with their friends or do homework. The coffeehouse creates a space where students and community members can escape and enjoy a cup of coffee.



Steaming Success

Izzy Toole | 552 words

In the heart of Big Rapids, Maddie Root dreamed of a job that wasn't just a paycheck but a passion. At 18, while attending Big Rapids High School and being a competitive dancer, her options for finding a job with a flexible schedule that she truly enjoyed were quite limited.

Growing up in a small town comes with both its joys and challenges. There's a comforting sense of community where neighbors look out for one another and familiar faces are everywhere. However, job opportunities for high school students can be limited, making it difficult to gain early work experience locally. When looking for a job, Maddie shared that "most places are looking for people who are 18 and up, but they want them to be college kids." Despite the setbacks, Maddie still was actively job hunting for a company that would align with her busy schedule and interests.

After hearing rumors of a potential coffeehouse opening up downtown, Maddie dove into online searching to confirm the news, and sure enough, discovered a job listing for *Belle's Coffeehouse*. Wasting no time, Maddie applied for the position and soon landed an interview. When she was offered the role of a barista, it marked the end of her search for a job she could truly enjoy.

Although Maddie was over the moon excited to begin working as a barista, she unfortunately started from square one. When being hired just weeks before the opening day, she had to quickly learn the ins and outs of the coffee machines, memorizing the drink menu, and adapt to the fast-paced environment. Becoming a barista is a lot tougher job than it appears to be.

Through trial and error, Maddie mastered the art of steaming milk to perfection and learned the balance of espresso shots.

As the countdown was creeping up on the opening day of *Belle's Coffeehouse*, suspense swept through all the newly trained staff members, including Maddie. Being a part of the opening of a brand-new coffeehouse in a small town felt surreal. For the past several weeks Maddie watched as the once empty space transformed into a warm and inviting café. From the installation of espresso machines to the arrival of the cozy seating arrangements, every detail added to the growing excitement, and it was a matter of time before it was brought to life.

The day everyone was waiting for had finally arrived and the the air was filled with excitement and anticipation. After using giant scissors the size of a baseball bat, Belle triumphantly cut through the bright blue ribbon stretched across the entrance of the coffeehouse. Once everyone rushed inside Maddie watched as the line grew out the door and around the corner. "It was unreal," Maddie recalls as she was taking it all in. This was the kind of moment that made the long-awaited job search and weeks' worth of training worthwhile.

As *Belle's Coffeehouse* approaches its first anniversary, Maddie reflects on how much has changed since being hired. What started as the idea of a café has become a staple of the community and what was just another job search has turned into so much more for Maddie. At Belle's she has built relationships with coworkers and customers as well as finding a fulfilling job that has now become her second home.





BREWING AT BELLE'S



COFFEEHOUSE HOURS

Sun: Closed	Mon: 7-3 p.m.	Tues: 7-3 p.m.	Wed: 7-3 p.m.	Thur: 7-3 p.m.	Fri: 7-3 p.m.	Sat: 9-4 p.m.
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THIS EDITION

STEAMING SUCCESS

Life from a local Barista's perspective while attending high school.

CREATING THE COFFEEHOUSE

The story of how Belle's came to be.

OUR MISSION

A Message from Belle's Coffeehouse

Welcome to Belle's Coffeehouse! Our mission is to create a welcoming space where college students and the community can come together over a cup of coffee. We are located at 116 N Michigan Ave, Big Rapids, MI 49307.



PARTNERSHIP

Belle's has partnered with Madcap Coffee out of Grand Rapids, MI with Madcap being their roaster

CONNECT WITH US

231. 287. 3271
@bellescoffeehouse

