Jason Nitschke
Regional Director
Nathan Reiff
Business Advisor/COVID Specialist
Rich Gannon
Rural Business Advisor
Tyler Menzales
Business Advisor

Great Falls Regional SBDC

Montana Mutt

Cut Bank, MT



"Without the Wix website training class, the idea of having my own website would still be just that, simply an idea. The things that felt out of my wheelhouse and therefore extremely overwhelming, the class addressed those issues and made the task doable."
Kimberly Winchell, *Owner*

Kim Winchell started Montana Mutt, LLC in 2019 as a side hustle out of her home in Cut Bank. She was inspired after realizing there were no dog treats sold at holiday craft fairs, so she started baking her own all-natural recipe. She soon added hand-sewn bandanas and developed organic paw balm.

Montana Mutt's mission is to keep products natural, clean, and include only simple, healthy ingredients. When feasible they use Montana products like flour and spent grain from another SBDC success story, Cut Bank Creek Brewery.

Her cottage business soon grew to also wholesaling her items to 10 pet stores in Montana. At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, Kim feared the primary source of her business income (craft fairs) would be canceled. She was right. She knew she had to pivot online. Enter the Great Falls SBDC which, in response to the pandemic, launched a nine hour Website Bootcamp presented by Business Advisor Rich Gannon.

Kim participated in the Website Bootcamp in June 2020. With the help of Rich Gannon, Montana Mutt launched its website a month later. Ongoing digital marketing support followed including search engine optimization, email marketing, and social media promotion.

Before working with the Great Falls SBDC, Montana Mutt's online Etsy store was small. After launching its own e-commerce presence, Montana Mutt doubled its online sales. Additionally, the average per-transaction sales on MontanaMutt.com grew to three times its average Etsy transaction.

With the SBDC's help, Montana Mutt also launched email marketing – with impressive results. Just before Black Friday, Montana Mutt created an email campaign that saw a 40% open rate (the average is 15-20%), a 20% click rate (the average 2.5-10%), and a 15% conversion rate (the average 2-5%). The email campaign resulted in sales of $416 in just 5 days – not bad for a list of only 60 email addresses!

The goal now is to grow Montana Mutt's email list to 500 in 2021. If conversion stats are maintained, one email campaign could project thousands of dollars in revenue.

While online sales have not yet replaced in-person events, they have created new marketing opportunities for the growing businesses. Through social media marketing and a website that can now handle international shipping, Montana Mutt is poised to make a push to expand from side hustle to a full-time gig.