

Le Beau Gallery....

115 North Muskogee Ave.

Tahlequah, Oklahoma

www.lebeaugallery.com

Glen and Paige Ruark opened LeBeau Gallery on July 1st, 2005. The specialty of their products is in European Antiques, Gifts, Art and Photography. The majority of their capital was with their own funds, however, through the Oklahoma

Small Business Development Center (OSBDC), Tahlequah, Oklahoma they were able to secure additional funds through Business Loan Express using an SBA guarantee. With the additional funds they were able to secure those lost minute items as well as position themselves for a completely innovative and new venture in Tahlequah, Oklahoma.

LeBeau Gallery is a member of the Tahlequah Main Street Association and also the Tahlequah Chamber of Commerce. As with all business start-ups there has to be something that "sets-apart" their business from the other merchants in a small town. The competitive edge they have is in the unique product line for this area.



Their inventory includes, but by no means limited to, unique glassware, jewelry, floral arrangements, purses, imported white teas, teapots and accessories. Also, picture frames, purses accessories and adorable pet accessories.

The renovations to the shop have been custom and in line with the overall European design of their merchandise. It is an "upscale" shop; however, they offer very affordable gift and personal items. The overall feel is very comfortable and allows you to browse and see very different items.

In the back of the shop future plans are to have a "day spa" and a photography studio. These two services also set their business apart from other competitors. The overall feel is very inviting and you want to stay and browse and just converse with them. And the teapot is on!

In general "main streets" in rural Oklahoma have had to adapt to the changing times. It is easy to set back and blame mega stores for coming to our community and "running" the small business out of business. But it is time for a wake up call, the big mega stores are here to stay and as such it is critical for us to adapt to the change. No matter how much we have hated to see these large stores gobble up the smaller business it is a fact we all shop at them, they provide employment opportunities to many in classified "depressed" regions of the state.

Small businesses can succeed and prosper. It is so refreshing to witness the enthusiasm and excitement that prospective business owners have in their business plans. Glen and Paige had developed a complete plan, including design, product lines, inventory management and the financing of their business. They came to the OSBDC with facts and figures in hand. They had their own capital invested and needed additional funds for the actual start-up and working capital expense.



As I witness the changes just within Tahlequah, Oklahoma it is so exhilarating to see the businesses on our main street. If we as a whole just take the time to drive downtown we would see new ownership of the Oasis Health Food Store, a Quilt Shop, a candy novelty store, many gift stores and an upscale jewelry store with a floral shop right next door. How convenient for the special people we have in our lives, not including indulging ourselves in these quaint luxuries.

Not to mention the wonderful food places, such as Vidalias, the Iguana Café, Sam and Ella's and the Boom-A- Rang restaurants. Many times I hear people say I can't wait until "so and so" comes here. Another talk about a big franchise opening here, however, as I look in the current phone book there are over 50 places to eat in our vicinity. Of this number is a wonderful steak establishment, Wild Horse Eatery in Keys. They also plan on opening a facility for lunches in the immediate downtown area soon. We need to be aware that waiting and hoping for these larger food chains to come we are forgetting about the wonderful places we now have in our vicinity and should be patronizing them, or we could lose them to the "mega" establishments.

As a Business Development Specialist with OSBDC, and many years as a Business Development Officer in the Banking Industry I have witnessed several businesses come and go. What makes a business last is the ability to provide a good product, good customer service and consistency in your product or service and maintain a healthy financial operating base. This can be achieved by having a Business Plan which includes financial planning and projections. At the Oklahoma Small Business Development Center in Tahlequah, Broken Arrow and other state locations we provide services, information and training in starting and expanding your business. If you would like more information or an appointment, please call me at 918-458-0802.

Sue Floyd
Business Development Specialist
OSBDC-NSU- Tahlequah
309 North Muskogee Avenue
Tahlequah, OK 74464
918-458-0802
floydsm@nsuok.edu