

As children, our interests, hobbies and passions define what we want to be when we grow up. Unfortunately, this often does not stay the case when building adult careers. Aspiring astronauts become accountants, inventors turn into electricians, bakers work in banks and so on. We trade in our dreams of getting paid to do what we love, for dreams of simply getting paid. However, this does not have to be the norm, as proven by the following people who successfully turned their passions into careers, right here in Acadiana. Craft beer, specialty coffee, bicycles, children's books and a love for people and food have led these Acadianans to some cool jobs that just might make you revisit your own childhood dreams. — Marie Simoneaux

cool jobs



“

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”

crying eagle brewing

Eric Avery, president,
Stephen Tyson, general
manager, and Bill
Mungai, brewmaster



“
What I love most about my job is being able to work with authors and illustrators who share the same passion as I do.
”

ally-gator bookbites

Tommie Townsley, author, publisher and CEO



“
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”

rêve coffee shop

Nathanael Johnson, owner, and Carter Lies, manager



“

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hub city cycles

Megan Arceneaux, owner

“

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runaway dish

Denny and
Katie Culbert,
founders

Crying Eagle Brewing Company

BY SARAH RAVITS

THANKS TO A NEW BREWERY THAT OPENED IN July in Lake Charles, residents of Calcasieu Parish (and beyond) will be able to quench their thirst, while hanging out in a cool space.

Crying Eagle Brewing Company, which occupies more than 10 acres of land, was started by local businessman Eric Avery, who broke ground last October after a lengthy decision process that involved lots of bureaucratic red tape, market research, taste-testing and recruitment of a talented, dedicated team.

“We are loaded top-to-bottom with people who are going to make this brand really special,” Avery says.

The name of the company, “Crying Eagle” is a translation of the native Atakapan word “Calcasieu,” the parish in which Lake Charles is located. Local pride is abundant at the brewery; the area inspires two of the three beers and Avery says that the beers will be distributed statewide this summer.

“Our primary focus is Louisiana,” he says.

Bill Mungai, brewmaster, has concocted a golden ale called “The Chuck,” which Avery says is “approachable and has mass appeal.” The “Calcasieu Common,” is a hoppy, hybrid lager ale. The third brew is the Belgian-inspired “Ready To Mingle.”

The idea for a craft brewery took shape about seven years ago.

“My father told me we needed to look at the craft beer market. I said ‘No,’ at the time, but then he brought it back up four years ago, so we started researching the industry,” says Avery. “It took years of research and travel and going to breweries and drinking all sorts of beers. Some beers I liked, some beers made me want to puke. It came down to a decision and we decided this was something we wanted to do.”

Now, the newly built facility features an outdoor beer garden, a 4,000-square-foot taproom with indoor seating and sample offerings and a private event space.

“We were thinking of this very much as an entertainment venue,” says Stephen Tyson, the general manager.

Though it hasn’t been easy, the team has high hopes. “It’s a very complicated business that is highly, highly regulated,” says Avery. “It’s a huge risk, but I had visions. More than just building a brewery and making

money, this is a passion project...It can be anything we want it to be.”

Crying Eagle Brewing Company
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cryingeagle.com

Ally-Gator BookBites Publishing House

BY SARAH RAVITS

BORN AND RAISED IN SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA, children’s author and publisher Tommie LaBorde Townsley fondly remembers her late grandfather, Henry LaBorde, telling colorful stories that reflected the family’s Cajun heritage. Today, Townsley owns a boutique publishing company in Lake Charles, Ally-Gator BookBites Publishing House, which allows her to work one on one with aspiring authors and illustrators who share a mission of inspiring children to read. The company has published 22 stories since its inception. To date, Townsley has penned seven children’s books that comprise a “Kids Cajun Tales” series, incorporating whimsical characters and Cajun spice into her stories. Though her early childhood memories clearly shaped her career path, Townsley says that becoming an author and publisher wasn’t entirely intentional. “I fell into it,” she says. Like many young literary types, she wasn’t sure where her affinity for storytelling would lead her.

But things began to take shape in graduate school, when she enrolled in a creative writing course while earning her master’s degree in English at McNeese State. There, she wrote a children’s story for an assignment titled, “Adolpheaux the Adventurous Dolphin.” Her professor loved it and gave her an A. Despite this positive reaction, Townsley let the manuscript sit for six years on her computer before a friend finally convinced her to publish it in 2005.

Then, in 2011, Townsley founded The Southwest Louisiana Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators Guild, a nonprofit that connected her with like-minded people.

“Many of the authors in the guild became interested in publishing their manuscripts,” she says.

Within a year, she founded Ally-Gator BookBites, thanks in part to Lake Charles’ supportive atmosphere and a shared office space called The Seed Center, which provided resources

to Townsley and her fledgling independent business.

Daily job duties vary, but Townsley frequently visits area schools, libraries and festivals and hopes to continue publishing “great books that will be distributed nationally and internationally,” she says. She has also been interviewed on radio and TV programs to encourage readership and promote literacy.

“What I love most about my job is being able to work with authors and illustrators who share the same passion as I do. We want to inspire children to read,” she says. “People love our books and I know we are making a difference in children’s lives.”

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Rêve Coffee Roasters

BY ASHLEY HINSON

Nathanael Johnson’s dream for Rêve Coffee Roasters was to create Lafayette’s own micro-brewery for specialty coffee that would cultivate passion in the “cup to table” movement.

The dream began in Eunice, where Johnson — of the Johnson’s Boucaniere family — grew up drinking coffee with his father, Joey. At 21, he opened his first coffee shop, Cafe Mosaic, in Eunice, his hometown, Johnson worked at and owned various Lafayette coffee shops until he felt the “entrepreneur’s burden:” the need to create.

“We’re the first place to do specialty coffee in Lafayette,” Johnson says. “I was trying to push boundaries. I was with that motto from the beginning.”

Specialty coffee is more advanced than premium or gourmet coffee; it’s stronger and more bold. It tastes like the earth and atmosphere from where it was grown, and creates better economic development for the farmers who harvest it.

Johnson studied coffee at the Special Coffee Association of America in Portland in 2012, where he learned the scientific and creative aspects of crafting coffee, a passion he shares with manager Carter Liles.

“We had a similar vision in aesthetic and design, and the same passion for specialty coffee. We had the same interest in introducing the community,” Liles says.

Rêve’s space is open, with expansive front windows. The exposed brick walls feature works by local artists, such as weaver Kat King. The chemical compound of coffee is on one of the back walls, and there are no doors, Johnson says, to represent transparency. The wood paneling on the other wall is from Johnson’s father’s shop.

Rêve’s platform is deliberate and helped to lead more cafes setting up shop in the city.

“We love where Lafayette is going in regards to the coffee industry with Carpe (Diem!) and The Lab,” he says. “We’re glad to be a part of that and all the other great shops around here. When I train at Indulge and other places, I say, ‘The bar has been raised.’”

The shop also hosts a concept new to downtown — latte-art throwdowns between area baristas. Johnson says he wants the shop to become a hub of information with training classes for enthusiasts.

“I want people to have that mosaic of people coming in to converse, read and have a place to escape for a little while,” Johnson says. “Coffee shops are the avenue for that. What I love about coffee shops is that kind of dynamic it has.”

Rêve Coffee Roasters
200 Jefferson St., Lafayette
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Hub City Cycles

BY ASHLEY HINSON

LOCATED ACROSS THE STREET FROM PARC Sans Souci, Hub City Cycles has serviced Acadiana residents since 2013, as downtown Lafayette’s neighborhood bike shop.

Owner Megan Arceneaux says the store’s mom-and-pop vibe was inspired by Johnson’s Bicycle Shop, which opened in 1953 and closed in December 2008. Arceneaux, a loyal customer, had just had her bike repaired before the shop closed. She liked the Johnsons’ unpretentious approach.

“I wanted to get people on bicycles, and on the right bicycles,” she says. “That’s how you do well.”

After Johnson’s closed, Arceneaux saw a void that needed filling. She wanted to offer high quality bikes as opposed to “department store” cycles, so the shop carries established, but affordable brands such as Jamis, Retrospec and Tribe and can fix your vintage beauty, too.

Hub City also offers the individual parts of the bike that make it special, the details that make it the rider’s — and the rider’s alone, — like custom colored chains and wheels, handles and seats of different shapes and sizes, plus helmets in every design imaginable.

The store offers customers what they need to customize their ride, and this keeps them coming back. Arceneaux spends time chatting with her clientele, and most are on a first-name basis with her.

“We’re still a small town. People appreciate when you remember their name,” she says. “And I keep employees; there’s good people behind you who help you have a successful business.”

One of her employees is musician and KRVS DJ Diego Martin-Perez, who repairs bikes and says he strives to empower customers.

“I had very little experience, but it was one of those trades I always knew I would love if I had steady exposure and good mentorship,” he says. “I’ve got both of those things there, and I love it.”

Part of Arceneaux’s mission is to educate people about the dangers of buying a cheap bike, which isn’t designed to be an investment and can be dangerous to ride. Still, since many people who need the bikes for daily transportation have some of the cheaper models, Hub City doesn’t turn them away. This results in loyal and diverse patrons.

The shop is involved with two of Lafayette’s bicycle scavenger hunts and is planning to host a weekly group ride in the near future.

“We’ve been very fortunate,” Arceneaux says. “I’ve seen more cyclists on the road. It’s refreshing, and I love it. I’m very lucky to come to work every day and do something I love to do.”

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Runaway Dish

BY SARAH RAVITS

IN ACADIANA, FOOD ISN’T JUST SUSTENANCE, it’s a way of life. For one couple in Lafayette, it is the driving force of an all-encompassing passion project and nonprofit organization that is about bringing people together over this shared bond.

As founders of the Runaway Dish, Denny and Katie Culbert focus on connecting people throughout the region. They foster food-related collaborations by hosting dinners and special events, along with publishing an eponymous magazine and posting updates on their information-packed website, runawaydish.org.

Ultimately, explains Katie, Runaway Dish serves three purposes: strengthening and nurturing the culinary community; raising money for local charities and nonprofits; and showcasing different parts of Lafayette that may be new or previously uncharted for diners and chefs. To date, they have raised more than \$20,000 for local charities through this organization.

“We connect people; farmers to chefs, chefs to chefs, diners to chefs, waiters to restaurants and chefs to new audiences,” says Denny, who has a background in photojournalism and works as a freelance photographer (including on occasion for this publication). “I’d been carving out a niche in food photography, which is ultimately what led to the creation of Runaway Dish,” he says.

Katie, meanwhile, has a background in finance and retail, as owner of the Lafayette-based, high-end jewelry and accessories store, Kiki. She uses her business savvy and applies it to the world of Louisiana cuisine.

While the Runaway Dish is more of a side project to their busy full-time jobs, it is a time-consuming pursuit and a labor of love. On any given day, duties may entail talking to chefs for hours about their approach to food, meeting with musicians to perform at events, designing menus or exploring interesting venues. In the upcoming months, they plan to relaunch their website, incorporating all of the content that they’ve published in the magazine. They’ll also ramp up efforts in documenting the food culture of South Louisiana by publishing another issue of the magazine before the year is over.

“Runaway Dish is more of a nonprofit side-project to our regular jobs, so everything about this is pretty great,” says Katie. “The best is the connections and friends we’ve made throughout the last few years...It allows us to explore and research so many parts of the culinary world.”

Runaway Dish
runawaydish.org