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2021 BUSINESS PROFILES







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PRINTING PLUS

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What services do you provide for our community?

We offer several services. Printing Pus started off in the spring of 1991 as a simple printing and copying center. Since then we have evolved into a full-service shop better described as "Graphics Communication". In the late 1990's, we started producing signs of many kinds, in-house. Vehicle graphics or business and building signs, window storefronts, and of course, boat lettering, This also includes banners and high resolution photographs mounted to a variety of materials. Our while you wait services are Wide Format prints such as house plans and Engineering prints. We can also scan (digitize) them for you. Other simple services include Laminating, Faxing and basic black & white or color copies.

How did your business start?

"Graphic Communications" was a new course added to the Stonington High School industrial arts program, when I first arrived in 1982. I was immediately interested and over the next 3 years, I spent all my open periods, and most lunch periods, in the classroom, learning all aspects of Printing. Basically my teacher was learning at the same time because he was actually the Wood Shop teacher. I even had a key to the back door for a time. LOL. After graduation, I attended Hall Institute in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. My instructor, offered me a position at his family owned Printing Company in Pawtucket, KI. It was an honor to be picked from a class of 30 students. We became close friends and this job was partly continuing education for me. I will alway be grateful this chapter. Eventually I became homesick and returned to the area and worked at a couple local Printing companies before starting Printing Plus at 137 Main Street, Westerly.

How many people do you employ, and how do you keep your best talent?

We have bounced back and forth between 4 and 5 full time and 1 or 2 part time. We treat our staff very fairly with pay as well as their need for personal time. I think the other reason we have such longevity with staff is just by being happy. Treating each other with respect. Handling situations as a learning process and not a punishment.

What is your favorite part about being a business owner in our community?

Helping young entrepreneurs start a business, being able to give back to our community, and making so many friends along thew way! Giving back to Non-Profit groups, and being on the Board of Directors at the Ocean Community Chamber of Commerce, has become very important to me. Many of these organizations in the community have helped me reach 30 years. Volunteering my time for many local events has made me feel connected and at the same time, provide me with personal growth. This is a terrific area!

What do you think is the most effective promotional tool for your business?

For my business, that's easy to answer! Satisfied customers! For the last 30 years, I have had the same business practices. Treat all customers equally. Provide fair pricing, do the job correctly, on time, and in a friendly manner. Referrals from previous clients has been the most effective tool.

If you could thank your customers for supporting your business, what would you say?

Thank you for sharing the journey! I feel very fortunate to have been born and raised in this community and if there is anything I can do for you personally, let me know!

What's the thing your customers don't know about your business, that you would like to tell them?

If you bring a project to me, and it's not a great fit or my equipment cannot produce what you need, I will be happy to share my knowledge and provide advice, information, or possibly leads that I've gained over the last 39 years in the industry. The other thing I would like you to know is, if your pet goes missing, I will give you a handful of posters, in color, for you to post in your neighborhood at NO charge. From one animal lover to another.

What inspired the brand/personality of your company?

I think the personality of any company comes from the owner and their demeanor. I love what I do and always have. For me, if I was to describe the personality of my company, it would go like this... A person became a customer, the customer became a client, the client became a friend. When I leave my shop and buy a product or go to dinner, I have three choices, shop at a customer's, client's, or friend's business.

What positive changes did 2020 force you to make?

2020 forced me to reevaluate my business as it did for so many. Owning a business is precious and this is not a time to become complacent. Modifying our pricing structure and letting some long time clients defer payments turned out to be a positive choice we made. I think it solidified some loyalty.

How do you plan to grow your business in 2021?

In 2020, we were fortunate enough to be an essential business and never missed a day. Not all business were as fortunate. Growth in 2021 is something we are all going to need to help with. Stay local, shop local, and keep your work in town. Don't buy everything online while many stores in our area need to rebuild. I guess my plan in nothing more than positive karma.

What sets your business apart from other businesses in your line of service?

There are several. Location is the most obvious. I have a steady stream of customers and potential customers driving past my business all day long. Building my business the old fashion way, from the ground up with honesty and hard work and never attempting to poach or steal clients for other businesses. Enthusiastic staff in a beautiful open and airy facility with a terrific views of the Pawcatuck River. Stop in and check out my shop.

What advice would you give to new business owners in our community?

I've helped thousands of businesses start up over 30 years. Even if I cannot provide you with my services, I will be happy to share what I learned along the way and maybe guide you in the best direction.



MEL'S DOWNTOWN CREAMERY

37W Broad St. Pawcatuck, CT 06379 • (860) 599-1363 32 Norwich Ave. Colchester, CT 06415 • (860) 531-9338 Hours: Open Daily Year Round at Noon • www.melsdowntowncreamery.com facebook.com/melsdowntowncreamery • facebook.com/melsdowntowncreamerycolchester

What services do you provide for our community?

Mel's is a 50's style ice cream shop with modern sweet treat flare. We are open daily year-round. We provide a fun, welcoming and enjoyable atmosphere for all ages. We host free family events, fundraisers, blood drives and take & make events.

How did your business start?

My business started in 2012 when my dreams of becoming a small business owner began. While my love for ice cream began as a child my true love for the sweet treat didn't come full circle until I had the opportunity to manage Sundaes; an ice-cream shop in Cranston, RI. That management position taught me a lot about business, community responsibility, and my desire to own my own ice cream shop.

How many people do you employ, and how do you keep your best talent? In February 2020 Mel's opened a 2nd location

In February 2020 Mel's opened a 2nd location in Colchester, CT. Our combined two store staff is now 18 and growing. I think we are able to keep our best talent because we truly value our staff's opinions and encourage their ideas. They know that they are not just employees but a key component to who we are and the legacy we are trying to build. They are a part of our family. We have been so thankful to their dedication; especially in regards to navigating through the pandemic. Their strength and determination to stay open never wavered. They trust our procedures and protocols. Our staff continues to do an absolutely amazing job every single day.

What is your favorite part about being a business owner in our community?

My favorite part of being a business owner in our community is watching the community grow, seeing our community members work together, and being able to be a part of that change. We are very lucky to reside in a community that it's residents truly love and support. I believe the challenges of the last year have clearly shown that.

What do you think is the most effective promotional tool for your business?

The most effective tool for our business is Facebook. We are able to use our business page to introduce new products, create and promote community events held at the shop as well as encourage customer ideas/feedback.

If you could thank your customers for supporting your business, what would you say?

I don't think there are enough words or time to be able to say how thankful we are to our customers. Their support over the last year has been extremely appreciated and heartwarming. No one could have predicted the challenges, the levels of stress, the mental exhaustion, and fear we all have felt. Our customer's continued support and kind words have allowed us to maintain all of our staff. They've allowed us to keep our doors open and to continue to be here to support our community. We would 100% say that "We LOVE you and we appreciate you! Thank you for being here for us when we needed you the most!"

What's the thing your customers don't know about your business, that you would like to tell them?

When the pandemic hit and the state shuttered so many businesses and livelihoods, we deemed our business essential. At the time it sounded silly to say that ice cream was essential but for us it was essential to our staff's and the businesses livelihood. I also would joke that ice cream was essential to our mental health but in all honesty, I wasn't joking at all. We worked hard to safely provide a happy place and a little bit of normalcy in a time of uncertainty and challenges. We weren't able to celebrate inside but celebrations took place with curbside orders; parents celebrated the survival of that day's distance learning, nurses the end of a day, birthday's that wouldn't have the normal party celebration, and so much more. We have





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been truly thankful to be a part of that little bit of happiness. We would bring ice cream orders curbside and see the stress of the day literally melt away and smiles appear. The ice cream gave many a moment to just breath and enjoy. Most importantly we want to say Thank You again. Without the support of our customers with curbside orders in those first few months I can honestly say I don't think Mel's would still be here.

What inspired the brand/personality of your company?

We inherited the 50's style theme and instead of reinventing the wheel we decided to embrace the concept and have fun with it. The theme is what inspired our logo and the rest is history. Our family fun events, specialty sundaes, and Mel's experience is all about embracing family, friends, and time together. Our brand is welcoming and that is how we always want you to feel when you walk in the doors of Mel's.

What positive changes did 2020 force you to make?

Mel's is always looking for new ways to grow and stay relevant. 2020 forced us to dig our heals in and just get moving as fast as we could. When the pandemic hit, we immediately flipped to being able to accommodate curbside orders. We added DoorDash Food delivery in our Pawcatuck location and FUD delivery in our Colchester location. Although delivery services take a percentage of the businesses sales many months those sales gave us the bump we needed to get through. It also gave us another avenue to ensure our customers could enjoy a treat and felt

safe receiving it.

How do you plan to grow your business in 2021?

I think at this point we are taking each day as it comes. We're paying attention and assessing the needs of our customers. We would definitely like to update our website to be more user friendly and informational as well as possibly offer gift card purchases online. We're also looking into new equipment for the possibility of bringing in slushies which is always a favorite.

What sets your business apart from other

businesses in your line of service? We are committed to our customers, creativity and most importantly community. Throughout the pandemic we have continued to host fundraisers, had a safe visit from Santa, supported our Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center and Jonnycake Center as well as brought ice cream to the WARM Shelter. Often, I'm asked how do you continue to do so much for the community when you're going through so much? My answer is simple; how can I not? If you hear about Mel's we definitely want you to think about the sweet treats but we also want you to automatically associate the word community with who we are as a business. We are grateful to be a part of our community and promise to help it grow.

What advice would you give to new business owners in our community? Embrace our community. Commit not only to opening a business but commit to taking care

of the community and our community will take care of you.

WOOD RIVER HEALTH SERVICES

823 Main St., Hope Valley, RI 02832
17 Wells St., Westerly, RI 02891
(401) 539-2461
Hope Valley Hours: M-Th., 8 a.m. – 8 p.m.; Fri. 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.; Sat., 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Westerly Hours: M-Fri., 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.
www.woodriverhealthservices.org or www.wrhsri.org
www.facebook.com/WoodRiverHealthServices
Twitter: Wood River Health@WoodRiverHealth
www.linkedin.com/company/wood-river-health-services

What services do you provide for our community?

Wood River Health Services is a private, non-profit, Federally Qualified Health Center providing top quality care to Southern Rhode Island and southeastern Connecticut residents. Wood River Health Services serves the entire community, those with insurance and those without, and has instituted self-pay models, sliding scale payments and a Community Fund to help those who could not afford care. With a patient base of roughly 7,000 area residents, Wood River Health Services is a full-service medical and dental facility providing primary care for families and individuals as well as care management, mental and behavioral health counseling, and a wide range of lab work, including X-ray, and phlebotomy. A Chronic Care program provides specialized, focused, long-term care and education for patients with diabetes and cardio-vascular disease, a Women's Health program provides a focus on gynecological exams, family planning, and cancer screenings, and oversees the local WIC (Women, Infants and Children) Program

How did your business start?

Wood River

Health Services

Wood River Health Services was created in 1976 by a handful of dedicated local residents in a small storefront in the village of Hope Valley, surrounded by the farming communities of southwestern Rhode Island and southeastern

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(401) 539-2461 www.woodriverhealthservices.org

Connecticut, where a visit to a doctor generally meant a day out of work and a trip to Westerly, Wakefield or Warwick. Because farmers don't get paid when they don't work, and couldn't afford either health insurance or doctor bills, the need for competent, affordable and accessible medical care was great.

With a mission to provide affordable medical and dental care to anyone who needed it, regardless of their ability to pay, the private, non-profit Community Health Center brought top quality care to area residents, those with insurance and those without.

Providing care second to none, the small health center soon outgrew its home. Residents banded together once again to build the current facility, opened in 1982, which has since been expanded several times. WRHS opened a second location in Westerly in July 2019.

How many people do you employ, and how do you keep your best talent?

Wood River Health Services currently employs four MDs and four Nurse Practitioners, three dentists, three dental hygienists, and behavioral health specialists, plus a staff of roughly 70 full- and part-time employees. Our doctors are all adjunct staff at Brown University's Alpert School of Medicine, and regularly have interns training under them. Leadership meets regularly with senior clinical staff and other managers to address concerns, but more than that, a friendly, connected culture is encouraged among staff to ensure that the quality of work-life is on par with the high quality of home life for anyone living on our area.

What is your favorite part about being a business owner in our community?

Wood River Health Services is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors made up of members of the community and patients of the health center to provide strategic planning and set policies and goals. As a requirement of all Federally Qualified Health Centers, at least 51% of the Board must be patients of the center, thus ensuring the members are in close touch with the needs of the community and our patients. As President and CEO, my greatest pleasure is in knowing that we serve a vital and integral part of our community.

What do you think is the most effective promotional tool for your business?

While we utilize the whole range of marketing options available to us – newspaper, radio, direct mail, our website and social media - as a small health center in a large but tight-knit rural community, word of mouth from happy, healthy patients has always been our best PR.

If you could thank your customers for supporting your business, what would you say?

We are very grateful every day, and particularly this past year, to be able to do our part in keeping our community healthy. The trust and support of our patients and our other community supporters is vital to that effort.

What's the thing your customers don't know about your business, that you would like to tell them?

This is our 45th anniversary year, but even after all that time, many do not realize the "onestop shop" model that we are built on. Our medical services are well-known, and our dental



department, too, though less so. Our Behavioral Health department has been growing for several years. But we also are the WIC provider for our area, we provide Community Resource Specialists to assist patients in learning about and accessing helpful programs and agencies, we provide care and education to those with chronic illness and Westerly Hospital maintains Xray, and blood lab in our Hope Valley location. All of this and more is available every time a patient visits WRHS.

What inspired the brand/personality of your company?

The culture and reputation of Wood River Health Services is rooted in the community that created it, and still supports it to this day. We are at once both a small "country doc" practice and a modern organization utilizing all the best practices of the medical field today.

What positive changes did 2020 force you to make?

Most notably, the pandemic speeded up the use of 'virtual' healthcare in every medical facility. While telemedicine had been on the horizon for a long time, the restrictions of the past year required us to shift quickly to enable us to continue providing the best quality care to our patients. We continue to see a good percentage of our visits remotely, not because of pandemic restrictions but because that patient's particular need does not require them to come in person. We also have been able to offer COVID testing as well as COVID vaccinations to our patients.

How do you plan to grow your business in 2021?

We have already reinstituted most of our growth strategy from last year that had been interrupted by the pandemic – our new Westerly medical, behavioral, Care Management, Community Resources and WIC offices had to be closed temporarily, though the work never stopped. Much of what was transitioned to online visits will remain that way, but the medical office is in full swing and we expect the rest to be some form of hybrid online - in person system. We will be opening our new operatory, or dental

treatment room, at the Hope Valley facility, bringing the department there to six rooms. Eventually, we plan to find appropriate space for a dental office in Westerly, too. In the wake of the retirement of two pediatricians in Westerly last year, we have added pediatric staff to our medical team, so we are recruiting heavily to serve that youth group. We are also working to increase our visibility in the Pawcatuck and North Stonington area, which many people do not even know we serve! Finally, we will be having a very exciting announcement later in the year that will involve a great leap in the services we provide, so stay tuned!

What sets your business apart from other businesses in your line of service?

In a time of rapidly increasing costs and diminishing resources for community medicine, the need for Community Health Centers to provide care to those who cannot afford it grows, and Wood River Health Services has become an increasingly vital part of the community. As the health care cost crisis grows and Rhode Island and the country grapple with issues around universal health coverage, Wood River Health Services, its staff, and its supporters continue to provide quality care to all, as well as aid to our neighbors in need.

In addition to primary medical, dental and behavioral care, Wood River Health Services provides Care Management, staying in touch with and monitoring difficult and complex patients, Community Resource Specialists, providing links, referrals and advocacy to connect our patients to other agencies and organizations, and Insurance Navigators, making sure all of our patients have the best coverage for their particular situation.

The health center is also deeply involved in community wellness through its work with Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds, South County's Health Equity Zone, Washington County Wellness Coalition, Basic Needs Network and Zero Suicide, among other public health efforts.

What advice would you give to new business owners in our community? Reach out and connect – there is great strength and tremendous generosity in our community.

Sponsored by: Java Madness! waterfront coffeehouse



61 Main Street, Wakefield, RI 02879 • Helpline – (401) 782 – 3990; answered 24-hours • Monday – Friday; 8:30 – 4:30 www.dvrcsc.org • www.facebook.com/dvrcsc • https://twitter.com/DVRCSC • https://instagram.com/dvrc.sc/

What services do you provide for our community?

The DVRCSC is the only agency serving Washington County assisting people impacted by domestic violence and building a community free from domestic violence. We offer a residential program, assis-tance with protective orders, counseling, advocacy, a 24-hour helpline and assistance with basic needs for victims of domestic violence and their families.

How did your business start?

The story goes that in 1978, a group of young mothers of children at a cooperative nursery school at the Hope Valley Baptist Church sat around a table with the general goal of forming a support group to address the issues facing women in the community. They identified three major needs: help for battered women, local access to healthcare and social services and affordable childcare. Ironically, while huge steps have been taken in all three areas, 45 years later these concerns are still real.

How many people do you employ, and how do you keep your best talent? Presently, we employ 9 people, of which 5 are full time. At one point, we had 23 employees.

Unfor-tunately, funding cuts mandated staffing cuts. Loss of staff equates to loss of programs. Maintaining staff is a genuine challenge because for profits have a more desirable salary and benefits package. We try to show appreciation to staff with various small incentives and gratitude.

What is your favorite part about being a business owner in our community?

We are probably the only staff who talk about when we don't have to exist anymore...the work of DVRCSC is critical to helping to build a community in which each individual shares the responsibility to create a culture of safety and personal dignity. We change lives. We safe lives. Our clients regain their self respect and become productive members of society.

What do you think is the most effective promotional tool for your business?

Unfortunately, people don't pay much attention to DV (it doesn't happen in my family!) until it impacts them. Then they finally understand that DV is a chain reaction that reaches far beyond the victim. Education and awareness are crucial to changing attitudes and behaviors towards victims.

Why should a person who has done nothing wrong have to move out of her/ his house to be safe?

If you could thank your customers for supporting your business, what would you say? We would not be here without the support of community partners like Java Madness. We do not charge for our services. We are supported by state and federal grants and private donations. Thank You!

What's the thing your customers don't know about your business, that you would like to tell them?

Domestic Violence is real. It is in your community. For over 20 years, the Westerly community has had the highest number of dv cases in Washington County. Without fail. Every year. One in 4 women and 1 in 7 men are impacted by severe physical violence in their lives. Intimate partner violence ac-count for 15% of all violent crimes.

What inspired the brand/personality of your company?

This agency was founded in 1978 and based on the lack of resources available to assist those fleeing from domestic violence. We were named

the Women's Resource Center of South County for approx-imately 25 years, changing to the Domestic Violence Resource Center in 2004 when statistics consist-ently showed at least 1/3 on those we served were men.

What positive changes did 2020 force you to make?

COVID forced us to become more tech savvy and social media accessible.

How do you plan to grow your business in 2021?

We hope to return to our new normal and be able to work in person,, face-to-face, with people.

What sets your business apart from other businesses in your line of service? The DVRCSC is the only agency serving Washington County assisting people impacted by domestic violence

What advice would you give to new business owners in our community? Get involved, get to know your community – and make it a better place to live and work.

