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VIEWS & VISIONS

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Derek and Lisa Godwin
Fife Street Brewing

Derek and Lisa Godwin are the owners of Fife Street Brewing in Charleston, West Virginia. A celebration of craft and community, Fife Street Brewing currently offers 11 beers on tap that are brewed and served on location in downtown Charleston. The Godwins are dedicated to providing authentic and inclusive experiences over great beer, food, and conversations. In addition to running one of the newest breweries in the state, Derek is a partner at Herman and Cormany Certified Public Accountants while Lisa is a State Farm Insurance Agent.

Brewing Up Business

Fife Street Brewing actually began its journey to realization around 10 years ago when Lisa Godwin, one of the founding members of the brewery, told her husband, Derek, that he couldn't open a sports bar. He would occasionally ask her if he could open one, and she repeatedly said no... until October of 2019, while sitting at a craft brewery in Florida, Lisa uttered these words: "If you wanted to open a brewery, I will let you do that." That set the wheels in motion to begin the project.

We were first introduced to craft beer in 2014 when our son, Connor, who, at that time, was a student at Marshall University, toyed around with an Oktoberfest-style beer on his home brew kit. We were hooked at first taste and began transitioning our beer palate from standard domestic-style beers to craft beer styles, and that love of craft beer has continued to grow.

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lot of amazing restaurants and local watering holes, there was only one brewery in town – our friends at Bad Shepherd.

We have researched various other towns around the country (Asheville, North Carolina, and Bend, Oregon, to name a couple) that are comparable in size and natural beauty to Charleston, and their revitalization has centered around the craft brewing industry. If you have visited either of those cities, you

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Derek already had a full-time career as a partner at the firm of Herman & Cormany, CPAs, and is the head boys' basketball coach at Sissonville High School. Lisa has been serving the community of Sissonville for over 35 years as a State Farm agent. So, while our plates seemed full, there was one thing that also was a driving factor into starting this venture – our overriding love for West Virginia and, specifically, the city of Charleston. While Charleston is the home to a

know they have a vibrant downtown scene with a growing number of restaurants and other job-creating industries. In our mind, what better way to combine the two than to start a dedicated craft brewery in Charleston?

We pitched our idea to our two operating partners, Josh Dodd, who owns his own web design company, and Jody Driggs, a partner at Silling Architects. They were committed right from the beginning and shared our same vision.



There was one additional hurdle we had to overcome at that time – COVID. To find our head brewer, we ran a national advertisement on a known craft beer website and, surprisingly, received around 85 responses, from as far away as India. Over a two-month period, we conducted over 20, one-hour long Zoom calls and narrowed our search to a couple candidates who we brought into Charleston to share our vision and have them see how beautiful our state is and how friendly our residents are. We were thrilled that our offer was accepted by our head brewer, Gil Peterson, and his wife, Molly, who, since moving here, have added to our population with their first child, daughter Marley.

Once all that was in place, our focus turned to creating a space that patrons



would want to visit not only to enjoy craft beer, but to enjoy an overall fun experience. The first part of the equation was to make the actual space viable, which was handled expertly by Jody. Additionally, the setup of the brew house by Gil and the branding of Fife Street by Josh were completed during our construction phase, and everything fell into place about as smoothly as possible, considering a majority of this occurred during the pandemic. While we were not searching for funding for the project, we were ecstatic when friends and associates expressed an interest in investing in the brewery, as it made it seem even more like a community-inspired project. In the end, over 50 people invested their time and money into the project.

Since opening in May of 2022, we have been overwhelmed by the positive response we have received, the number of people that have come in from out of town and said what a wonderful place we have and how great Charleston is, as well as also seeing a lot of younger people in the brewery in a city/state that is supposedly dying out with old age. In November of 2022, the industry welcomed to Charleston a third brewery, Short Story, to be our neighbors on Summers Street. In

March, we worked with the Charleston Convention and Visitors Bureau to create Brewers Row with our two other breweries on Summers Street and are looking to add more!



Our vision is, and continues to be, to make Charleston a better place for everyone living here and to introduce people to our city and inspire them to move here as well. Our goal is to continue to produce and serve great beer and food and enjoy the smiling faces that grace Fife Street daily. 