

# Tallahassee Democrat.

---

**OPINION** *This piece expresses the views of its author(s), separate from those of this publication.*

## Lift up local women-owned businesses | Opinion

**Janna Lewkow** Your Turn

Published 6:00 a.m. ET March 14, 2021

With Florida's vaccine rollout underway, small businesses can see the light at the end of the tunnel. Female entrepreneurs like myself are anxious to get back to business as usual and resume our key role in the state's economy.

However, due to COVID, women-led and owned businesses are still suffering. As a female entrepreneur in Tallahassee, I can't sit on the sidelines and let my fellow lady bosses fail — we need to support women entrepreneurs now more than ever.

It's no secret women-owned businesses are an unstoppable driving force in economic growth. According to a recent report, prior to the pandemic women-owned businesses represented 42% of all businesses. Over the past five years the number of women-owned businesses increased by 21%, while all others were up only 9%. My own business, Sweet Southern Shore Boutique, was one that opened its doors during that time.

When we decided to start a family, I planned to continue my career. But when our daughter, Ava, experienced health problems as a baby, those plans changed.

**More:** Tallahassee's women chefs and restaurateurs 'not afraid of a challenge'

**Need a break?** Play the USA TODAY Daily Crossword Puzzle.

**More:** 'Something magical about beer': Meet four women at work in Tallahassee's craft breweries

This shift in my career plans motivated me to dig deeper into a more creative side, and pursue my dream of owning my own boutique. And so, Sweet Southern Shore, a nod to my Southern and coastal roots growing up in Panama City, was born.

With experience in helping grow businesses in the past, I turned to Facebook and began selling clothing to friends and family through my personal page and later a business page. The "shops" feature helped my boutique quickly expand to a national audience with more than 1,400 followers who directly purchase my products.

In fact, I found one of the most useful ways to expand my business was by creating a Facebook group, which allows me to create relationships that go beyond sales. This VIP group has more than 1,200 members and is an exclusive place for women not only to shop, but to share and feel a part of a positive community.

**More:** Revealed: The 25 Women You Need to Know and 5 Young Women to Watch for 2021

I genuinely believe an outfit (or special package at your doorstep) can positively change your day. My mission continues to be providing the very best in clothing/accessory design, quality and service. Bringing the best of the best is what drives me every day!

Although my passion has grown, the pandemic has drastically changed the market for women-owned businesses. A report from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce found that women-owned businesses have been more heavily impacted than male-owned businesses and are less likely to anticipate a strong recovery in the year ahead. It's incredibly disheartening to think pre-pandemic women-owned businesses were increasing at such a drastic rate but now declining faster than their male counterparts.

I ask all my Tallahassee ladies to support our women-owned businesses and share this message with your friends and family. We have so many great women in our community who are innovative, brilliant and creative. Let's make sure we lift them up! Let's shop local, promote their products and lend a hand.

*Janna Lewkow is founder and CEO of Sweet Southern Shore Boutique. She resides in Tallahassee with her husband Logan and their daughter Ava. Visit [sweetsouthernshore.com](http://sweetsouthernshore.com) to learn more.*

## **More local women-owned businesses to support**

The Office of Economic Vitality tracks women owned-businesses, as well as minority-owned businesses and others. You can search for businesses to support at [oevforbusiness.mwsbe.com](http://oevforbusiness.mwsbe.com).

Here are a few women owned businesses to look for during Women's History Month:

**Avail Health & Behavioral Solutions** is a woman-owned business focused on taking care of seniors either in assisted living facilities or their own homes. During the pandemic, Avail continued to take care of this vulnerable community. Through online platforms like Facebook, it continue to stay connected with audiences by sharing open job applications, health tips, product giveaways on Facebook Live and motivational quotes for those struggling with being socially distanced.

Visit [availhbs.org](http://availhbs.org).

**Runnin' Buzz Bartending** is a woman-owned bartending business focusing on events. Runnin' Buzz has continued to bring its bartending services to safe, socially-distanced events in Tallahassee. It uses platforms like Instagram and Facebook to communicate with its followers and provide package pricing specials, inspirational quotes and profiles to help followers get to know the Runnin' Buzz team.

Visit [runninbuzzbartending.com](http://runninbuzzbartending.com).

**Decadent Delights** is a woman-owned bakery that sells scrumptious baked goods to the Tallahassee community. The business uses both Instagram and Facebook as a way to share photos of its baked products, update on sold-out items and share collaborations with local government and companies like Starbucks.

**More:** Decadent Delights Tally, a new locally owned bakery, opens on Apalachee Parkway

**Drip Drop Fitness** is a women-owned fitness studio that offers dance cardio-focused fitness classes. The studio uses both Instagram and Facebook to highlight moves that are utilized in the hybrid dance-exercise class, as well as tips and tricks for a healthy lifestyle. The studio also created a Happy Hour Group for members to support each other outside class. Visit [dripdropfitness.com](http://dripdropfitness.com).

**More:** A year of sweat pays off at Drip Drop Fitness

**Curio** is a woman-owned boutique located in Railroad Square that features vintage and modern goods. Since 2014, the shop has been dedicated to sourcing goods from fellow entrepreneurs, artists and independent brands. The shop uses its Instagram and Facebook to showcase new products, share words of empowerment and highlight fellow female creators. Visit [curiogoods.com](http://curiogoods.com).

## **JOIN THE CONVERSATION**

*Send letters to the editor (up to 200 words) or Your Turn columns (about 500 words) to [letters@tallahassee.com](mailto:letters@tallahassee.com). Please include your address for verification purposes only, and if you send a Your Turn, also include a photo and 1-2 line bio of yourself. You can also submit anonymous Zing!s at [Tallahassee.com/Zing](http://Tallahassee.com/Zing).*

*Submissions are published on a space-available basis. All submissions may be edited for content, clarity and length, and may also be published by any part of the USA TODAY NETWORK.*

**Never miss a story: Subscribe to the Tallahassee Democrat using the link at the top of the page.**

