

Episode 6: Connecting Communities

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Come join us, explore the impact of small business here in rural Arkansas.

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What challenges would you face? Who can help you meet those challenges?
How do you get in touch with others like you?

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This is Create Bridges, Arkansas, and we invite you to come cross these bridges with us.

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We're back with another episode of the Create Bridges podcast series, Arkansas Small Business, Big Rural Impact. I'm UA Cossotat

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Media director Loren Hinton. And we appreciate you listening.

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Today, we're sitting down with Murriel Wiley, program coordinator for the 3Cs Region, and Mallory Bailey of Red River Oil Company

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in Ashdown. Today's episode is a focus on Community Connections.

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We'll be discussing the way small businesses support their surrounding areas with volunteer efforts and community partnerships.

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So we're going to be talking about some of the community connections that you guys have as a small town business.

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I know that you guys have a few different locations and you do a few different things to give back to your local area.

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So today we're going to sit down and talk about all of that. Mallory,

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would you start by giving us some background on what Red River Oil Company is all about?

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Sure. So Red River Oil started in June of 2010 when we first opened our doors.

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We were a tiny little metal building with two gas pumps and some Big Tex out there.

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And over the course of 10 years, we had grown exponentially.

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Our Ashtown location, we added a fueling station over there with probably six more pumps.

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2014, we purchased what used to be Mayson oil in Foreman, Arkansas.

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And we moved in and we have some people over there full time. And 2016, we purchased the former ATCO distributing in Texarkana, Texas.

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So we moved into a much larger market than we had been used to.

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And right now, we're actually have a new location, Ashtown under construction

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that will be an unmanned fueling station right there on Highway 32, the bypass.

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So anybody can go there. Trucks will have the Red River Oil charge keys and

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they'll be also open to the public. Wow. So you guys have been busy. Very busy, sometimes hard keep up.

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I believe that for sure.

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As far as the things that you guys stay busy with, will you talk to us about your company's role in the retail, tourism and entertainment sector?

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Red River Oil would fall into the retail section for Little River County.

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We do provide fuel and oil lubricant products as well,

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especially products to the average person or a farmer or any store sort of industry or construction.

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The farming portion of our community is definitely one of the largest portions that we serve,

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provide our services to. They need this fuel, especially during hay season or harvest season.

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I mean, they really are leaning on us to be there, keep their tanks full,

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provide the products they need for their machinery so that they can get their job done.

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That also is in turn servicing our community and feeding the people in our community.

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And that's important. Yes, very definitely agree with that.

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So since you guys fall into the retail industry,

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I know that you guys may have a lot of involvement with your community as far as getting involved, volunteering, giving back.

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What do you guys do to support your community beyond just filling up your residence? At Rred River Oil

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we really pride ourselves on being not just a part of the community, but being involved in the community.

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It's our civic duty to help to help get back to this community that is nurturing all of us and providing things for us.

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You know, we just want to be able to get back to that. So through that,

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we like to donate to the schools so their football programs or their PTO for their fundraisers or any sort of yearbook ad.

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And we do that for schools in Little River County

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and Sevier.

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So we focus on those areas, but we also tend to, we like to do some things for the sports that are not just school involved.

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So in Foreman, that would be their youth football or Youth Sports Association and Ashtown at the City Park.

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So as you guys know, in these small towns.

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First of all, it's hard to raise the money to be able to provide these services or these teams in these games for these children.

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You know, the parks don't they don't make hardly any money. I mean, they they have tournament's come in.

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They might get some revenue there. And these cities are strapped. The cities are strapped.

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I mean, Ashtown has one of the highest tax rates in the state of Arkansas.

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We're in the top 20. It's over 11 percent sales tax.

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So our city, you know, it's a small town.

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So it struggles it. It's not like the city can provide to cannot pay for all of these sports programs at the park.

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So we always volunteer to sponsor those programs at all the local cities that we in the service areas that we're in.

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Since the farming community is such a big supporter of us, we do try to get back there through the fair and rodeo or premium sale,

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because a lot of those people have children or grandkids or family members that are involved in those things are gonna be,

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you know, working with these animals for so long and bring them to that premium sale.

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So we want to be there to be able to support them, but also show those kids that there are lots of people out there that support them

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and are proud of what they're doing and encouraging them to continue that work.

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And as far as the Chamber of Commerce goes, that's something that you volunteer to do as the vice president, right?

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Yes, correct. So I guess I came on, they invited me to our asked me to be on the board two years ago.

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So this is my second year. Next year, I will be the president of the board.

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And I absolutely love being involved in that and the events that we do in the community.

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I think it's really important also, you know, not just for me personally as my civic duty to get involved in my community and give back.

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But I like to be the face for Red River oil and, you know,

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get get our name out there so that people in the community knows that we're supporting them.

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The truck and treat, which sadly has to be done a little bit differently this year, is my absolute favorite event that we did for the chamber.

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So I get to, you know, put my big Red River Oil on my car and decorate my truck with all my skeletons and stuff.

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And it is so much fun to watch to have all those kids come by and get gobs and gobs and gobs of candy.

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Well, that leads me directly into my last question or my next question is the why.

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Right. You guys could so easily just sell your fuel and go about your business open and close

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everyday. But you do go above and beyond to serve as vice president for your chamber.

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And you do donate to your premium sales and your county fairs and your schools and your youth sports.

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Why do you guys do all of that, if you may or may not even see a business return or an impact from it?

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What makes you guys decide to give back to your community?

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Well, for as long as I've been doing this, have doing those things, being involved in the community,

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building those relationships is absolutely necessary for a small business to survive in a rural county

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in my opinion. These people have been there.

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You know, they're your customer, but they're not just your customer. They become your friend. They feel like family.

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There are people that come in there that I have become friends with over the years that we call them on the phone.

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We'll get to dinner together. But they also it's the word of mouth.

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So when they're telling their friends about us, they should know that, you know,

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how they feel about Red River oil and the services that we provided for them. You know that it means something.

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I mean, that means a lot more than just go on Facebook and finding a local business, providing the service that you're looking for.

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And so maintaining these relationships helps bridge the gap between just being a small business in your community and or,

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you know, or being something for the community, being a part of the community.

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I love that. And I think that you guys are serving an important role and maybe there's some other businesses that

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might get more involved once they know what Red River oil is really about. As far as Covid-19 goes,

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I know you mentioned that with the premium sale that's going to change this year.

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How have you guys survived and adapted during the covered 19 pandemic?

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Well, when when Covid started well, when we really started feeling those effects of it here in southwest Arkansas,

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it was probably the end of March, beginning of April.

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You know, you go outside or you'd get in your car to go somewhere and there hardly be anybody on the road.

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There's no cars on the road and there's definitely not any transport trucks out

there that need to be filled up.

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There's not, most people are at home.

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They're not needing the fuel for their tractors or whatever kind of equipment they're using, the people in the log woods.

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And so we saw all our fuel numbers drop drastically.

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First those six to eight weeks during that time when everyone really just wasn't getting out anymore.

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So to kind of counteract that and try to keep everything going and all of that, we just really focused on reaching out to the customers that we have.

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Making sure that we are still providing that same quality of service that we pride ourselves on.

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And just continuing to work with our customers so that they can also survive during this pandemic, because as a small business,

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when we are a small business, but we're not like, you know, this one man who has a log truck and that's what he has to,

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hHe has to haul this wood to be able to survive. And so it's just important for us to be able to make sure that we're staying competitive and

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doing what we can to also help those other people that are in the same position we are.

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And are you guys still able to help out with your community and give back as much even though Covid is going on?

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Yes. So we are still donating to everything that we've normally donated to.

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We're still trying to stay on top of any events that, you know, they need volunteers that we can try to go and, you know, be a part of that.

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But as we all know, that some of those things have changed this year. A lot of those events are not happening or they're happening differently.

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So we're just kind of adapted and go with the flow.

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Do you have any advice for any business owners out there maybe that want to get involved in their community,

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but they are maybe holding back because of Covid? Yeah, I would say don't hold back.

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I mean, you can't let this. You can't let things hold you back. You're only going to move forward if you're constantly trying to move forward.

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I can get down with that, and I thank you so much for your time.

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And I really appreciate you sitting down with us today.

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Is there anything else you would like the people listening to know about Red River Oil Company?

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Yeah. Yeah. We have locations and Ashdown, Foreman and Texarkana.

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We are a full service fuel bulk plant distributor.

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So we. You're more than welcome to come to any of our facilities and purchase fuel or oil or lubricant products.

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00:11:37,700 --> 00:11:42,890

Well, we also deliver. So give us a call and we'll get you taken cared of.

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00:11:42,890 --> 00:11:54,270

Thank you so much, Mallory. We appreciate you. Thank you.

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00:11:54,270 --> 00:12:04,230

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