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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: MEAGHAN MAURICE, DIANE HUDSON (2); COURTESY BLACK DOG IRON WORKS

Busy Hands

Out of the cubicle, into the workshop.
 Post-modern tradespeople get back to basics and resurrect the past.

BY DIANE HUDSON

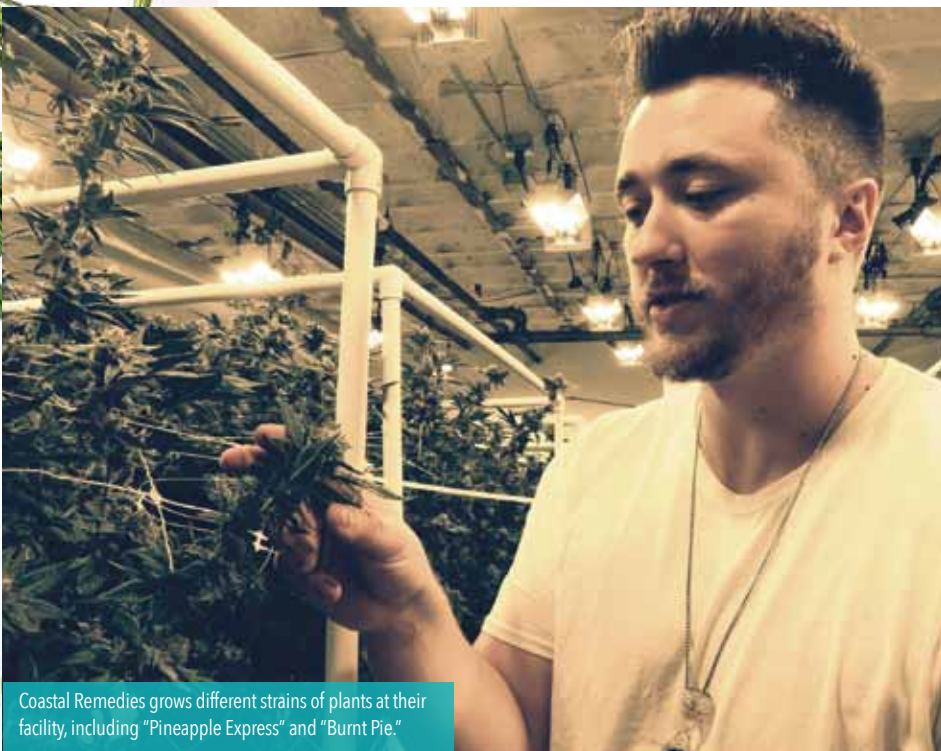
EVER HEARD OF A FARRIER? An auriferer? Mystical economic trends are creating a strata of young dedicated practitioners of ancient trades—some with a 21st century twist. We take a look at those who have wholeheartedly signed on to the work of our forefathers.

Mother's Little Helper

"If you'd told me a few years ago I'd be doing this, I'd have said, 'That's a pipe dream!'" **Sam Butler**, founder and co-owner of **Coastal Remedies**, a medical marijuana business, says.

Growing up on the West End in Portland, Butler, 23, took

BUSINESS



Coastal Remedies grows different strains of plants at their facility, including "Pineapple Express" and "Burnt Pie."

time off after school to intern on a farm in New Mexico. Tiring of "making goat cheese," he moved back, and at 18 wound up managing KGB Glass, a smoke shop on Congress Street. "It gave me the taste of running a business. I enjoyed the stress and getting creative, trying to build something."

Starting work for marijuana caregivers in his free time, tuning other people's cannabis into tinctures, edibles, essential oils, etc., Butler was soon working "nine to five at the store and five to nine" at his business.

"You have to specialize in something. We chose extracts. Initially we had a small line of beverage enhancers, medicated simple syrups to pour in a drink. Many marijuana patients are adverse to smoking, so this is a viable niche."

After two years of full-time focus,

"Many marijuana patients are adverse to smoking, so this is a viable niche."

—Sam Butler, Coastal Remedies

Coastal Remedies has invested well over a quarter of a million dollars back into the business. A week or two away from harvesting its first crop, the firm is bustling with activity and growth. Numerous 1,000-watt grow lights, state-of-the-art humidifiers, and a full-time professional grower add dimension to this investment. But it's at a separate space where the extraction work is done and Butler really shines, truly at home in his lab. "I always liked chemistry," he says.

As for income, "We pretty much pour it all back into the business. But I wake up every day and get to dictate my own schedule, which is work. It's more than money—I love what I do. I'm pursuing my vision. All this would be worth a lot on the black market. But that doesn't interest us. Our product is helping give better lives to people in pain, and that gives a great sense of accomplishment and worth."

A Creative Thread

"When I was a kid," seamstress **Jacquelyn Pepice**, 34, says, "I'd tell my mom, 'When I grow up, I'm going to have my own store, and I'm gonna call it Sink or Fly.'" Instead, she named it **Hem and Veil**. She laughs. "Kinda like hill and dale."

Always attracted to sewing, Pepice and fellow students at MECA (2002-2006) convinced the sculpture department to buy an industrial sewing ma-

chine and pull a loom out of storage. "We started our own fiber niche, and I began designing wearable art."

Finding the confidence to follow her passion took time, including nine years of being inspired by her mentor, Sarah Martin, owner of Bar of Chocolate in Portland. "I started bartending there in 2006 at 21. I watched Sarah growing her business. I realized that if you work hard, you can make it happen."

In rented spaces, Pepice steadily built a clientele of brides and bridesmaids before purchasing her current location in Rosemont. "It's scary," she says of having put \$40,000 down on the building. "But there will be no rent increases. I have a playroom for my five-year-old and storage area for extensive inventory." Pepice also sells and alters gently used wed-



PHOTOS BY DIANE HUDSON



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ding dresses, often those returned to her by her customers. She has close to 100 gowns that were either donated or bought when Encore on Congress Street shut its doors.

As a bride enters the well-designed space, it's hard to tell who is more excited. Pepice is literally bubbling over. "I could sew every day; I love helping people. And people are happy when you're helping them look beautiful for the most special day of their life."

In the Bag

Jasmine Clayton, 42, owner of **Kurier** in Portland, has a favorite quote: "If you don't follow your dreams, you'll spend your life working for someone who did."

Before following her dream, Clayton spent four years helping designer Jill McGowan of Freeport follow hers. "I was a single mom and needed a 'real job.'" The stint served her well. "I don't think I could've gone into business without experiencing their system of production. It was better than going to school."



All the while, Clayton was working on her own designs, selling in craft shows, working on social media, and building in-

ventory. "Jill was so helpful every time I had a question. And she taught me to get used to failing. You can't take it personally."

In 2014, at age 38, with only \$5,000 to her name, she signed a lease for her space in the State Theatre building, and gave eight weeks notice to McGowan. "It was a risk. I don't have a rich grandfather or miraculous fund that's going to catch me. If I don't make the money, we don't have food on the table." Clayton learned early on that she is not her customer. "I wouldn't spend \$375 on a handbag, even if the cow made it from his own skin."

But others recognize the value of Clayton's work and will part with the cash. Kurier sells hundreds of different styles, all designed by Clayton. Her favorite is the multi-use Ellis bag. As we speak, she is creating 500 beer koozies for Brooklyn Brewery made with leather from Tennessee and help from her part-time assistant. "I love my work. I say that all the time. Every day is like craft camp."

As I leave, I notice the beautiful



Stop by almost any day to see Jasmine at task in the back of her shop at 615A Congress Street.

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Iron Man

Matthew Foster never imagined he'd grow up to be a blacksmith. In fact, he planned on being an engineer. It wasn't until he went on to study sculpture at the University of Maine that he heard the clang that dreams are made of. "I studied art there and particularly focused on sculpture. The sculpture studio at the UMaine has a small blacksmithing setup that just consists of a forge, an anvil, a vice, and some hammers and tongs," Foster says.

While working as the sculpture studio technician at the university, Foster bought multiple books on blacksmithing, including three he continues to source today: *The Complete Modern Blacksmith* by Alexander G. Weygers, *The New Edge of the Anvil* by Jack Andrews, and *The Art of Blacksmithing* by Alex W. Bealer. "The knowledge of blacksmiths was never really written down. It's only been in the last 100



years that we've documented how blacksmiths did what they did. Now we're sort of documenting these things that were never documented before for future generations."

Today, Foster runs **Black Dog Ironworks** (named after his two dogs) from his home in West Enfield. "If you told me



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ten years ago I was going to be a full time blacksmith running a shop, I'd tell you you were crazy. It was just not on my radar."

It was Foster's wife who encouraged him to pursue the work professionally. "When my wife and I became pregnant, I thought *I could really use some extra money*. It was she who suggested I start making some stuff and selling it."

Starting out, Foster worked with the bare minimum: his forge, an anvil, a cordless drill, and a grinder, costing a total of \$1,000. Last year, Foster brought in \$120,000 in sales. "That's because I am selling online. Before the internet, you'd work with people in your local community," he says. "But because of the internet, I can reach the whole world. Most of my customers are from the United States, and I've shipped to 25 foreign countries." ■

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