

# Home-based businesses are creating a booming economy in York County

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With a bakery in her garage , Jeanne Fiocca is one of the many in a growing population of home based businesses in York County. (WYDaily/Courtesy Cookie Text)

Jeanne Fiocca wakes up every morning, gets her children ready for school and heads to work—in her garage.

Fiocca, owner of the business Cookie Text, is just one of the many residents in York County contributing to the growing number of home-based businesses. The county has been working on tracking this data and cultivating an environment of success for this new industry over the past few years, said Melissa Davidson, assistant director of the York County Office of Economic Development.

“We realized such a large portion of our business licenses were home-based and thought it was something that other places hadn’t looked into yet,” Davidson said. “A lot of folks are stuck in that old mentality of attraction: bring more businesses here. But we are interested in keeping

the ones we have.”

Data from the county shows two-thirds of the business licenses in 2012 were home-based businesses and they account for 7 percent of the total business personal property taxes and business license fees in the county.

Davidson said that high number remains steady every year as internet markets continue to soar. During the recession in 2008, the nation saw a large spike in home-based businesses, according to data from the county, and since then York County has capitalized on the opportunity.

Home-based businesses help the county economically because they allow for a larger and more diverse pool of companies to enter the area. Davidson said while that means those businesses aren't using storefronts, operating from home leaves more real estate opportunities to bring even more businesses into the area.

The county has started to implement programs, such as the annual Home-Based Business Conference to help cultivate a community where those businesses can thrive and connect.

For Fiocca, creating a home-based business in York County was a supportive process that helped her create a successful community-oriented business. Cookie Text is a business that bakes homemade cookie cakes with messages on them, and delivers them personally to customers.

When thinking about how to operate her business, she said the idea of a brick-and-mortar storefront came to mind first. But then she realized how much overhead an at-home business would save, about \$7,000 a year, according to data from the county, and decided that she could create her cookie cakes right from home.

Over the years, she renovated her garage into a baking studio and eventually hired four staff members to work with her. She said most importantly she became part of a growing community of small business owners.

“Everyone tries to measure [success] by the dollar, and the business is financially successful, but it's successful in many other ways,” she said. “I love my job, I've been able to give back to my community and created a sense of living my purpose.”

Davidson said those types of businesses are ideal for a rural community because people can be closer to the home and their families while also pursuing their business goals.

Data from the county showed owners of home-based businesses tend to feel happier with their work and life balance even though they are often working longer hours.

With new programs from the county continuing to grow that create networking and grant opportunities, Fiocca said her home business has allowed her to become more involved in her community.

"We really do focus on these home-based businesses in our area because they're important for our economy," Davidson said. "It's exciting to be right there on the cusp of a new initiative."

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