

Gov. Evers: ICYMI: “The Evers Administration Prioritized Small Businesses in Its COVID Response. Those Efforts Are Paying Off”

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MADISON, Wis. — In case you missed it, UpNorthNews [highlighted](#) Governor Tony Evers’ efforts to invest in small businesses across the state.

During Gov. Evers’ first term, more than 4,500 small businesses in all 72 counties have benefited from the Main Street Bounceback program — and funding is still available for even more small businesses. Based on aid distribution, Gov. Evers has [shown up](#) “among the most pro-small business governors” in the country and “the state is in its [strongest financial position](#) in more than 50 years.”

Gov. Evers is establishing Wisconsin as the small business powerhouse of the Midwest, and because of his common sense leadership, the state [reached](#) the lowest unemployment rate in state history and a labor force participation rate that is four points higher than the national average.

Read more about how Gov. Evers has prioritized small businesses.

[UpNorthNews: The Evers Administration Prioritized Small Businesses in Its COVID Response. Those Efforts Are Paying Off](#)

Sheila Desjarlais always wanted to open her own business.

Her ideas for what that might look like changed over the years, but she knew she wanted to work for herself. The timing, however, was never quite right. Starting a business is a risk, and between her husband’s time in dental school, establishing

himself professionally, and then her giving birth to their first child, Desjarlais needed stability. So she spent 15 years working in accounting.

When the coronavirus pandemic hit in 2020, Desjarlais, a Washburn resident, was working as an office manager for a small family business in nearby Bayfield. As the virus spread across the country, she quit her job to care for her second child, who was only a few months old at the time. That's when she started thinking again about launching her own business.

"Starting a business in the middle of a global pandemic is not really a super good idea, but in some ways, the timing was great," Desjarlais said. "I wasn't working, the baby was really little, my first daughter was older—she was four and she didn't need as much care."

Desjarlais took the plunge. She started slowly, launching Kiddwink Kids out of her own home, designing sensory kits—themed kits that include a sensory element, such as Play-doh, slime or kinetic sand, and other toys to combine with that sensory element—for children to play with.

"I was just going to make these kits and I was going to sell them at festivals and I was going to sell them online and that was going to be it for a little bit," she said. "But I entered a business competition for the area here for Chequamegon Bay and the winner gets \$5,000."

Desjarlais won. That money was helpful, but what really allowed her to take Kiddiwink to the next level was the Wisconsin Tomorrow Main Street Bounceback program, which offered \$10,000 to local entrepreneurs who opened a new, brick-and-mortar location or expanded operations in a vacant commercial space.