



SBDC Success Story **Garth's Brew Bar**

Dubbed "Greatest American Beer Bar in Wisconsin" by CraftBeer.com, focuses on community

Garth Beyer opened Garth's Brew Bar on Monroe Street in Madison in December 2019 for three months, before Wisconsin's Safer at Home order forced him to pivot to carry-out sales only and eventually to carry-out and patio seating only. But Beyer says the three months he had to prove himself and for guests to experience the bar is keeping the business going.

"We've had a lot of support from the community, craft beer drinkers, and breweries," says Beyer. "We had a few months under our belt for people to come enjoy our beer, and we got our brand out there. People learned about our mission and want to support us."

Three months after opening and right before the shutdown, CraftBeer.com dubbed Garth's Brew Bar the "Greatest American Beer Bar in Wisconsin."

"There are only a few major awards that a beer bar can win in America, and this is one of the biggest ones," Beyer says. "And though we planned a big celebration for it that had to be cancelled due to COVID-19, we've had a lot of craft beer drinkers come in and congratulate us."

Garth's Brew Bar is hosting virtual tastings and craft beer launch parties, as well as moving forward with collaboration brews with local breweries.

"Breweries seek us out if they're going to start distributing to Madison or want extra attention from the city's craftiest of beer drinkers," Beyer says. "They like knowing that we're a destination hub for them to test the market and brew a collaboration beer with. And we take pride in providing them consumer feedback, brand support,

and market knowledge to help them thrive."

Beyer always had the entrepreneurial bug. As a child, instead of running a lemonade stand, he sold and traded Beanie Babies with other neighborhood children. He kept his eye on the idea of creating a unique business as an adult—he just didn't know what it would be.

Beyer's inspiration for a bar came from a "beercation" he and a college friend took to Budapest, Hungary.





“We went to a bar called Hops, and the owner was there serving beer, and he knew everything on the menu,” recalls Beyer. “There were communal tables, and it was relaxed and comfortable, with people socializing and drinking beer between conversations. I felt like Madison needed something like that, and that’s what I set out to create.”

In the fall of 2016, Beyer connected with SBDC business consultant Anne Inman, whom he describes as “truly remarkable.” He says that’s when things started to take off.

Beyer and Inman began by going through his business plan, which at the end of a number of workshops became a 56-page proof of con-

cept. Using an SBDC business plan template, the pair met close to biweekly to review each section, like company background, industry competitive set, market share, and more.

“Every time I thought it was thorough, Anne would suggest adding things to take it to the next level—asking me about my competitors, for example,” says Beyer. “She



pushed me to bring all the data to table that I could.”

Beyer says working with Inman helped him make his business plan for entering the neighborhood airtight.

“I felt confident after working with Anne,” he says. “I had to win over banks, contractors, family members, friends, neighborhood groups, and city politicians. When I was looking for a loan, I talked to one bank whose loan officer said that in 40 years, he’d never seen a plan as qualified as the plan I shared with him.”

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The UW-Madison Small Business Development Center supports businesses in Dane, Sauk, and Columbia Counties.



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