

Fort Collins coffee shop hiring homeless eyes expansion



Sarah Jane Kyle, *The Coloradoan* 10 a.m. MDT May 27, 2015



(Photo: Morgan Spiehs/The Coloradoan)

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A Fort Collins coffee shop that intentionally hires homeless and formerly homeless individuals hopes to open a second shop in the city.

RedTail Coffee, located in the Fort Collins South Transit Center, 4915 Fossil Blvd., [opened one year ago in anticipation of Redtail Ponds](#), a permanent supportive housing complex that opened just south of the coffee shop earlier this year. The complex serves homeless and low-income individuals.

The shop, which is small, has the capacity for two mission-based hires in addition to one seasoned barista who helped form the menu and teach owners Seth and Kelly Kelley about coffee.

Employment at the coffee shop has been a "second chance" for barista Jason Henderson, who joined the team a few months ago. Henderson is a resident at Redtail Ponds and previous general contractor.

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He needed a new job that put less strain on his old back injuries and "shot" knees. When he found out RedTail Coffee's mission, he knew he found the perfect fit for his new life.

Working as a barista is "very new to me," but he loves his interactions with customers during his regular morning shift every Monday through Friday.

It's no surprise to him that applications have poured in for the shop's one open position, which will be filled in June.

"There are a lot of people who want this job, and that's because of the way Kelly and Seth run this," he said. "They're great people to work for and are big into giving people second chances."

The shop's small size limits the number of people the Kelley's can hire. The couple recently launched a [GoFundMe campaign](#) to raise \$50,000 in start-up costs for a second location that would allow more mission-based hires like Henderson.

"What we're doing is making a difference, but we can only do so much with being a small shop," Kelly Kelley said. "If I could, I would hire every single person that sent in resumes. We just don't have the space right now."

The new location would have the same heart to help those in need in Fort Collins. As the shop expands, Seth Kelley hopes it will serve as a model for other communities.

Both of the company's mission-based hires to date, one of which no longer works at the shop, have found permanent housing, he said.

"From what we've seen so far, this is a powerful thing that we can do," he said.

RedTail Coffee has become a community center that bridges societal gaps, he added. The shop draws a wide variety of customers, from those in need of help to those who would like to help.

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A donated book library has become a fixture at the shop. Customers bring in and borrow used books at no cost. At the shop's entrance, a plastic tub dubbed "Take it, Leave it," fills with donated clothing and socks and quickly empties.

Customers and staff share resources and stories.

"It's a safe place to be," Kelly said. "Conversations come up and relationships are building. That's what I'm proud of."

Follow Sarah Jane Kyle on Twitter [@sarahjanekyle](#) or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/reportersarahjane.

How to help

- RedTail Coffee has an ongoing GoFundMe campaign to help raise money to open a new shop. Visit www.gofundme.com/redtailcoffee to donate.
- Donate clothing and other items to the Take it, Leave it box.
- Drop off used books for the library.

Hours

RedTail Coffee, located in Fort Collins South Transit Center at 4915 Fossil Blvd., is open 6:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday. On May 30, the shop will host a special anniversary celebration with drink specials and food from 9 a.m. to noon.