

Sunshine & Whiskey Filling Station

Watson, MN



RLF Business Spotlight



Looking for a place to fill up your tank with gas, get some groceries, or grab a hot meal? The Sunshine and Whiskey Filling station has you covered! This one stop shop in Watson provides a friendly atmosphere with products that meet the needs of it's customers at an affordable price. Owner, Autumn Lee, finds purpose and motivation in owning her own business. Being able to serve and give back to the community, provide great experiences for her family, and build relationships with her customers is what it is all about for Lee.

"Every single customer that walks through the door is important to me, to the store, to my team," Lee said. "Everyone has their own story, some stand and choose to share their day with us, some are in a hurry and off to their next stop, but one doesn't make the next less important."



Along with the C-store business, Lee also runs Salty Heifer's Off-sale under the same roof. She hopes to expand the building in the future, possibly adding a new "Beer Barn" or an expansion to the c-store side. And along with the building expansion, she would love to have a team with full-time employees, creating job opportunities for the community of Watson.

With help from the UMRDC CARES Act RLF, Sunshine and Whiskey Filling Station was able to make updates to the kitchen, store, and outdoor signage. They were also able to install a point of sale system which helps manage daily business activity.

Next time you are in Watson, be sure to stop in and check out this community staple!



"I hope that our loyal, and new, customers understand that when they support a small business they really are making a big difference for myself and my team."

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Autumn & Lee

What are your goals for the business?

To provide quality products at reasonable prices while maintaining excellent customer service. The end. It's that simple. Having a bright, clean and friendly store where people want to come and return to, with products that meet their needs at a price point they can afford.

What do you enjoy most about owning a business in Watson?

We have the lake and plenty of great outdoor activities year-round to keep customers coming through, we have a great loyal customer base already established. Another view point is that there is literally no other gas station or grocery store in Watson. It's not just for people living in Watson. There is a large service area and both our establishments can provide much needed necessities beyond just gas and pop. We have automotive needs, basic grocery items (short a cup of sugar...we got you covered, not enough butter or milk, don't worry we have that also) along side when you decide you want an adult beverage we are here for you – with numerous options now!

What would your main piece of advice be for someone just starting out with a business?

Recognize your strengths and weaknesses and own them. Recognize your team's strengths and capitalize on that! Understand your existing market and target market. Listen to your customers. Listen to what they want or need. Sometimes it's just an ear...but don't forget they are important. And when someone tells you, "you'll never beat the competition because their store is bigger", let that light a fire within you. Allow the challenge placed in front of you to drive you to think like your customers, allow it to push you out of your comfort zone and take a closer look at the service and product being provided. Don't get complacent, change is good. With the right amount of competition, focus, strategy, perspective, and innovation, you will succeed. Don't let someone tell you otherwise.

