



'THE BORED'
Longtime Montrose group revealed
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MONTROSE DAILY PRESS



Colorado West Christian School Color Run 5K participants toss bags of colored powder into the air after the race Saturday at Cerise Park. (Paul Hurschmann/Montrose Daily Press)

Montrose father and son team up to open distillery

• Distillery to open later this year or early 2018
• Business is welcome addition to West Main Street, city manager says
• Owners have had idea for distillery for years

By MATT LINDBERG
MONTROSE DAILY PRESS
MANAGING EDITOR

David Fisherling didn't know that when he and his wife took a vacation in 2012 that it would inspire his professional dream.

The couple decided to spend their first vacation in years by tackling the Kentucky Bourbon Trail tour, which features seven signature distilleries in the state.

"We had a great time," David said of checking out places where liquor is manufactured. "I was into the home brewing stuff in the past, and this trip gave me the idea of why not a distillery?"

But they were living in D.C. then, and David said it wasn't a good place or time to pursue that idea. That changed in 2014, though,

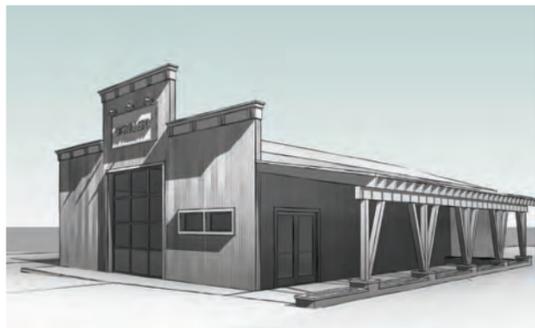
when the Fisherings decided to move back to Montrose to start a family. It was then David had a heart-to-heart conversation with his father, Greg. The two are co-owners of High Mesa Communications in Montrose, but David didn't want to let his dream die.

'We definitely don't want to be the only town between Grand Junction and the San Juan Mountains that doesn't have a distillery.'

David Fisherling
Co-owner

"My dad is the kind of guy who has to have something to do," said David, who is vice president of High Mesa Communications and a Montrose native. "So he provided the environment to follow

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An architect's rendering of what the distillery will look like once complete. (Submitted photo/David Fisherling)



Heather Vincent, left, and Andrea Johnson await the start of the Colorado West Christian School Color Run 5K Saturday at Cerise Park. (Paul Hurschmann/Montrose Daily Press)

School holds first color run

• Organizer pleased with success of first event
• School relies on fundraising, donations
• Participants enjoyed getting covered in colors

By PAUL HURSMANN
MONTROSE DAILY PRESS PHOTOJOURNALIST

Despite the late season snowfall, the first Colorado West Christian School Color 5K Run went off without a hitch Saturday at Cerise Park. "We had about 165 runners today," said Stacy Brown, main organizer and board member of the school. "We are doing the run as a fundraiser. We rely on fundraising and donations to keep the doors open and to pay the faculty. We wanted to spice things up a little bit with the color run."

Brown said they got a good mix of families with children enrolled in the school and the community at large. A good number of the participants were children, along with some of their teachers from Colorado West.

"There's a nice spot in the course ... so if the kids get tired, they can just flip a u-ey and turn around and come back," she said.

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'Big gamble' for farmers in labor crunch

• Local fieldworkers finding other jobs
• Visa process for foreign workers sees delays
• Growers have to plant before they can line up pickers

By KATHARHYNN HEIDELBERG
MONTROSE DAILY PRESS SENIOR WRITER

If you plant it, will the laborers come? For John Harold and other growers in the Uncompahgre Valley, it's a serious question, representing the "gamble" they must take: Harold needs workers to harvest his "Olathe Sweet" sweet corn and is facing a labor crunch as his usual pickers have moved to other jobs.

On top of that, the process for bringing in the foreign workers he hires under the H2A visa program is seeing delays.

"I have no approved visas as of today, but I've got over 1,000 acres of corn in the ground," Harold said Wednesday. "Me and a bunch of growers are taking a real gamble that we can make it work. So, we'll see."

The H2A visa is for temporary agricultural workers. Regulations mean farmers like Harold can only request visas 45 days before the workers will be needed. But it takes corn 70 to 80 days to mature, which means growers have to plan before they are able to request visas.

"I have to plant a month or a month and a half before I can even apply for the labor. We all gamble that the system will work," Harold said.

"The gamble is that we've already done the planting, but because of the law of the H2A program, we can't ahead of time make sure we have the labor."

Farmers apply to the U.S. Department of Labor for a certain number of visas. The applications then proceed to the Department of Homeland Security, the State Department and then to the consulate in Denver, which conducts interviews.

"All those (people) out there who say we don't bring in vetted (employees) — they go through three or four federal agencies; they are fingerprinted and passported, then vetted at the consulate," Harold said.

Harold pays to bring in the farm laborers from the point of recruitment to the consulate and then to the job site. The visa fees and the workers' return trip home are also his responsibility; last year costs were \$60,000 and he brought in fewer than the 24 people he's requested through the H2A process this year.

The consulate interview process is taking a day or so longer than it has in the past — and time is money.

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DISTILLERY

FROM PAGE 1

our passion.”

The father and son recently purchased the old Potato Growers Co-Op at 39 W. Main St. with the help of brokers John Renfrow of Renfrow Reality and Burton Bullington of RE/MAX Alpine View. The plan is to open the not-yet-named distillery late this year or in early 2018 in the old green warehouse, according to David.

“It won’t be ugly and green, though,” David assured. “We promise that.”

Their distillery will feature signature whiskeys, brandies and other spirits, depending on what the market demands. David said it will boast a tasting room, but the plan is to also sell their liquors at wholesale and retail locally and beyond.

They’ll also repurpose the other part of the property as a co-op for mixed retail with the intention of creating a space where people can have some fun and relax.

“We want people to go to their friends or co-workers and say, ‘let’s go to the co-op or the distillery,’” David said, crediting The Vine Market & Bistro on Main Street for inspiration on how to pull off the co-op space successfully “The idea is you can go to the distillery and right across the parking lot is another space people can hang out.”

For David, bringing a distillery to Montrose is something that has been long overdue. Distilleries are becoming popular throughout the nation, including in Colorado, he noted.

“Well, I think it’s a natural fit for our town. Look around — Ouray, Buena Vista, Grand Junction, Salida and Telluride, they all have distilleries,” he said. “They’ve been booming in Colorado. We

don’t want to be known as a town that has a big Walmart, and we don’t want to be known as the town that just has strip malls. We definitely don’t want to be the only town between Grand Junction and the San Juan Mountains that doesn’t have a distillery.”

Like David, Greg said the timing was right to go ahead with this venture.

“Montrose has needed one,” he said. “This will be an anchor for the whole area. We want to attract local customers and help with tourism.”

Turning passion into business

The distillery the Fisherings have planned didn’t come out of nowhere. The father and son have long appreciated a good spirit, particularly whiskey.

“We’re both really big whiskey fans,” David said, adding he has about 100 bottles in his house currently. “This is something I’ve been passionate about, so I said ‘why the he** not do this?’”

In addition to his passion for spirits, Greg is the majority owner of High Mesa Communications and runs his winery for self-use only on his Spring Creek property. But that’s separate from the distillery, and Greg expressed excitement about the various liquors they’re creating. The two said they’ve spent months researching and experimenting, noting it has paid off already.

“We’ve got a bourbon recipe using fresh Western Slope sweet corn, and it’s spectacular,” Greg said.

The two also said they take pride in opening their business along Main Street on a property that has a unique history and had been up for sale for years. **The historic structure was built in the early 1900s, according to Renfrow.**

City Manager Bill Bell said he had talked with



The Fisherings plan to renovate the property at 39 W. Main St. (Paul Hurschmann/Montrose Daily Press File Photo)

Greg roughly three years ago about opening a winery or another business in that building, so he was happy the Fisherings were starting a new project there.

“We’re really excited about it,” Bell said, noting it will complement other West Main Street businesses like Cimarron Coffee Roasters, Montrose Kayak and Surf, Chow Down Pet Supplies and Healthy Rhythm Community Art Gallery. “They have a really good vibe going for West Main, and I think this will help with the plan of making it a destination.”

The city manager added it enhances the Colorado Outdoors Project that plans to revamp the river corridor. The land

across from the Montrose County Justice Center will eventually be home to a recreation/business park aiming to attract outdoor-focused industries to relocate to Montrose and include river restoration and high-end commercial, residential and industrial development, as previously reported by the Montrose Daily Press.

In addition, the city and Montrose Recreation District are working on a concept paper they hope will win Great Outdoors Colorado’s favor, and, ultimately, a \$2 million grant to build 2.25 more miles of concrete trail, with underpasses, on the northwest end of town and southern Montrose, as previously reported.

Renfrow praised the

Fisherings for turning the property into something that can be beneficial to the area.

“I am just excited to see this come together,” he said. “I think it will be good for that whole corridor.”

David said he wants the distillery and co-op to make Montrose better. “We want to follow in the footsteps of

the microbreweries in Montrose, Colorado and the country,” he said. “This is something I love, which is awesome. We’re doing this for us and our families, but we feel we have a responsibility to make it a success for the entire town.”

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