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Jaren's Jerky Goes Strate to Business

ENID, OKLA. – With a little help from Autry Technology Center, Jaren & Lester Browne took a family recipe and turned it into a thriving small business. Cue Jaren's Jerky!

While in high school at Chisholm Public Schools, J. Browne chose to attend the Information Technology program at Autry Technology Center. After two years in I.T. and graduating high school in 2020, he jumped into the Graphic Arts program.

During his time as a student, J. Browne began experimenting with his uncle's jerky recipe! After finalizing his own product, he began to share the jerky with friends and family. When the positive reviews started pouring in, J. Browne realized he was onto something.

"My friends and family were saying 'I would buy this!'," said Browne. "At the time I wanted to make some money to pay for college so I knew this could be my avenue."

J. Browne knew the Strate Center at Autry Tech existed when he was a student, but he was never expecting to actually use it. When he launched Jaren's Jerky, there were no open tenant spaces available, but that didn't stop the father-son team from utilizing the resources available.

Meredith Westfahl, Autry Tech's Small Business Management Specialist, told the Brownes about the Cherokee Strip Business Model Competition, a local opportunity to win funding for new small businesses.

"She set us up with a business plan," said Lester Browne. "We had already developed one, but they gave us the opportunity to use Live Plan and other applications that they use at Strate Center so we could build a more standardized business plan that matches the other plans that come out."

J. Browne utilized his training to create the marketing for the business as well as an online store. Jaren's Jerky made it through to the final round of the competition and placed third overall. At the same time, the largest commercial kitchen space at the Strate Center became available and Jaren's Jerky jumped at the opportunity to move in as a full-time tenant.

"I just don't think the community is aware of how much information or content that Autry Tech has," said L. Browne. "We are just starting to utilize the process and the experience of the Strate Center. The cool thing is we are on the ground floor with new management and some changes that can really impact how you interact with the other tenants."

Jaren's Jerky now offers three different flavors – original, spicy and teriyaki – in a variety of sizes ranging from ¼ lb. bag at \$9.99 to a 1 lb. bag at \$29.99. While the Brownes have big plans to eventually become a wholesale distributor to major chains and convenience stores, they are happy to serve the Autry Tech students lining up at the door for now.

Autry Technology Center has been a part of the Enid community since 1967 and is one of 29 CareerTech schools across Oklahoma. The center has more than 25 career programs and offers a wide variety of evening and weekend short-term courses and certifications for many diverse career fields. Autry Tech serves nearly 16,000 individuals each year, including many area employees who receive training through the Workforce Development Department that works with over 500 local businesses each year.

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Jaren Browne of Jaren's Jerky

