

ZanBria Artisan Farms: Regenerative agriculture



Heather Gayton began ZanBria Artisan Farms as an online market in 2019. In the summer of 2021, this woman-owned business expanded to a permanent location in Friendship, WI.

THE BUSINESS

Her niche market farm focuses on the research, education and development of regenerative agriculture. She said, “It’s really important to me that customers and participants feel like they are doing something meaningful and positive for the environment when they support ZanBria Artisan Farms.” Heather sees true value in partnering with the natural ecosystem to develop symbiotic relationships between food production and the conservation of natural resources.

Her farm is currently in the start-up phase as part of a grassroots homesteading and self-sustainable movement. By facilitating educational research and projects through on-farm trials, Heather is able to look for relationships and patterns within the ecosystem that not only improve the quality of plant health but also support native plant, pollinator and wildlife populations. Conservation work is at the heart of what is being done at ZanBria Artisan Farms.

When the COVID pandemic hit in 2020, Heather saw it as a chance to create a more personalized experience for people looking to learn about this way of living.



One-on-one appointments allowed her to remain safe and really connect with customers on a level that created both a friendship and an opportunity for the client to grow their own food and establish their own homestead.

THE COMMUNITY

As an educator and community stakeholder, Heather is involved in a variety of local initiatives. Presenting at Conservation Days, leading environmental education projects, staying involved with a producer-led watershed group and serving on the Adams County Deer Advisory Council are just a few ways she supports the local community.

She also works with the Adams County Farm Bureau, 4-H Leaders Association, Adams County Land and

Water, Adams County Master Gardeners and Wisconsin Association of Environmental Education. The Small Business Development Center (SBDC) in Stevens Point has been incredibly valuable in the planning and supporting of the development and networking for the farm as well.



She said, “The advice from the SBDC really helped me pace myself for long-term success.” Mark Speirs, a consultant at the SBDC, helped increase her understanding of pivots and the financial considerations that go along with them. Heather added, “Mark has remarkable insight on the structure of financials, and he really made the concepts easier for me to understand and apply to my specific industry. He was very supportive and responsive throughout the entire business planning process. His experience and education around the topics were incredibly valuable.”

Heather also benefited from the Entrepreneurial Training Program (ETP) offered by the SBDC. “I really enjoyed the ETP class experience. The instructors and guest speakers were incredibly knowledgeable. The pacing of the course was not too intense but still provided the necessary accountability to create the end product: the business plan,” she commented.



THE FUTURE

ZanBria Artisan Farms is hoping to support local Adams County 4-H clubs in youth development through hands-on projects and on-farm experiences in the very near future. Heather also plans to grow her capacity to take on more research and other education initiatives based on conservation and agricultural practices. We can’t wait to see how else ZanBria Artisan Farms devises ways to save resources, the environment and the world!

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