

# Montpelier start-up focuses on backyard sugar making

by Patrick Ripley, VtSBDC

When March rolls around in Vermont's Green Mountains many large scale sugar makers are already hard at work tapping trees and boiling sap into the sweet syrup the state's famous sugar maples provide. But there's also a cadre of small scale home producers who focus on providing a gallon or two for their family and friends.

Those small scale backyard operations did not go unnoticed by husband and wife team Justin McCabe and Kate Whelley McCabe, who themselves had struggled with finding an efficient way for backyard sugar makers to produce affordable syrup for their families.

"Our young family could not find an affordable fun way to sugar on a small scale given the products on the market – and lack thereof," Whelley McCabe said. This led them to open the Vermont Evaporator Company, a Montpelier based business that makes small scale maple sugar evaporators for backyard sugar makers. Priced at \$825 the evaporators are far more affordable than many of the professional models seen throughout Vermont and beyond.



Vermont Evaporator CEO Kate Whelley McCabe with founding members and brothers Patrick (left) and Collin Whelley getting ready to start up their "Sapling" Evaporator, the company's flagship product.

But before the small manufacturing company could get off the ground, there were many hurdles to cross.

"We are not experienced in starting a business," Whelley McCabe said, citing challenges such as estimating cost of equipment, as well as building expenses, among other things. The fledgling company soon contacted Vermont Small Business Development Center Area

Advisor Charley Ininger for assistance with their business start-up needs.

Whelley said they quickly went to work on the start-up concerns with a "calm, data-based" approach to decision making. She described the process as "very positive." "It gave us confidence," she said.

"There is absolutely no reason not to check in with VtSBDC if you are starting out or in a jam," Whelley McCabe said.

For more information on the Vermont Evaporator Company visit [www.vte-vap.com](http://www.vte-vap.com) and for more about VtSBDC and the services provided by area advisors check out [www.vtsbdc.org](http://www.vtsbdc.org).

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