

Leslie Coffee Co. | WSU Emerging



Those who love specialty coffee, tasty food, and a creative space to enjoy both will love Leslie Coffee Co. Owner Sarah Leslie started her career as a barista in New York City while working towards her undergraduate degree in 2006. Her career in specialty coffee was influenced and supported by her experience volunteering with the Barista Guild and the Specialty Coffee Association.

When she moved back to Wichita in 2016 as a credentialed Lead Instructor for the SCA and vice chair of the Barista Guild, she had spent a decade working at coffee shops across New York City as barista, manager, and educator. Sarah had dreamed of opening her own coffee shop and in 2018, that dream became a reality when Leslie Coffee Co. was established.

“Leslie Coffee Co. is a cafe and training space dedicated to improving the lives of our employees, customers, and

community through specialty coffee,” said Leslie. “We provide customers with expertly-crafted specialty coffee beverages and a unique food menu in a welcoming, community-focused environment.”

Starting her own business would be no small task, so Leslie reached out to the Kansas SBDC at Wichita State University and met SBDC advisor Frank Choriego for assistance. Before opening, Choriego helped Leslie develop a business plan, set financial projections, find a location, prepare for a loan request, and helped with the opening process. Opening a new business was a lot of work and Choriego was excited and ready to support along the way.

“There was never any doubt in Frank’s mind that I would eventually be able to open

my own business. He had faith in me even when I didn’t and kept me going even when it seemed like maybe I should give up,” said Leslie.

Once Sarah opened the doors to Leslie Coffee Co. the shop soon became a reflection of Wichita, Kansas. Customers felt as though Sarah provided a different feel with her business that the city had never seen before. With decor that was inspired by her time in NYC, the vibe in her shop represented an atmosphere that community residents enjoyed.

“At the end of the day, make sure you are happy with your decisions,” said Leslie. “You have to live with the business every day. Listen to your stakeholders (employees, customers, mentors), but make sure you remember to listen to yourself and keep your happiness in mind.”



lesliecoffee.co



930 W Douglas
Suite A
Wichita, KS 67203



(316) 516-3405
sarah@lesliecoffee.com



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The Kansas SBDC at Wichita State University serves the following counties: Barber, Harper, Harvey, Kingman, McPherson, Pratt, Reno, Rice, Sedgwick, Stafford, and Sumner. You can contact the team at ksbdc@wichita.edu, or call (316) 978-3193.
Kansas SBDC Advisors: Frank Choriego