

Hello, My Name is Shylo Bourdeau. I own and operate Greener Cleaning service and Wild North Farm with my life partner, Trevor Barry. We live off the grid in Lowell, VT. with our five children, all boys and all home-schooled. My story is a long one to tell but I am going to keep it very short and to the point. I have lived in Vermont my entire life. I have been working since I was 11 years old, I started paying in taxes when I was 14 years old and I am now 32. I started my first business, Greener Cleaning, with my life partner back in 2007. While the cleaning business has been successful our true passion has always been farming. In 2012 we were able to purchase our own farm/homestead thanks to our hard work and the success of our cleaning business and so began our farm business. Fast forward to late 2017 when our family experienced a series of unfortunate events that completely changed our lives. We had four children then and I was also pregnant with our fifth and suffering from chronic pain and SPD. We first suffered from a very unexpected financial crisis followed by continuous vehicle trouble. In the spring of 2018 our newborn was diagnosed with a congenital heart defect and later that fall our 8 year old was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes. Our daily routine changed a lot to make

adjustments for our children's care. We still kept both businesses going through this but had to scale things back to accommodate our children's special needs. I had to fight the entire end of my pregnancy and through both diagnoses/hospitalizations with the state to receive much needed help to keep my family fed and housed. Economic services was not supportive of our businesses that we worked so hard to build and that had always supported our family before our financial and health crisis. This was when we found Amy through NECKA micro business program and I will be forever thankful for all her support and help. With Amy's knowledge and dedication to help true micro businesses succeed we were able to feel some relief and finally get the help to rebuild our businesses and become self sufficient once again. I have worked one on one with Amy developing a business plan and cash flow analysis for both my farm and cleaning service. She was very professional, knowledgeable and dedicated to helping me achieve my goals. I was able not only comply with my set goals through the states reach up program but also was able to take advantage of a grant program through VOCREHAB to expand my farm business and increase cash flow. If I did not get this help I might not even have been able to continue my farm business through the winter. Instead I have been able to continue to

grow my farm business through the winter and have a much needed source of food and income for my family. I participated in several other workshops through NECKAs micro business that helped me connect with other small businesses and allowed for much needed networking and support. The workshops have a drawing where we get the chance to win money for our business and I did win during one of the workshops. We are now preparing a full launch of the farm business this spring. I recently took a training with Amy on marketing and how to create an effective card rack for my business. With this training and the money I won from the workshop I will be able to develop a very solid marketing tool for my farm business. Its a very exciting opportunity because it will increase my cash flow giving my business the ability to succeed. Without the MBDP I would not have been able to afford these services. I am still very much in need of these services right now with my farm business being in that in between stage from new business to grown and expanded. I am working on a more in depth business plan for my farm in hopes to obtain funding for the expansion. Right now I am working on a very tight budget and can not afford the much needed services that NECKAs micro business and Amy provide. My plans were to take advantage of these services as much as possible while

launching my farm business expansion. Our goal is to be able to provide for our family while supplying our local communities with a healthy source of food and herbal remedies. Amy and these programs are helping us reach this goal. We have thought several times about leaving Vermont because its so expensive and a few bad events have caused us years of struggling and fighting to get by. I know that the state seems very concerned about the aging population and is even paying young people to come make there home here, but what about those young people who are already here?? We are a family of seven living in very rural Vermont and trying to make a living here that also helps bring growth to our communties. Why would the state be cutting out programs that help hold on to these families and entrepreneurs only to then have the idea to pay people to come here? The answer is that its a bad idea financially and morally to be cutting any funding that helps our families and small businesses. I appreciate being heard and sincerely hope that those making decisions will do so wisely and fully informed on the impacts their decisions will be making on the heart of Vermont, our families and small businesses.