



## Bree's Story

Bree Breckel is the “B” in B&E’s Trees. The “E” is her partner, in business and in life, Eric.

Bree and Eric are tree farmers. They own land just outside of the Village of Newry in Monroe County. That land is home to lots and lots of maple trees, 2,400 of which B and E tap. The sap those trees produce gets boiled down to make syrup.

Inspired by farmers in their families, the couple was drawn to the idea of a farm; however, lenders aren’t quick to fund them. Eventually, Bree had luck with the county farm service agency. With that money and a lot of help from family and friends, Bree and Eric were able to get bulk production off of the ground.

With profits barely covering expenses, Bree started exploring niche markets. A chance encounter with folks from a craft beer company that was experimenting with bourbon barrels led B and E to their market segment: bourbon barrel aged maple syrup. Shortly after that, Bree enrolled in an entrepreneurial program offered by Couleecap that receives United Way funding, hoping it would help her market B&E’s Trees’ new and improved product.

**“Sometimes you have to take the leap. When I did, family, friends, and Couleecap were there.”**

**-Bree Breckel**

According to Bree, the nine-week course helped organize the “wildly flying ideas” she had in her head into a sound business plan. She found value in the course, which brought together business owners, big and small, from all industries and walks of life. While Bree says program staff “didn’t do any of the work for you,” they still “gave you all of the tools to be successful.”

And what a success it is! Bree has been farming full time for about a year, and B&E’s Bourbon Barrel Aged Maple Syrup is available for purchase or consumption at nearly 30 stores and restaurants in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Illinois.

The couple still faces challenges – a long winter can cause devastating delays in sap flow, and Eric’s needing to maintain his old nine-to-five in Milwaukee keep them three hours apart – but Bree is incredibly grateful for everything they have thanks to the course. Bree’s five-year plan for her farm out in the woods includes hot water, internet, and Eric... what more could a successful businesswoman ask for?

Bree’s story is one of hard work. You can change the story for community members like Bree with a gift to United Way.

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