Arthur Deibler Says the Real Shortage in Small Towns Isn't Money, It's People

The Hegins entrepreneur says finding and keeping staff is a harder problem for small-town businesses than covering the bills.

Hershey, Pennsylvania Nov 9, 2026 (Issuewire.com) - Arthur Deibler owns Prima Pizzeria and Lucky Horse Tavern in Valley View, Pennsylvania, and Bullpen Fitness & Recreation. Running three businesses in a small region, he says the hardest problem isn't cash flow. It's finding enough people to keep the doors open on a Friday night.

"Everyone assumes the tough part is money," Deibler says. "The tough part is a 17-year-old who can only work weekends, and a cook who just took a job closer to home. You plan your whole week around who's actually available."

He says this problem gets less attention than it deserves, because it's not as easy to measure as a rent increase or a utility bill. A business can survive a slow month. It struggles when there's nobody to open the kitchen.

Why a Small Town Feels It First

In a bigger city, a restaurant or gym has a deep pool of workers to pull from. In a town the size of Valley View or Hegins, that pool is small and it doesn't refill quickly. Deibler says young people often leave for nearby cities once they finish school, and the ones who stay are already working somewhere else.

"You're not competing with the restaurant down the street," Deibler says. "You're competing with every other business in three towns for the same twenty people."

That shortage hits differently depending on the business. A tavern can run short-staffed for a night and survive. A fitness facility that relies on someone being at the front desk to open safely can't.

What He Looks for Instead of Experience

Deibler says he stopped expecting to hire someone with a résumé that matches the job. Instead, he looks for people who show up on time and want to learn.

"I'd rather train someone who's reliable than hire someone with ten years of experience who calls off every other weekend," he says. "In a small town, reliability is the skill."

He also says the businesses that last tend to be the ones willing to work around people's real lives: a second job, school, a kid at home. Rigid schedules don't survive long in a labor pool this small.

The Part That Doesn't Show up on a Balance Sheet

Deibler says the staffing problem rarely gets discussed the way rent or ingredient costs do, because it's harder to put a number on it. A missed shift doesn't show up as a line item. It shows up as a closed sign, a shorter menu, or a manager covering three roles at once.

He says owners in small towns talk about this among themselves more than they talk about it publicly.

"You hear it at the counter, not at a meeting," he says. "Someone says, 'I can't find anybody,' and everybody nods."

Growing up around football before studying at Lebanon Valley College, Deibler says the lesson that stuck with him wasn't about talent. It was about who showed up to practice every day, even when it wasn't convenient. He says that's the quality he looks for now, whether he's hiring for a kitchen or a front desk.

Why He Still Thinks It's Worth It

Deibler doesn't frame the problem as something that needs a fix handed down from outside. He says it's just the reality of operating where he operates, and the owners who stay in business are the ones who adjust to it rather than waiting for it to change.

"You work with what the town gives you," he says. "That's true of customers, and it's true of the people who work for you."

He says the businesses that figure out how to build a small, steady staff, even a handful of people who stick around for years, end up stronger for it than businesses that try to outcompete bigger towns on pay alone.

To read more, visit the website here.

About Arthur Deibler

Arthur Deibler is the Founder and CEO of ventures based in and around Hegins, Pennsylvania, including Prima Pizzeria and Lucky Horse Tavern in Valley View and Bullpen Fitness & Recreation. A 2013 graduate of Lebanon Valley College, he is known for building businesses that stay close to the communities they serve.

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