

2009 Emerging Business of the Year



Tallgrass Brewing Company

Owner	Jeff Gill
Nature of Business	Microbrewery
City	Manhattan
County	Pottawatomie
Phone	785 - 537 -1131
Web Site	www.tallgrassbeer.com
Business Structure	C-Corp
Business Began	2007
Employees	5 full-time and 5 part-time
KSBDC Consultant	Rick LeJuerne and Les Streit

“The Washburn KSBDC was extremely helpful because the consultants at the SBDC provided the resources and feedback to build my plans from an idea to a completed business plan. From the seminars to the later reviews of my business plan, the KSBDC has been a very valuable resource and an important factor in our success.”

Jeff Gill, Owner



Jeff Gill turned a home brewing passion into a successful brewing company. He is pictured here with his wife Tricia and their children.

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Development Center**

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The idea for Tallgrass Brewing Co. was born in early 2006 when Jeff's wife Tricia asked him what he would do with his life if he could do anything. Without hesitation, he explained how he would do what he loved and open his own microbrewery. "At that time I had a good job that I was successful at, but I never felt like it was something I wanted to do for the next 30 years," Jeff explained.

Jeff was already an award winning home-brewer, but didn't know exactly what to do next. Jeff spent the next year researching the craft beer industry and networking with vendors and potential customers. During this time, Jeff attended small business seminars provided by the Washburn KSBDC and also worked one-on-one with KSBDC consultants writing the business plan.

Secret to Success

“Don't rush into anything. Plan for the plan. I was so glad that I took my time to do it right.”

– Jeff Gill, Owner

After months of careful planning, in April of 2007, Jeff quit his job and signed a lease on a small warehouse in Manhattan, KS. Tallgrass Brewing Co. officially started production in August of that year producing 30 barrels a month of his signature beer, Tallgrass Ale, to bars and restaurants in the Manhattan and Topeka area. Challenges early on included finding the right distribution partners and numerous other variables that can affect the manufacturing process.

The hard work is paying off however. Today, Tallgrass produces 370 barrels a month of the original Ale, a Belgium style Wheat, an India Pale Ale, and a traditional German Lager, and seasonal beers delivered in kegs and bottles to over 350 restaurants and liquor stores all over Kansas and in parts of Nebraska. In July of 2009, Tallgrass Brewery won four medals, including two gold, and was honored as eighth overall at the prestigious United States Open Beer Championships.

Jeff has successfully turned a passionate hobby into his life's calling. "I just wanted control over my own destiny," Jeff explained. "I didn't want a limit on my future; I wanted to be the one making the decisions on how far I could go." Unlike so many of us who desire the same, Jeff took action to make it happen. "To this date, Jeff's business plan is one of the best plans I have ever read. It was thoroughly researched and well written. Jeff knew what he was doing and made it happen," summarized Rick LeJuerne, Regional Director of the Washburn KSBDC.