

Scott Andersen – Kansas Earth and Sky Candle

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

The aroma of new-mown hay. The smell of baking bread. The sweet scent of lavender. These fragrances can connect with our senses in compelling ways. Today we'll learn about a remarkable Kansas company which is infusing these fragrances into their soy-based candles and connecting with customers nation-wide. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Scott and Jennie Andersen are the founders and co-owners of the Kansas Earth and Sky Candle Company. Jennie grew up at Ellinwood and went to KU where she met and married Scott. Due to his father's business career, Scott and his family had lived in several cities around the nation before coming to Kansas City. "I was a kid from the suburbs," Scott said.

Scott earned a graphic design degree at KU and went to work for a company in the Kansas City area. He also did design work on the side through his own business, Forcefield Design.

Then Jennie's parents asked if they would consider moving to Ellinwood to live in their large farmhouse. Ultimately, Scott and Jennie made the move. They now have two children, ages seven and five.

Scott continued his design business from there. The company offers design services for websites, branding and logos, marketing, album art, merchandise and clothing. His company's website is www.forcefielddesign.com.

"One day my wife showed me a cool candle online, and asked what I thought about getting it," Scott said. "I said, 'I think I could make that.'" He did some research, got some equipment and made her a candle. It was fun, so he made candles for other family members for Christmas. The candles were so well received that this became a business. "We work as a team," Scott said of he and Jennie.

They weren't sure what to name their business, but knew they wanted to use natural fragrances that related to their life in Kansas. "We wanted to highlight our small town life," Scott said. The business name they chose is Kansas Earth and Sky Candle Company.

"I had lived in Connecticut just before moving to Kansas City, and my buddies were giving me grief about coming to Kansas," Scott said. "Then I got here, and it's much bigger. The Flint Hills are awesome, and it's amazing to me how epic western Kansas is," he said.

The Andersens used natural soy oil as a base for their hand-poured candles and added various fragrances. The business began to grow.

"We were pouring candles in our bedroom and it got too crowded with kids and cats," Scott said. He and Jennie rented an old, historic building on Main Street in downtown Ellinwood. They later purchased and renovated this building which was known as the Cyclone Building.

Today, the Kansas Earth and Sky Candle Company produces natural soy candles, soy wax melts, room spray, and lip balm. "A lot of candle companies use paraffin which is made from petroleum," Scott said. "Our candles are made

from soybeans which grow in Kansas, and they burn twice as long,” he said. “We want to be sustainable so we recycle boxes and use natural products wherever we can,” he said.

The company offers candles with home-grown fragrances such as Greener Pastures, Sunwashed Apricot, Prairie Wildflower, Sweet Clover and Alfalfa, Lavender Honey, Fresh Baked, Country Clothesline and more. The candles are poured in the back of the building where the Andersens also host candle-making classes. The front of the building is a studio gallery which features local artists. Products are sold online as well.

Kansas Earth and Sky products have gone all over North America and overseas. One wholesale account is in New Hampshire. That’s impressive for a business in a rural community such as Ellinwood, population 1,969 people. Now, that’s rural.

“We’d love to bring more people to Ellinwood,” Scott said. “It has historic underground tunnels, lots of antique stories, and good restaurants,” he said.

For more information, go to www.kansasearthandskycandle.com.

Now we can enjoy the scent of new-mown hay or baking bread anytime we want, just by lighting a candle. We salute Scott and Jennie Andersen for their creative entrepreneurship. Their ideas make a lot of scents.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.