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*For Immediate Release*

**The White Heron Tea & Gifts Awarded \$10,000 Backing Small Business Enhancement Grant Through American Express and Main Street America**

**New Port Richey, Florida** – On Tuesday, June 25, American Express and Main Street America announced the grant recipients for the [Backing Small Businesses Grant Program](#).

They announced the 500 small business owners who have been awarded \$10,000 through the [Backing Small Businesses grant program](#). The program's 2024 grant recipients represent U.S. small businesses across all 50 states, plus D.C. and Puerto Rico. Later this year, grantees will have the opportunity to apply for an additional \$30,000 enhancement grant that will be awarded to 25 small businesses.

The White Heron Tea & Gifts, located in historic downtown New Port Richey, Florida was one of 500 businesses chosen to receive this grant.

"We are very excited to have been chosen to receive this grant from American Express and Main Street America," stated Kelly Hackman, owner of The White Heron Tea & Gifts. "It's no secret that small businesses have had a hard time over the past few years, and that businesses haven't survived. Those of us that did have had to put projects aside and become creative with how we manage our businesses. For us, this grant will allow us to do some behind the scenes projects in our kitchen and tearoom, as well as provide for some marketing, staff training, and inventory for our gift shop. These are all things that we have wanted to do for some time and now we can."

The White Heron Tea & Gifts has been a staple of the historic downtown New Port Richey community since opening in January 2016. Over the past eight and a half years, The White Heron has worked to drive local, regional, and national tourism to the community, and has been the recipient of many "Best of Awards." Two of their teas have received international recognition including: Luscious Loquat green tea receiving the 2019 Global Tea Championship Silver Medal, and Lavender Vanilla White Tea receiving the "Highly Commended" tea recognition at the 2023 Leafies Competition hosted by International Tea Academy, England. The White Heron Tea and Gifts, and their tea brand, Driftwood Tea

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## Grant Award

Company, was the only US based tea company to receive any recognition in 2023.

Since launching in 2021, Backing Small Businesses has provided over \$9 million in grants to 1,180 small business owners nationwide. American Express and Main Street America initially created the grant program to help economically vulnerable small business owners recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and grow their businesses.

This program is part of American Express' "[Backing Small](#)" initiative to provide financial support and resources to small business owners experiencing economic hardships. Other Backing Small grant programs include [Backing Historic Small Restaurants](#) and [Backing International Small Restaurants](#). Backing Small is an extension of American Express' longstanding commitment to support [small independent businesses globally, including through its](#) Shop Small movement and Small Business Saturday campaign, celebrating its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year.

Meet the most recent Backing Small Businesses Enhancement Grant Recipients: <https://mainstreet.org/the-latest/news/500-small-business-owners-receive-10-000-grants-through-backing-small-businesses-program>

To learn more about the Backing Small Businesses grant program and learn about the grantees, [click here](#).

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## **About Kelly Hackman**

Kelly Hackman, owner of The White Heron Tea & Gifts in New Port Richey, Florida, is a WTA Certified Tea Sommelier, Tea Specialist, and Etiquette Consultant. Hackman has created a unique tea escape at her tearoom, which has assisted in transforming her town's historic landscape and assists in drawing guests to the area from throughout the Southeastern United States. She and her husband also own Cotee River Brewing Company, Coastline Salt Room, and Crafty Grain Products, as well as the brands Driftwood Tea Company and Driftwood Botanicals.