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## Loan Helps College Student Build Business on Barrel-Racing Bling

By *Finance New Mexico*

Lyndseyanne Wilken started making custom tack sets to help pay her way through college. Now her small business, Run as One Tack and Equine, is doing so well that she's starting to think her degree in agricultural sciences will be part of a fallback plan rather than her dominant career path.

The 22-year-old lives in the Doña Ana County community of Salem and attends New Mexico State University in Las Cruces. She acquired the skills to create equine finery for rodeo horses in 4-H leatherwork classes and has refined them over more than a decade.



“My target audience is (made up of) barrel racers,” she said. “Barrel racers are looking for an edge to set them apart. Loud colors and different patterns are in.”

And that's what customers will see on Wilken's Facebook page: handmade bridles, halters, breast collars, browbands, reins and stirrups with beads, fringe and eye-catching colors or patterns.

### Made to Order

Wilken launched her business in March after years of making stylish accessories for her friends and associates in the barrel-riding circuit.

She obtained a \$5,000 loan from Accion to cover the costs of a leather sewing machine and other essential startup materials. Wilken offered her horse trailer as collateral.

“If I hadn't gotten the loan, I wouldn't be here,” she said. “It's paying itself off quite nicely.”

A loan officer at an area bank referred Wilken to Accion, thinking the nonprofit lender would be a good fit for her small-scale, home-based venture. Even if the bank had been able to finance a startup like Run as One, it would have had to classify her loan as a machine loan, Wilken said, and the minimum for that loan type is \$10,000.

“I didn’t know if my ideas were good enough,” she said about approaching Accion. “They were amazing. They said, ‘You can do this.’”

And Accion was right: Wilken is doing so well that she and her fiancé/business partner are thinking about branching out and offering equine physical therapy services that aren’t available where they live.

“We’re hoping the business can build out without the need to refinance it,” Wilken said. “Now we’re just trying to prove we can do this.”

But if the couple needs some capital support, they plan to ask Accion first.

### Where the Accion is

Since it began in 1994, Accion has helped thousands of New Mexican businesses like Run as One in more than 181 communities across the state.

The organization exists to help entrepreneurs get their hands on the tools they need to start, run or expand their businesses. One obvious resource is money — Accion can lend as little as \$1,000 and as much as \$1 million — but the support doesn’t end there.

As part of its mission to empower people to be positive agents of change in their communities, the organization helps business owners with credit reporting, technical assistance, business counseling and financial literacy training.

For more information about Accion New Mexico, or to apply for a loan, visit [www.accionnews.org/newmexico](http://www.accionnews.org/newmexico) or call 1-800-508-7624. To reach Run as One Tack and Equine, [visit https://www.facebook.com/runasonetack/](https://www.facebook.com/runasonetack/).

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