

STRETCHING DOLLARS AND BUILDING COMMUNITY

The Story Behind Tiny Town Bent and Dent

In the unincorporated town of North Bend, where the nearest grocery store is miles away and the closest gas station sits 10 minutes down the road, residents have often had to travel far for even the simplest necessities. Tucked within this quiet community is a place where locals can find everyday staples without the long drive and convenience store prices: Tiny Town Bent and Dent, owned and operated by mother-daughter duo Laurie Kamrowski and Sadie Anderson.

A Dream Rooted in Thriftiness

For years, Laurie and Sadie shared a love for “bent and dent” stores, those treasure-hunt style shops that offer discounted groceries with minor packaging flaws, overstocks, or items just past their “best by” date. Sadie often remarked that Tiny Town would be the perfect spot for one, especially since both she and Laurie were stay-at-home moms who prided themselves on being thrifty and resourceful.

Sadie, who has an autistic daughter, was also drawn to the idea because it offered a flexible schedule. “I can take off when I need to, such as when the school calls,” she says. “It fits with our lives.”

But more than that, they knew their community needed this. Beyond a single gas station, there simply wasn’t a place to pick up quick essentials. They wanted to change that.

Opening the Doors

Tiny Town Bent and Dent officially opened in August 2023, and word quickly spread far beyond North Bend thanks to Facebook posts and customer recommendations. Before long, shoppers from neighboring towns were making the trip to see what was new on the shelves, especially the pizzas, which tend to sell out as fast as they arrive.



From pantry staples, to snacks and household products, you can find a little bit of everything at the Tiny Town Bent and Dent, located in North Bend, Wis.



Sadie (left) and Laurie (right) welcome shoppers to Tiny Town Bent and Dent, a family-run store established to support the North Bend and surrounding communities.

The store’s inventory comes through a grocery broker, which means each shipment is a surprise. “The semi-load arrives about every two months from South Carolina and often contains Food Lion brand products. Items range from dented boxes and cans to overstocks and products newly past their “best by” date,” Laurie explains. “We don’t have much control over what arrives,” she continues.

Laurie and Sadie say the most common misconception is the “best by” or “use by” dates. These dates are a manufacturing standardization for consumers to measure quality, not safety. The food does not automatically become unsafe beyond the date; typically, it may just begin to lose freshness or flavor. “It is a personal preference, but food is often perfectly safe months beyond the printed date,” says Laurie. “We try our best to screen products, and many items aren’t expired at all.”

“I eat foods beyond the date all the time,” Sadie says. “The one thing we found usually doesn’t last beyond the date are hard taco shells,” she adds.

A Surprising Variety

Many first-time customers walk in expecting a small selection, only to be shocked at the variety Tiny Town Bent and Dent offers. Snacks and candy are consistently the best sellers, especially high-end brands that are significantly cheaper than in the grocery store. Cereal is also a popular commodity. Some of the strangest items to arrive? Pickled guava, cactus leaves, and two full pallets of fruit cake. “Unfortunately, some things just have to be thrown or given

away," Sadie admits with a laugh.

Still, Laurie and Sadie work hard to keep the store well-rounded. If a shipment doesn't include staples like ketchup, they try to outsource it. They often supplement the stock with pizzas, brand-name cookies, granola bars, milk, eggs, sour cream, and bread. They've even received pots, pans, utensils, and toys, and sell these along with other rummage-style items. "We try to keep the price low on these items to pass the deal on to others," Sadie says.

"It's a lot more work than we originally anticipated," Laurie says. With no storage space in the shop, overflow items are off-site. When the store isn't open, Laurie and Sadie spend their days loading and unloading boxes, sorting products, shopping for supplemental items, and stocking shelves. But they do it with a smile and with help from family members who pitch in behind the scenes.

"The biggest hurdle is keeping the variety," Sadie says. "But that's also one of the biggest compliments we get."

A Place Where Everyone Knows Your Name

Over time, Tiny Town Bent and Dent has become more than a store: it's become part of the rhythm of the community. "Every Wednesday our regulars are in," Laurie shares. "We know almost every customer who comes in now, and they're always looking for what's new. It's like a family. When you don't see a regular, you start to worry."

Often people stop in intending to buy just one item for supper and end up leaving with a full bag of bargains. For Laurie and Sadie, that's one of the most rewarding parts. "It's gratifying to see people are able to stretch their dollar here," Sadie says. "We're helping them cut their grocery costs."

Looking Ahead

While Tiny Town already offers an impressive mix of staple pantry items, dry goods, snacks, beverages, and



Occasionally, you'll find rummage-sale type items outside the store, which appeals to many shoppers.



Snacks and candy are highly sought after items at Tiny Town Bent and Dent.

household items, Laurie and Sadie hope to expand their frozen options in the future. They currently sell some frozen items like hamburger, pork chops, brats, and pizzas, but they'd love to offer more.

"One perk of running the store," Sadie jokes, "is having first dibs on the bargains, which helps us stretch our own grocery budget, too."

A Family Business at Heart

Above all, Laurie and Sadie want customers to know two things: Laurie encourages everyone to keep an open mind about product dates and "best by" labels.

And Sadie sums it up beautifully: "We are truly a family business. We're part of this community and we're here to support it."

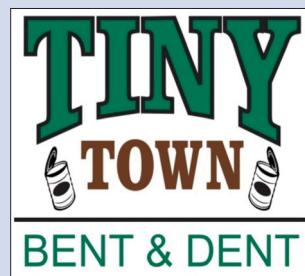
With dedication, resourcefulness, and a commitment to serving their neighbors, Laurie and Sadie have turned Tiny Town Bent and Dent into a local lifeline, and a place where community and affordability meet in the heart of North Bend.

—Brandi Shramek, Member Relations Supervisor

Tiny Town Bent and Dent
W16135 State Highway 54
Melrose, WI 54642

Hours:

Wednesday through Friday:
9 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Saturday: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.



Directions:

From Melrose: Head south out of town and turn right onto Hwy 54.

Continue on Hwy 54 for about 7 miles until you reach the **village of North Bend**.

As you near the end of town, **Tiny Town will be on your left.**

2026 ENERGY EFFICIENCY REBATES

Jackson Electric offers rebates to members who purchase qualified energy efficient items.

- Qualified items must be purchased, installed, and operating (generating kWhs) on Jackson Electric's service lines in 2026.
- Active memberships only.
- Submit to our office your **completed and signed rebate application within 60 days** following your invoice date with the Energy Star label (if applicable) and paid receipt.
- Contact our office for an application form. Application forms can also be completed and submitted through our website at www.jackelec.com.
- Your rebate application may be rejected if all required documentation is not completed and received within 60 days of the invoice date.**

Rebate amounts less than \$500 will be issued a credit on the member's billing statement. More than that amount, a check will be issued to the member on record.

Jackson Electric does not participate in the statewide Focus on Energy efficiency incentive program. It is felt that the money the co-op receives from its members to distribute for rebates and incentives should stay locally and within Jackson Electric's service territory. The \$1.40 line item on your billing statement is a state-mandated charge where \$0.70 goes to low-income energy assistance programs and \$0.70 to energy efficiency programs.

* Incentives in red denote a new offering in 2026

HVAC	
Air Source Heat Pump and Mini Split*	\$600/ton
Geothermal Heat Pump*	\$600/ton
ECM Blower w/New Furnace*	\$35/unit
Tune-up for Heat Pump or Central AC Units — rebate for tune-up only, not repairs – one per location, every other year	Up to \$75, no more than cost of the tune-up
Smart Thermostat <ul style="list-style-type: none"> May be any brand Not required to participate in a load management program Must be Wi-Fi enabled Must be Energy Star certified 	Up to \$100, no more than the cost of equipment

**Must be AHRI certified and meet efficiency standards on rebate form.*

RESIDENTIAL ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGERS	
Regular EV Charging Station* (Supply a steady charge to the battery)	Up to \$500
Smart EV Charging Station* (Connect to the internet and allow remote scheduling, energy use tracking, and can adjust charging speeds.)	Up to \$1,000
*Member is required to enroll in Time-of-Use billing (TOU) to qualify for EV rebate. Not to exceed cost of equipment.	

ENERGY STAR APPLIANCES	
Clothes Washer	\$150
Clothes Dryer (must be electric)	\$150
Dishwasher	\$150
Dehumidifier	\$ 50
Inductive Range (requires specific cookware)	\$150
Freezer	\$150
Refrigerator	\$150
All-in-One Washer/Dryer Combo <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One unit, not the same as stackable Must have heat pump technology for drying 	\$300

AGRICULTURAL, COMMERCIAL, AND INDUSTRIAL EQUIPMENT	
Exhaust Fan	\$1/inch
Circulation Fan	\$1/inch
Dairy Plate Cooler/Well Water Pre-Cooler	\$500/unit
Dairy Refrigeration Heat Recovery, etc.	\$300/unit
Low/Zero Energy Livestock Waterer	\$50/unit
Scroll Refrigerator Compressor	\$30/HP
VFD	\$30/HP

ENERGY AUDITS	
Audit Recommended Improvements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incentives are available for energy efficiency improvements completed to an existing home or farm. Energy efficiency improvements must be recommendations from an audit arranged by Jackson Electric Cooperative or a cooperative approved partner. Rebate not to exceed the cost of energy efficiency improvements up to \$500. For specific details on this program, go to www.jackelec.com or contact our office. 	Up to \$500
Cost of Energy Audit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit recommended improvements are required to receive the energy audit rebate. Refer to rebate form for full details. 	50% of audit cost, up to \$200

WATER HEATERS	
Residential 100+ Gallon*	\$500
Residential 75-99 Gallon*	\$400
Heat Pump Water Heater	\$700
Smart Water Heater Controller <ul style="list-style-type: none"> May be any brand Billing account must be enrolled in Time-of-Use billing to receive rebate 	Up to \$100, not to exceed cost of equipment

**Load management receiver must be installed and operating, and energy efficiency standards must be met to receive rebate.*

WIRED THROUGH TIME

As we begin a new year, we're excited to launch Wired Through Time, a monthly look back at the stories, people, and places that shaped our cooperative's early years. We dug into original issues of the magazine, some dating back to the early 1950s, to reconnect with the moments that helped build the communities we serve today.

Our first stop takes us back to January 1952, when the magazine highlighted the South Alma Cheese Factory, established in 1931 just a few miles south of Alma Center. That month's story focused on the factory's mastery of Swiss cheese, a craft they perfected with the help of a retired cheesemaker who had honed his skills in Switzerland, Germany, and across the United States before sharing his expertise with the Ludeman's. Although the factory has since closed, the building still stands as a quiet reminder of its place in local history.

Join us each month as we continue flipping through the pages of the past, rediscovering the people and places that helped shape the cooperative and the communities we proudly serve today.



The two sons leaning over the kettle here are, Herbert, left, and Harold, slipping the large cloth around the cheese.



The mass of cheese is raised from the tank by a hoist.



Harold in the cold room is placing a 180-pound wheel on the shelf.



Francis Ludeman inspects the cheese in the brine tank.

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