

# The Times-Tribune

## Pandemic motivates people to switch jobs, start businesses

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Like millions of people throughout the U.S., the pandemic motivated Chae Rucker to switch careers and start her own business.

Rucker formerly lived in Philadelphia, where she owned a hookah bar and worked as a mobile bartender at events such as birthday parties and wedding receptions.

When the pandemic hit, events were canceled and she was forced to shut down her bar, leading her to pursue a different career.

The married mother of five, who also is a certified phlebotomist instructor, moved to Scranton where she started the business Compassionate Care Phlebotomy & Medical LLC at 413 S. Washington Ave.

Rucker offers virtual or in-person phlebotomy training as well as testing for COVID-19, pregnancy, HIV and sexually transmitted diseases.

“Because of the pandemic and because I had some experience in the medical field, I thought it would have been beneficial for me to get into the medical field where there was a need,” Rucker said.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony and celebration was held at her new Scranton business last week.

It's a trend seen throughout the country. The COVID-19 pandemic led to growth in entrepreneurial activity.

Americans filed paperwork to start 4.3 million businesses last year, according to data from the Census Bureau, a 24% increase from the year before and the most in the last decade.

The pandemic also led to a growth in people switching careers and quitting jobs, especially in fields like the food and hospitality industries.

Mountain Top resident Kim Carpenter said she quit her job as clinical director and lead physical therapist for a health care corporation in the area and subsequently opened her own physical therapy business during the height of the pandemic.

Her business, Specialty Physical Therapy, opened in the Midway Shopping Center in Wyoming in June of 2020.

She worked with Wilkes University Small Business Development Center to start her business. The pandemic slowed things down and delayed construction but she said she stuck to the original business plan.

Carpenter said she decided to quit her job and start her own business because she found that "corporations were valuing money over patients and the staff wasn't getting treated well."

"Nobody was giving back to the community anymore and they weren't making the education of our upcoming generation of students a priority," she said.

Her goals in starting her own business included ensuring that the staff was treated well, that students were mentored and that they would give back to the community.

Her business now has four full-time employees and a part-time employee. She said they put an emphasis on giving back to the community, which has been especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In August, Americans quit their jobs at a record pace. According to the U.S. Labor Department, about 4.3 million Americans quit their jobs in August, the highest on records dating back to December 2000.

And a [Digital.com](https://www.digital.com) survey of U.S. workers found a trend of people quitting their jobs called “The Great Resignation” is far from over. In fact, one in seven workers will quit their jobs this fall and 15% of the workforce plans to quit before the new year.

According to the survey, better pay and benefits are the primary motivator among those quitting.

Computer and information technology, business and finance, health care, and food and hospitality industries will see the most employee turnover.

About 70% of workers quitting from the computer and information technology industries are starting their own businesses.

Men plan to quit at twice the rate of women. About 19% of those not planning to leave their job will do so if their employer requires them to get the vaccine, the survey said.

Teri Ooms, executive director of the Institute of Public Policy and Economic Development at Wilkes University, said she knows people who have retired early because of COVID, switched careers because they had time to think about what they really wanted, went back to school for training to upskill or learn new skills or quit local jobs because they found jobs that committed to remote work.

Ooms said COVID provided everyone an opportunity to reflect not only about their own mortality with respect to the unknowns of the virus, but to bring to the forefront “what really matters.”

“People are making more thoughtful decisions not just about career changes, but also what is important in your current job,” she said. “I have heard some people indicate they are more particular about after hours events and even some meetings. If they cannot identify a direct benefit, they aren’t doing it anymore.”

Ooms called remote work a “win” for employees and employers. Not all employers that could support a remote workforce embrace it, however, she said. This could be problematic for these employers as remote work is now deemed a big perk and benefit, she said.

While remote work requires everyone to work differently to keep the engagement, collaboration and relationships, Ooms said remote work “has exceeded many employers’ expectations while reducing costs.”