

# 2018 ANNUAL REPORT

**nbdc**

NEBRASKA BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER



## DEAR FRIENDS OF NBDC

The Nebraska Business Development Center (NBDC) is honored to have provided vital business development services across Nebraska in 2018. Our impact is illustrated by the success stories in this annual report. While the stories report on only 14 of the more than 2,293 clients we served in the past year, they exemplify the breadth of our services and our clients' successes.

Nebraska's small businesses are the backbone of successful communities. Their owners invest time and treasure building businesses and providing Nebraskans with jobs—supporting not only families and communities, but also our nation. In 2018, NBDC assisted 2,293 Nebraska business clients, who created or saved 965 jobs, invested \$39,330,727 in their business operations and increased their sales by \$20,874,381. In 2018, the total economic impact to Nebraska of this collaborative effort was \$438.9 million.

Because our services are confidential, we are very grateful for the businesses in this publication that allowed us to tell their stories and applaud their successes. Without these testimonials, NBDC would indeed be a well-kept secret. Our clients place their trust, not only in the quality of our service, but also in the integrity of our respect for their information.

NBDC focuses on helping employer-based Nebraska business owners and entrepreneurs to grow and create jobs. We are proud of our highly qualified professionals, exceptional services and our statewide delivery. Services include: business plan preparation; financial projections; market research; loan packaging, including SBA guaranteed loans; helping businesses qualify for and submit proposals for government contracts; export assistance; commercialization of innovative products; exit and transition planning, including business valuation; and, helping businesses become more successful and sustainable.

NBDC services would not be possible without the support and funding from the University of Nebraska Omaha and various federal and state agencies including the U.S. Small Business Administration, the Defense Logistics Agency, the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration, and First National Bank of Omaha.

NBDC is a department of the College of Business Administration at the University of Nebraska Omaha. NBDC has offices in Omaha, Lincoln, Wayne, Norfolk, Grand Island, Kearney, North Platte, McCook, Scottsbluff and Chadron. We have partnerships with University of Nebraska Lincoln, the University of Nebraska Kearney, Wayne State College and Chadron State College, leveraging their funding to support our efforts.

The businesses highlighted in our 2018 Annual Report are representative of the entrepreneurial spirit of Nebraska, and we are honored to recognize them. NBDC is committed to supporting the growth and success of Nebraska's businesses—helping good businesses become better.

## OUR PARTNERS



Catherine Lang, JD  
State Director  
Assistant Dean



Louis Pol, PhD  
John Becker Dean  
College of Business Administration  
University of Nebraska at Omaha

**Business Plan   Loan Packaging   Market Research   Tech Commercialization   Exporting**



MARGARET AKIN



GARY DUSEK



SARA BENNETT



UMEDA ISLAMOVA



JOSH NICHOL-CADDY

**Succession Planning   Financial Projections   Business Valuation   Sustainability   Training**



CHARLIE MCPHERSON



ARETHA BOEX



ODEE INGERSOLL



LOREN KUCERA



RICK YODER

**Government Contracting   BidMatching   Subcontracting   Registering   Market Research**



VERONICA DOGA



MARY GRAFF



CHUCK BECK



TAYLOR LAW



DICK UHING



QUENTIN FARLEY

**Process Improvement   Leadership Development   Project Management   Supply Chain   Safety Leadership**



RENEE HELD



HAROLD SARGUS



BETH GIESBRECHT



KIM HARTER



LAURIE MATTHEWS  
TULLIUS



JERRY PARRIOTT



Aretha Boex and Mark Santo in Washington, D.C. during National Small Business Week. Santo was awarded SBA Small Business Person of the Year for Nebraska.

**NBDC CONSULTANT CREDENTIALS INCLUDE**

Certified Valuation Analyst (CVA)  
 Certified Technology Consultant (CTC)  
 Certified Exit Planning Advisor (CEPA)  
 Certified Business Planning Advisor and Master  
     Business Planning Advisor  
 Contracting Assistance Specialist (CAS)  
 Associate Contracting Assistance Specialist (ACAS)  
 Certified Contracting Assistance Specialist (CCAS)  
 Economic Development Finance Professional (EDFP)  
 Certified Procurement Professional (CPP)  
 Sustainable Facility Professional (IFMA SFP)  
 Society for Human Resource Management Senior  
     Certified Professional  
 Professional Engineer, registered with the State Board of  
     Engineers & Architects  
 Certified Global Business Professional (CGBP)  
 Certified Verification Counselor (CVC)  
 Certified Online Instructor (COI)  
 Project Management Professional (PMP)

## 2018 NBDC IMPACT ON NEBRASKA



**CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 1**  
Jobs—125

Sales —\$74.6 million

**CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 2**  
Jobs—336

Sales —\$42.6 million

**CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 3**  
Jobs—504

Sales —\$31.9 million



**Jobs created and saved** **965**



**Increased sales** **\$20,874,381**



**Investment by businesses** **\$39,330,727**



**Government contracts** **\$128,706,278**



**Clients Served** **2,293**



**\$438.9 MILLION**

**Total impact to  
Nebraska's economy**

Total state-wide economic impact includes direct, indirect, and induced impact as calculated using the IMPLAN economic model. Thanks to Dr. Christopher Decker, Lucas Diamond Professor and Chair, UNO College of Business Department of Economics for his IMPLAN economic model of the attributed data of NBDC.

# NEBRASKA

### BEYOND THE NUMBERS

NBDC's impact can be seen in the successes of its clients across the state. Read their stories in the following pages.

# SAFETY LEADERSHIP AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

## COLLABORATION FOCUSES ON BUSINESS SAFETY AND CONTINUITY

**T**wo organizations uniquely situated to encourage business safety and security joined forces to develop the Emergency Preparedness and Business Continuity Certificate program in 2018.

The nine-session program is a collaborative effort of the Nebraska Business Development Center (NBDC) at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, the National Safety Council, Nebraska, and the National Strategic Research Institute (NSRI) at the University of Nebraska.

Harold Sargus, manager of professional and organizational development at NBDC, and Eric Koeppe, president and CEO of the National Safety Council, Nebraska, say the two organizations first collaborated on a Safety Leadership certification class launched in 2016. “The Safety Leadership certification has gone very well, largely because of the expertise we can bring to the classroom,” Koeppe says.

After attending a National Safety Council conference that included a session on emergency preparedness and business continuity, Koeppe was impressed. “It

emphasized how important it is to have a plan, because for whatever reason, if there is a significant interruption to your business, you need to be prepared,” he says.

He and Sargus then led the development of the Emergency Preparedness and Business Continuity certification class. Designed to deliver information useful to any size business, the workshop includes presentations, interactive discussions and simulation exercises on a wide variety of possible scenarios, from natural disasters to terrorism and other workplace emergencies.

In the first eight sessions, participants learn about disaster impact analyses, hazard and risk management, public and private coordination during events, agency cooperation and communication, continuity and recovery plans, and fiscal sustainability. The final session features a capstone simulation where participants roleplay a disaster scenario and apply what they have learned to test their decision making skills.

“Everyone takes something away from this workshop, no matter their industry or the size of their business,” Koeppe says.

“A small business that hasn’t yet developed a plan gets a roadmap of sorts that they can use. A large corporation that already has a plan can go back and take a more critical look at any facets that need to be refined or updated.”

Penny Lyons, manager of drug and alcohol testing at Union Pacific and a National Safety Council, Nebraska board member, completed the first certification class. She says she gained a valuable working knowledge of disaster preparedness.

“I really got a lot out of it,” she says. “I wanted to learn something outside the normal scope of my work,



and I appreciated the various perspectives of the different instructors.”

Lyons says she has since passed on some of the information to others in risk management at Union Pacific. “I would recommend this class to anyone, even people who are not in the emergency preparedness trenches, so to speak,” she says. “When you have a better understanding of the various aspects of these plans, it creates more buy-in.”

Sargus says NBDC hopes to eventually create an online workshop series based on the Emergency Preparedness and Business Continuity certification class.

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*“The sooner a business gets up and running after a major disruption, the sooner employees will receive a paycheck. That translates into community vitality.” – Harold Sargus*

# INTENSIVE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

## COLLABORATION CONCENTRATES ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS ON KEITH COUNTY

**S**even local business owners learned how to better serve their customers and expand their markets during the Nebraska Business Development Center (NBDC) intensive business development project, held in late September in Ogallala.

In partnership with Keith County Area Development (KCAD), NBDC consultants spent five days examining the businesses in depth to produce a confidential report detailing how the owners could employ methods to help develop their businesses' full potential.

"These economic development projects are an investment we make in the businesses we serve across the state," says Catherine Lang, NBDC state director. "The final report we provide to our clients develops specific skills and delivers extremely useful information that the business owners can transform into opportunities."

Mary Wilson, KCAD executive director, says she heard many positive comments during the celebration dinner held to formally conclude the project. "The people I spoke with were pleased with the processes the NBDC consultants used and the knowledge they gained," Wilson says. "To have someone from outside take a closer look at their businesses gave them a fresh perspective."

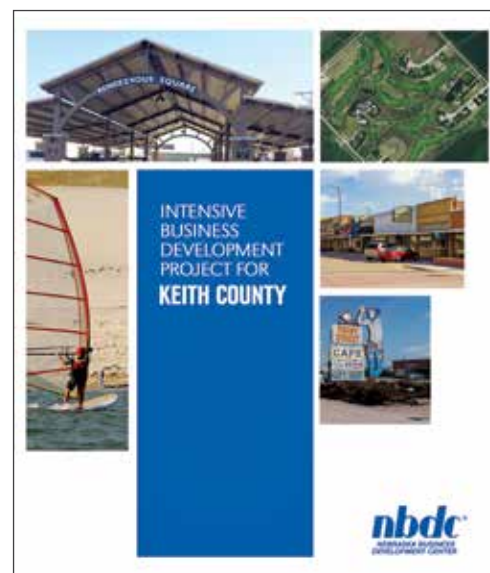
The project was funded by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) at no cost to the participating businesses from Ogallala and Paxton.



From left: Josh Nichol-Caddy, Catherine Lang, Charlie McPherson, Mary Wilson, Ingrid Battershell, Umeda Islamova, Sara Bennett, Jean Waters, Odee Ingersoll

The project began with a Sunday evening welcome dinner at which the business owners met the NBDC consultants. Monday morning, the NBDC consultants visited their assigned businesses and focused on the business model for each client. The NBDC version of the Lean Business Canvas was used to guide the development of the model.

Sessions through Wednesday included reviews of several areas, such as operations, customer service, human resource practices, markets and marketing strategies that result in increased sales, financial operations and merchandising techniques.



MaKenzi Spurgin, owner of MaKenzi's Boutique, says she and her consultant worked on improving the marketing of her business, including advertising and making changes to her website.

"I was thankful for how much advice the consultants were willing to share," she says. "We really jumped in with both feet, and I am glad I made the time to take part. It was very beneficial."

Lance Larington, who co-owns Nebraska PrintWorks with his wife, Carlene, says he thought the consultants offered a good mix of experience from which to learn. "It was helpful to get a perspective from somebody else," he says. "Some of it was reaffirmation; some of it concerned areas we could change in order to stay viable."

He says business owners may be reluctant initially to ask for advice. "It can be a humbling but valuable experience," he says. "I was surprised at the resources we got back. It was a detailed report, and I was very pleased."

The NBDC consultants who participated were Margaret Akin, Sara Bennett, Odee Ingersoll, Umeda



"I have come to value our connection with NBDC. With this project in particular, we are very happy they came out to western Nebraska. It shows NBDC values our businesses the same way we do." —Mary Wilson

Islamova, Charlie McPherson, Josh Nichol-Caddy and Jean Waters, along with retired NBDC consultant Ingrid Battershell.

McPherson, NBDC center director for west central Nebraska who worked with Wilson to organize the project, says he lauds the business owners for allowing the NBDC consultants to examine various private facets of their companies. "It can be difficult for business owners to have these types of conversations with strangers," he says. "But I think this group felt very comfortable with the consultants after just a short period of time. Ultimately, they saw the one-on-one time they got to spend with us as a genuine chance to strengthen certain areas of their businesses."

"This is a business program, but it is also a human program," Lang says. "We don't just help businesses statewide; we help people and their communities. The more we can do strategically to build this relationship, the better."



From left: MaKenzi's Boutique; Lance Larington, Nebraska PrintWorks. MaKenzi Spurgin Photography



### SUSTAINABILITY BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

is awarded to a Nebraska business that has demonstrated leadership incorporating environmental sustainability as a strategic business value that has resulted in improved business performance.

2013 – The Grey Plume

2014 – Greenhouse in the Snow

2015 – Sand Creek Post & Beam

2016 – Top Block

2017 – West Point Designs

**T**he ongoing sustainability efforts at the Tyson Foods Bacon Plant in Omaha underscore the core value of stewardship that is embraced and embedded throughout the largest food company in the United States.

“At the Omaha plant, more than 99 percent of the incoming raw material is converted to a finished marketable product,” says Nick Jarecke, plant manager. “A new waste water treatment facility, plant-wide LED lighting upgrades, routine electronics recycling, along with on-going water usage reduction initiatives, are among the many improvements aimed at making our operations more sustainable.”

Bacon product manufacturing at the Omaha plant dates to 1988, when Millard Processing Services began

“We are putting sustainability at the center of our business and finding solutions to sustainably feed the growing population,” he says. “This requires us to rethink and reimagine our role as a big food company and explore new ways to create a more sustainable food system. We intend to figure out how to create accessible, affordable and delicious food, while also making a difference in the environment, and doing the right thing for our key stakeholders.”

He says the plant’s efforts to improve sustainability, and to employ more environmentally conscious practices, are two elements of the company’s overall focus on creating an environment that emphasizes the importance of food safety, and the safety of its team members.

## SUSTAINABILITY BUSINESS OF THE YEAR TYSON FOODS OMAHA BACON PLANT

operations as a privately held company. In 2002, Tyson Foods purchased the 329,000-square-foot facility and made it part of its Prepared Foods Division.

The facility has since grown through investment in capabilities and capital expenditures of more than \$50 million. Today, approximately 900 “team members” produce more than 170 million pounds of raw and fully cooked bacon annually, making it one of the largest bacon production facilities in the world.

Tyson Foods’ Omaha operation first partnered with the Nebraska Business Development Center (NBDC) in 2012 when it began its Lean manufacturing journey by sending its first team member through the NBDC Lean Certification program. Jarecke says Lean training has taught his team members key skills in problem solving and process improvement, which in turn helps them address sustainability opportunities at the plant.

“We’re doing this in part by focusing on engagement with team members and utilizing communication ‘huddles’ to keep them informed and prepared for their day,” Jarecke says. “We emphasize safety one-on-ones to empower our team members to help provide safe and efficient processes and equipment. We also have begun quarterly town hall-style meetings to bring everyone together and share our successes, challenges and further communicate our commitment to safety and sustainability.”

He says three groups have successfully completed the NBDC Lean training. “We now have more than three dozen change agents leading and coaching daily plant improvement,” he says. “It’s a great program and partnership, and we are thankful that Nebraska has these resources to help us invest in our team members and our business success.”



Front (l to r): Amelevi Alaga, Roy Hoang, Rebecca Hoy, Ana Mass, Ah Kyar, Margaret Shimerdla, Linda Bishop. Back (r to l): Noe Garcia, Randy Hawk, Darrell Brice, Robert Cannon, Doo-Hyoung Yi, Doug Brown.  
Tim Fitzgerald Photography



### EXPORT BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

is awarded to a Nebraska business that successfully sells and delivers products or services internationally.

2013 – Elliott Equipment

2014 – Bruckman Rubber

2015 – New Grand Ocean International

2016 – International Propeller Service

2017 – American Premium Foods

# EXPORT BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

## BREHMER MANUFACTURING

**F**ounded in 1974 by Joe Brehmer and his father, Reynard, Brehmer Manufacturing, Inc., has many business divisions and serves a broad range of markets, including dry fertilizer tenders, hog feeding equipment, truck customization and more recently, fitness equipment.

The division that has brought the company global attention is Eagle International tire recycling equipment.

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The Lyons, Neb. company has customers in 27 countries and is in the process of adding three more foreign markets.

“This is something we’ve put 30 years of effort into,” says Joe Brehmer, company president, who has been involved in every aspect of design for this line of tire-reduction equipment.

In addition to foreign sales, Brehmer Sales Representative John Tejkl says the company is working hard to establish dealers internationally. “We have a dealer who currently covers five countries, and we are getting others officially signed on,” he says.

The international presence is the product of research, training and hard work by Brehmer and his company, along with the services of the Nebraska Business Development Center (NBDC). NBDC has provided advice, information and training since 2000, when NBDC consultant Renee Held gathered a group

of non-competing manufacturers to learn about lean manufacturing processes. “I really enjoyed that experience,” Brehmer says. “I liked learning about lean manufacturing and being able to meet others like myself.”

Since then, the company has hosted lean workshops and leadership training.

“We’re really fortunate in Nebraska to have a lot of programs available that help promote and grow businesses,” Brehmer says. “The big thing is finding those opportunities. That’s where NBDC’s services come in very handy.”

Brehmer and his father began the business in Oakland, Neb., and in 1983 moved to Lyons.

The company has expanded eight times, Brehmer says, growing from 19,000 square feet to 60,000 square feet. Brehmer Mfg. employs 52 people fulltime and “we’re fighting to recruit more.”

The company continues to innovate and improve its line of products, with patents pending on three new products, including a universal system to help load pontoon boats onto trailers.

Being diversified has helped Brehmer survive at times when many markets were slumping. When Eagle started in 1991, Brehmer provided design, manufacturing and customer services for the start-up, which became the nation’s leading provider of tire-recycling equipment and reached into Chile and South Africa. Brehmer acquired Eagle in 2017.

Tejkl says Eagle delivers good brand recognition and a strong Internet presence.

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“Now that we have taken Eagle on board, there are few, if any, competitors who can operate at the capacity we can.”—John Tejkl

NBDC has assisted Brehmer with market research obtained through Nebraska’s State Trade Expansion Program (STEP) to assess the potential for sales in several foreign markets. NBDC also has provided the company with a sample distribution agreement, as well as resources for developing opportunities in Russia.

“The people we have worked with at NBDC have helped our company in a number of ways,” Brehmer says. “We appreciate their knowledge and expertise.”



# 2018 CHAMPION OF SMALL BUSINESS LANDEN CHIROPRACTIC, P.C.

**A**dvice from the Nebraska Business Development Center (NBDC) in Chadron helped set Landen Chiropractic, P.C., on course for the successful and growing business it is today.

In order to secure financing from a local bank, and a matching low-interest loan from the City of Chadron, chiropractor Erich Landen, D.C., needed to present a business plan to the Chadron City Council and to a committee of six people, including bankers, an accountant, and Tim Donahue, who at the time was NBDC center director in Chadron. "Sitting down with that group and listening to their critiques of my projections really helped me to fine tune my business plan," Dr. Landen says.

Coincidentally, Donahue's brother was a chiropractor. "Tim was a great sounding board," Dr. Landen says. "He was familiar with things I was talking about. Thanks to him and others on the committee, I was able to make some necessary changes before presenting my plan to the City Council."

Dr. Landen obtained his bachelor's degree in exercise science from the University of Nebraska at Kearney, where his wife, Mary, earned the same degree. While he was an undergraduate in Kearney, Dr. Landen worked for a chiropractor. After graduating from UNK, he attended Northwestern Health Sciences University and obtained his Doctor of Chiropractic.

He also has certifications in radiology, physiotherapy and acupuncture.

Landen Chiropractic, P.C., serves Chadron and surrounding areas by providing a variety of services covering chiropractic, acupuncture, soft tissue work and physiotherapies. Most of Dr. Landen's work involves chiropractic and acupuncture.

Landen Chiropractic started out in a small office with Dr. Landen as the sole employee. Steady growth has since led to Dr. Landen purchasing a building from a retired chiropractor in the area, which more than doubled the square footage of his business. The current location is situated near Chadron Community Hospital at 1115 W. 8th Street in Chadron. The lot on which the building sits also has potential for future expansion, Dr. Landen says. The number of employees has grown to four.

Landen Chiropractic has a strong relationship with Chadron Medical Clinic and Chadron Community Hospital and its radiology department to give patients comprehensive care.

Dr. Landen and his wife are active members of the Chadron community. As a volunteer, Dr. Landen coaches youth athletic programs such as flag football, wrestling, soccer and T-ball. He has donated considerable time to Chadron State College by serving as the athletic teams' chiropractor during events, and working with athletic trainers.



Photos courtesy Chadron State College



In addition, Dr. Landen has given lectures and presentations to students and businesses about the importance of proper work environments and ergonomic positions while working. He has also given seminars about acupuncture for athletes.

Dr. Landen says he appreciates the variety of services the NBDC offers. "I think NBDC is an extremely valuable resource," he says, "for myself and anyone interested in starting or expanding a business."



### CHAMPION OF SMALL BUSINESS

has been presented annually since 1983 to a Nebraska small business owner who has triumphed in the field of business and is an empowering entrepreneur who stands up for other small business owners. For all past awards visit [nbdc.unomaha.edu/about/champions](http://nbdc.unomaha.edu/about/champions).

2013 – Douglas Garwood, Garwood Enterprises

2014 – Roger Franklin, Gary's Cleaning and Restoration

2015 – Christine and Kevin Grooms, American

Agricultural Laboratory

2016 – Cody and Chrystal Brooks, White River Feed LLC

2017 – Mead Lumber/Truss Craft

# MCDANIEL FARMS

## GOVERNMENT CONTRA

**T**he ability to secure more than a dozen government contracts since first contacting the Nebraska Business Development Center (NBDC) for advice and assistance has enabled Amber McDaniel to significantly grow her livestock and hay brokerage business in 2018.

McDaniel Farms is a diversified, sustainable agriculture enterprise located near Sargent, Neb. The farm incorporates production of livestock (cattle and goats), prescriptive goat grazing, and the production and sale of quality hay.

In August 2017, McDaniel was referred by the Small Business Administration district office in Omaha to Chuck Beck, a government contracting specialist for the Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) in the NBDC office at the University of Nebraska at Kearney. “As a service disabled veteran, Amber was interested in contracting goat grazing services to federal agencies and knew that she would need market research to help guide her efforts,” Beck recalls.

Beck reviewed McDaniel Farms’ System for Award Management (SAM) registration and noted that it was limited to “Federal Assistance Awards Only.” He also identified other potential issues when reviewing the SAM registration and brought them to McDaniel’s attention.

“Chuck helped change my SAM registration to include contracting, and he helped set up a BidMatch profile to receive notifications of contracts suited to my business,” McDaniel says.

Within two weeks of the initial request for assistance, McDaniel asked Beck to review sections of a solicitation that McDaniel Farms was planning to bid on. Beck provided feedback regarding the proposal,



# CTOR OF THE YEAR

and helped guide McDaniel through updating her SAM Registration so that she was registered to do business with federal agencies.

Since May 2018, McDaniel has won a total of five contracts with the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture. One of her most recent successes is a five-year goat grazing contract with the National Forest Service.

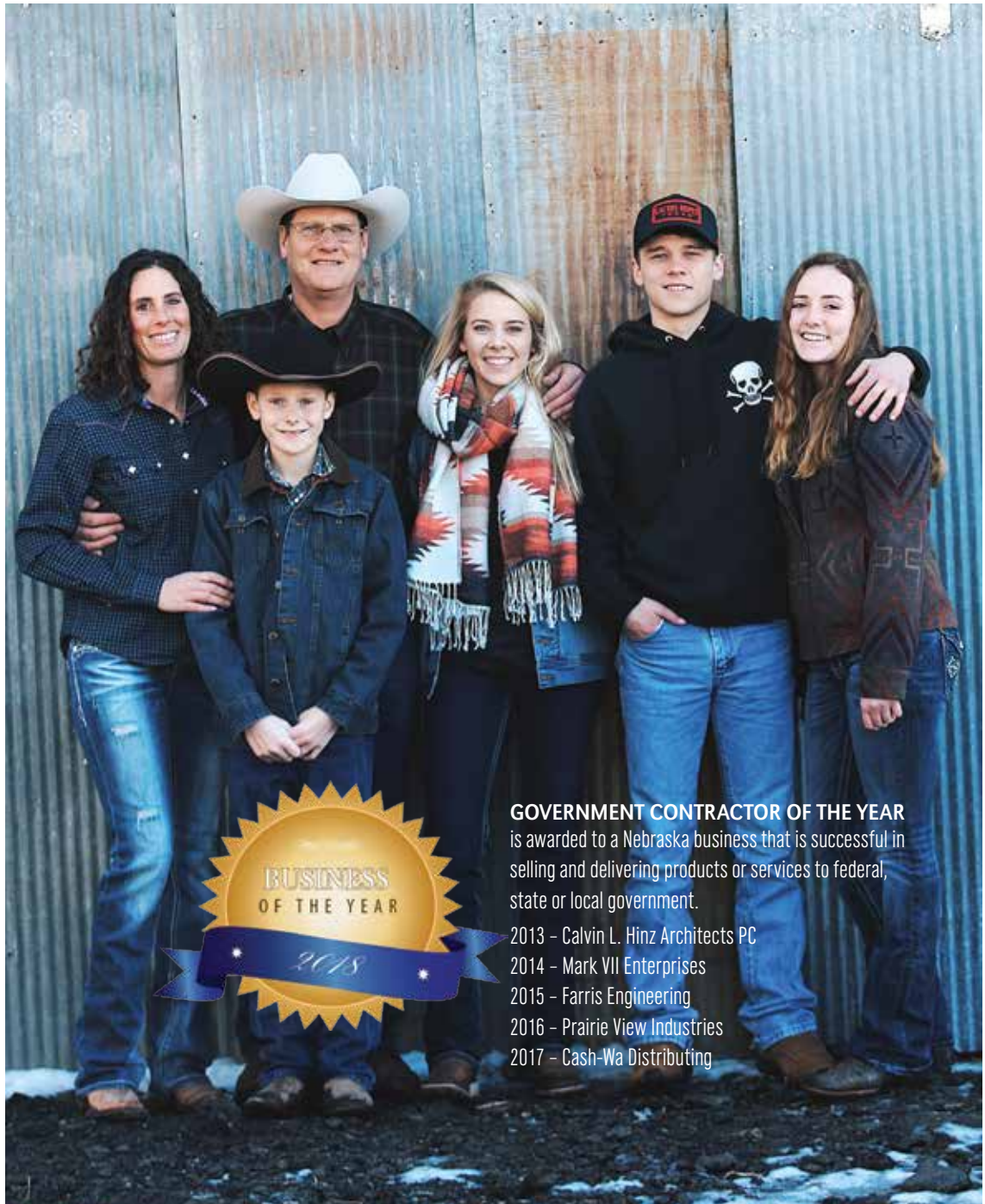
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*"As a woman and beginning farmer, I want veterans, disabled veterans, and women reading my story to see that there are programs that can help them start careers in agriculture, and they shouldn't be afraid to reach out and get in touch with those organizations." —Amber McDaniel*

McDaniel says Beck's knowledge and experience, and the NBDC services, have made a positive impact by identifying opportunities for her small business. "If I didn't have Chuck's advice, I doubt I would have any federal contracts," she says. "He helped align my business and capabilities into the federal system."

Beck continues to check on McDaniel and her progress. "He still mentors me and is always looking for different opportunities, locally and regionally," McDaniel says. "He is very responsive, too. Whether I send him an email or leave him a voicemail, he always gets right back to me. I would have been lost without his help."

Amber McDaniel and Lex McDaniel with their children from left: Samuel McDaniel, Hannah McDaniel, Hadley McDaniel, Shelby McDaniel



**GOVERNMENT CONTRACTOR OF THE YEAR** is awarded to a Nebraska business that is successful in selling and delivering products or services to federal, state or local government.

2013 – Calvin L. Hinz Architects PC  
2014 – Mark VII Enterprises  
2015 – Farris Engineering  
2016 – Prairie View Industries  
2017 – Cash-Wa Distributing

# INNOVATION BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

## INNOVATIVE PROSTHETICS & ORTHOTICS

**I**nnovative Prosthetics & Orthotics is living up to its name by pioneering the use of 3D printing technologies to create prosthetics and orthotics devices that one day may be delivered not only to people in the U.S. but also to those in developing nations who cannot afford traditionally manufactured and expensive devices.

Founder and CEO Rakesh Srivastava has established the company's clinics in Omaha, Hastings, and Grand Island. Srivastava himself is a wearer of a prosthetic leg after being injured in a traffic accident in India 37 years ago.

He moved to the United States to attend the University of Nebraska at Kearney, where he earned a bachelor's degree in telecommunications management, and a master's degree in instructional technology with an emphasis in assistive technology.

He completed his residency and soon after became an American Board Certified Prosthetist and Orthotist. He opened his first clinic, in Hastings in 2006. The three clinics employ a total of nine people, while seven clinics in India managed by his brother Sailesh Kumar employ an additional 23 people.

Srivastava has worked with consultants at the Nebraska Business Development Center in Omaha and Kearney to obtain market research on exporting, as well as expertise from the technology commercialization team on prototype grant

application and from the procurement technical assistance center (PTAC) on government contracting opportunities. He has used NBDC's services to prepare a loan package and business plan for his 3D manufacturing expansion project.

Prosthetic devices are used for lower and upper extremity needs. Orthotics include braces for the foot, knee and back. Patients visit the Innovative Prosthetics clinics to be fitted for these devices.

In 2012, the company introduced cranial remolding orthosis, a physician-approved helmet clinic for infants with head asymmetries.

Three years later, Srivastava's company partnered with Creighton University on a \$50,000 prototype grant funded by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development to create a prototype of a medical grade 3D printed prosthetic device. Srivastava is also part of a research collaboration with the 3D Printing Laboratory and the Department of Biomechanics at the University of Nebraska at Omaha to develop low-cost 3D printed prostheses.

"With 3D printing, anyone thinks they can do something like this, but the human body is very complex," Srivastava says. "That is why we did research with UNO Biomechanics."

Based on the research, the team has successfully developed the first open sourced 3D printed partial hand prosthesis, the Cyborg Beast.



Zahira Cordero Lopez, Rakesh Srivastava



The high cost of prostheses for children, their weight, unattractiveness and complex fitting procedures often have a detrimental effect on use, retention and satisfaction. Srivastava wants to manufacture medical grade 3D printed prosthetic devices, including finger, hand and arm prostheses and cosmetic covers, that are capable of being remotely fitted, visually appealing to children, durable and much less expensive to manufacture.

Our goal is to take this global. We want to help non-profit organizations worldwide to provide these devices to people with no insurance. Utilizing 3D printing can cut the manufacturing cost to one-fourth of what it is today. The demand is huge. By making these prostheses affordable and customizable, instead of serving 100 people, we can serve 1,000 or 10,000.” – Rakesh Srivastava



### **INNOVATION BUSINESS OF THE YEAR**

is awarded to a Nebraska business that advances technological innovation, partners with a Nebraska university to meet federal research and development needs, or increases commercialization of federal research.

- 2013 – LNKChemsolutions
- 2014 – LI-COR Biosciences
- 2015 – Windcall Manufacturing (GrainGoat)
- 2016 – Goldfinch Solutions
- 2017 – Sanguine Diagnostics & Therapeutics



# AIRLITE PLASTICS

# MANUFACTURING BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

**A** commitment to lean manufacturing processes, coupled with a coordinated effort to continuously innovate and improve its processes, distinguishes Airlite Plastics of Omaha as a leader in producing food packaging, drink cups and lids, polystyrene coolers, insulated concrete form building blocks and other custom products.

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Privately held and family-owned for more than 70 years, Airlite Plastics produces 2 billion molded units per year at its manufacturing facilities in Omaha and Nazareth, Penn.

Together, the facilities total more than one-half million square feet of production and storage area, with a workforce of approximately 1,000 people.

The company continuously applies the latest technologies in the development of new molds and creating customized approaches to thin-wall plastic packaging. For example, Airlite was the first in its industry to develop the four-level stack mold, and the company commercializes award-winning stock In-Mold Labeled packages, giving its customers access to new designs at affordable entry costs.

Jesse Kaufman, director of quality and continuous improvement, says Airlite partnered with the Nebraska Business Development Center (NBDC) to guide the facilitation of lean implementation and overall operations improvements, and to provide lean training to Airlite managers, supervisors and engineers.

NBDC has since delivered lean training to three groups of Airlite leaders, with a fourth group currently in training. Additionally, NBDC has presented

on-site workshops that give Airlite personnel insight on ways to improve productivity and heighten customer satisfaction.

“We continue to utilize our NBDC grads in a number of ways,” Kaufman says. “They have helped us implement 5S initiatives, and set up reduction initiatives. Weaving what they have learned into everyday operations can be contagious. If one person implements a change and others around them see the benefits, it gets everyone interested.”

He says the NBDC consultants do well to break the learning materials into concepts that everyone can understand, no matter their job. Airlite has hosted several NBDC Lean Enterprise Certificate workshops including 5S/Workplace Organization, Set-Up Reduction, Principles of Lean, and Standard Work, bringing together participants from other Omaha-area companies.

“We have benefited by hosting these workshops, because we can take what our students discover about what others are doing compared to our own processes and put their new knowledge to use on improving the production floor,” Kaufman says. “It’s a great way to engage our employees and watch them bring value to the company.”

Airlite continues to invest in its people through leadership training and development, the use of the National Career Readiness Certificate in hiring and employee development, and monitoring and improving employee engagement with tools such as the Gallup Q12 Employee Engagement assessment.

Kaufman says Airlite Plastics being named Manufacturing Business of the Year brings pride across the entire company. “To have someone we partner with recognize our efforts to learn and improve,” he says, “that’s truly rewarding.”



## MANUFACTURING BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

is awarded to a Nebraska business that demonstrates leadership in employee involvement, continual process improvement, customer and supplier relations, innovation and new product development, sales growth, and sustainability.

2013 – Certified Transmission

2014 – KZCO

2015 – Brand Hydraulics

2016 – Hornady Manufacturing

2017 – Exmark Manufacturing



A continuing commitment to developing leadership competencies that improve quality of care and life, empower team members and better manage resources has earned Hillcrest Health Services the inaugural Employee Development Business of the Year award from the Nebraska Business Development Center (NBDC).

Hillcrest Health Services in 2016 selected NBDC from among five respondents to its request for proposal to help reestablish its Leadership Academy program. Hillcrest management sought assistance in finalizing leadership competencies, designing a curriculum for experiential learning that would develop those competencies, instruction for the resulting 48-hour curriculum, and one-on-one coaching as needed.

Jolene Roberts, CMSW, LNHA, president and principal, says the decision to partner with NBDC has been rewarding for the company and the more than 100 top-level managers who have taken the classes to date.

“We have sent people to workshops that wind up being all theory, or information that doesn’t always apply to our mission, goals and methods,” Roberts says. “The NBDC team designed a curriculum tailored to our product line and our company. It has proven to be practical and usable knowledge that can be implemented immediately. The material is creative, informative and applicable. It’s the number one reason we chose them, and we have not been disappointed.”

She says Hillcrest Health Services delivers a wide array of housing and senior care services “that operate as an integrated continuum of care.” These include alternatives such as independent living, memory support, skilled nursing, post-acute rehabilitation, adult day services, outpatient therapy, wellness services, home health care, telehealth and hospice.

The company, which was founded in Bellevue in 1967 and acquired by Roberts in 1989, has approximately 1,400 team members who work to enhance the lives of more than 1,200 senior adults every day.

Under Roberts’ guidance, the business doubled in size in a 30-month period. She says it remains her goal to develop leadership skills that take her team beyond the technical skills they require to do their jobs.

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*“When you work in long-term care, the management roles are filled by people who have a passion for what they do.” –Jolene Roberts*

“They are not often MBA trained, and they don’t always have the opportunity to take leadership classes on their own. That is why we bring the classes to them,” Roberts says.

After beginning with a series of interviews to gain a better understanding of the leadership competencies deemed integral to success at Hillcrest, NBDC professionals met many times with Roberts and other company officials to co-author an effective and comprehensive curriculum.

Now in its fourth year, the Leadership Academy at Hillcrest Health Services is expanding to include a third level of training for those who have completed Leadership 101 and Leadership 102 classes. Roberts says Hillcrest is committed to developing its team members and furthering the leadership program.

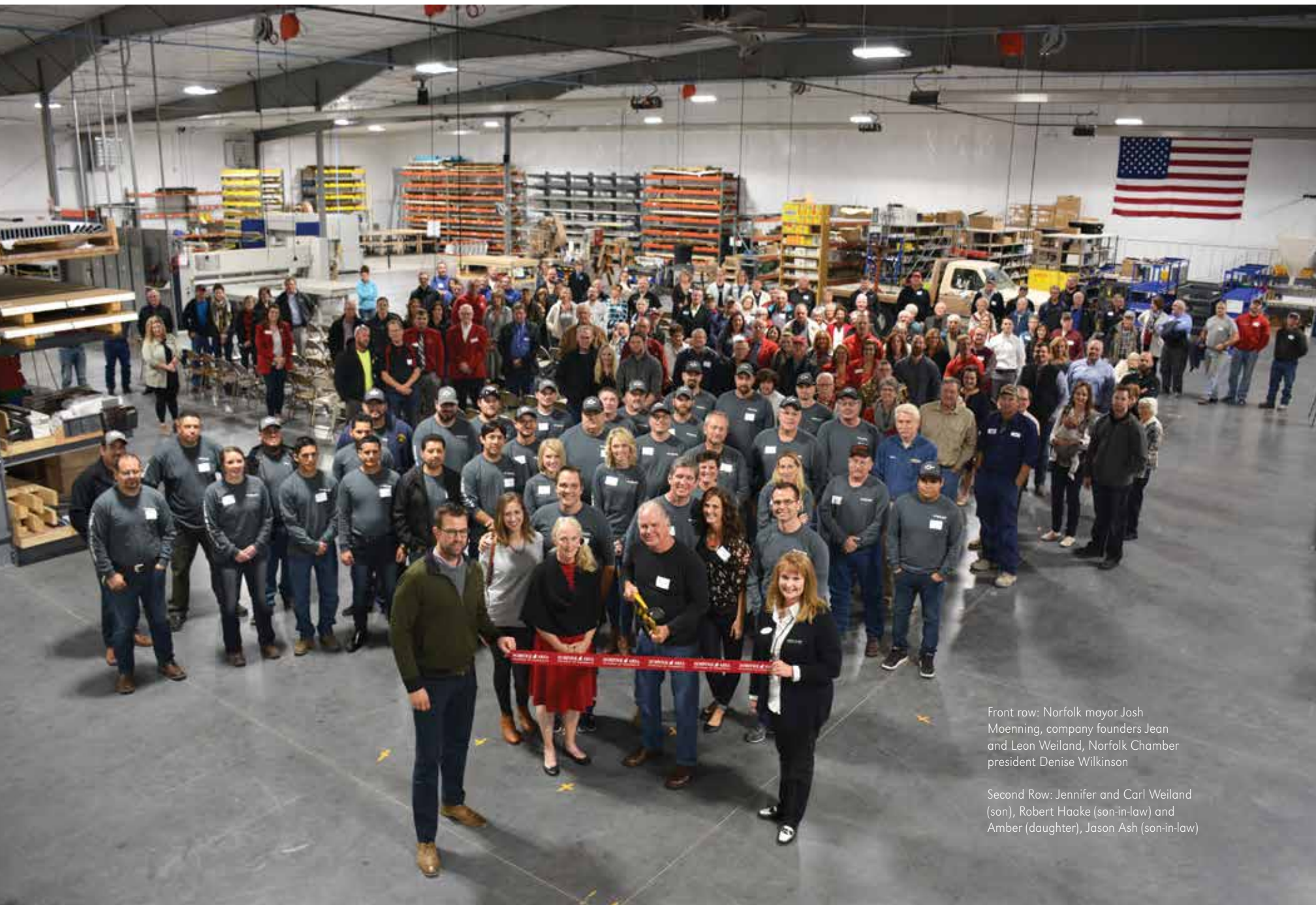
“The NBDC professionals we have worked with have a lot of expertise in the leadership realm,” she says. “They have listened closely to us and customized a curriculum based on our needs. That’s the home run.”

# EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT BUSINESS OF THE YEAR **HILLCREST HEALTH SERVICES**



## **EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT BUSINESS OF THE YEAR**

is awarded to an NBDC client that demonstrates a commitment to employee development and organizational improvement and embraces a strategic and programmatic approach.



Front row: Norfolk mayor Josh Moenning, company founders Jean and Leon Weiland, Norfolk Chamber president Denise Wilkinson

Second Row: Jennifer and Carl Weiland (son), Robert Haake (son-in-law) and Amber (daughter), Jason Ash (son-in-law)

# WEILAND DOORS

Leadership at Weiland, Inc., says the guidance of Loren Kucera, Nebraska Business Development Center consultant, was instrumental when the company was advised to seek a Small Business Administration (SBA) loan as part of the financing to build a 60,000-square-foot factory for its operating shop in Norfolk.

“We are so glad we got Loren and NBDC involved early,” says managing partner Carl Weiland. “Their impact was deep and positive. Loren was an incredible advocate for our business during the SBA loan application process. It is really easy for projects of this size to get mired in red tape, and the process is not straightforward. On top of that, we had a new building to plan.”

“Needless to say, there was not an abundance of extra time to learn the ins-and-outs of a complicated loan process that involves so many parties,” Weiland says. “The task would have been quite ominous and probably close to impossible without Loren and NBDC.”

Often referred to as Weiland Doors, the company manufactures doors and windows for harsh environmental conditions, mostly corrosive wash-down environments in sanitary food plants and wastewater facilities.

The company was founded in 1984 by Leon Weiland, who began crafting custom doors for the local meat packing plant as an effort to pay back the debt on his family farm.

After growing the business for 25 years, Leon began turning over control of his business to son, Carl, and sons-in-law, Jason Ash and Rob Haake, in 2009. The managing partners have been running the business since 2011 and in a seven-year span, have tripled the size of the company through new product innovation and excellent service.



In 2016, company leadership met with Madison County Bank officials to discuss obtaining a loan to build a factory that would meet the growing company’s need for space, as well as address environmental and personnel issues. “Our meeting with the Madison County Bank revealed that we were required to get a SBA-backed loan to make this dream come true,” Carl Weiland says. “Loren Kucera and NBDC were one of the first calls we made to help assist us in that process.”

By February 2017, Kucera had enough information to begin assembling applications for loans from the Nebraska Economic Development Corporation (NEDCO), Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District (NENEDD), Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and the SBA. The loans were approved in May 2017. The company moved its operation off the family farm and into the new factory one year later.

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“On a project like this, it’s easy to think that the groundbreaking is the starting line because that is when there is finally something tangible for the public to see. But there was more than a year of hard work prior to our groundbreaking that involved a lot of people.” – Carl Weiland

Weiland says, “Loren and NBDC were instrumental. Their day to celebrate was the day we broke ground, and we were happy they were able to be there to celebrate with us.”

Weiland says he and his partners would recommend NBDC consultants to any business owner needing professional guidance. “They really seem to live out their mission to support small businesses,” he says. “I can’t imagine a reason to hesitate asking for their help.”



Spectrum Photographics

# MCKINEY MANUFACTURING

Utilizing its state-of-the-art equipment, McKinney Manufacturing & Sales in Mitchell, Neb., provides customers with cost-effective, quality tube bending and fabrication services.

Founded as Bare Manufacturing, Roger McKinney purchased the business in 2015 with the help of general counseling and financial projections he obtained from the Nebraska Business Development Center (NBDC) office in Scottsbluff.

In 2018, McKinney again turned to NBDC to obtain similar services when he purchased his new Computer Numerical Control (CNC) tool bender. CNC allows for precise control of positioning, velocity, coordination, feed rates and other aspects of the manufacturing process for a particular part or object.

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This new equipment enables McKinney Manufacturing to produce 3-1/2 inch and 4 inch exhaust pipe, which meets recent Environmental Protection Agency standards, as well as the former standard, 3-inch pipe.

Currently, the majority of McKinney's competitors are able to only produce 3-inch pipe.

The company manufactures with a variety of metals, including cold rolled steel and stainless steel, aluminum, and nonmetallic materials for specialized applications.

McKinney says Larry Bare started the company in 1972 in a small shop in Mitchell. "His primary business was servicing hydraulic hose manufacturing industry," McKinney says. "Larry was an amazing machinist."

Hydraulic hose is utilized throughout the oil producing industry. When that industry slumped in 2015, with the price of a barrel of crude plummeting from about more than \$100 to about \$30, McKinney's business slumped along with it.

He says 2017 was the beginning of a recovery, and that he has since grown the business to employ five full-time people and one part-timer.

"It's been a blessing that we were able to purchase that new equipment to give us an edge on the competition," he says.

Growing his business has also enabled McKinney to join the Scottsbluff High School internship program and bring a student into the shop to learn firsthand about the tool and die industry.

He says NBDC consultant Margaret Akin "has been wonderful to work with. I can't say enough about how helpful she is when it comes to filling out grant and loan paperwork."



# ARMADILLO ARMS & SPORTING GOODS



**P**lanning for and opening a first business brings many challenges, and Matt and Larry Eden of McCook found an advocate and guide in the Nebraska Business Development Center (NBDC).

Matt was a heavy equipment salesman and Larry, his father, was semi-retired from farming and transportation when they decided to act upon a thought they'd been kicking around for more than two years.

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*"The idea of a sporting goods store appealed to us because we have been hunting and fishing our entire lives." –Larry Eden*

"In McCook, we had no equipment option other than Walmart," Larry says.

The Edens say they felt they could offer a level of personalized customer service that isn't found in a large chain store. Additionally, Walmart prohibits sales of firearms to anyone under 21 years of age. However, Nebraska law allows for sales of rifles and long guns to anyone 18 and older for use in hunting and sporting events.

When the Edens took the concept for their new business, Armadillo Arms & Sporting Goods, to their banker to discuss a

loan, they were pointed to Charlie McPherson, director of the NBDC center for west central Nebraska.

"They already had purchased the land, and put a down payment on a building they were looking to build, but needed additional funding to pay for the remainder of the building along with inventory, equipment and supplies," McPherson says. "A lender referred them to me to assist with the development of a business plan and financial projections for the loan."

Matt Eden says they had the framework of a five-year business plan. "We got with Charlie about three months before the building was done and he helped us refine our plan," Matt says.

Larry Eden says McPherson also conducted research into the sporting goods industry to compare projected revenue, profit and sales margins against figures the Edens had already compiled. "We were about spot on," Larry says. "It gives you a boost of confidence to find out that, yes, we were on the right track."

Armed with the reinforcement McPherson's figures and advice provided, the Edens were able to obtain the necessary funding. They opened Armadillo Arms in June 2017 once they had their live bait operation in place, adding inventory over the next few months. They had the grand opening of their just-under 5,000-square-foot sales building at 210 Airport Road in October.

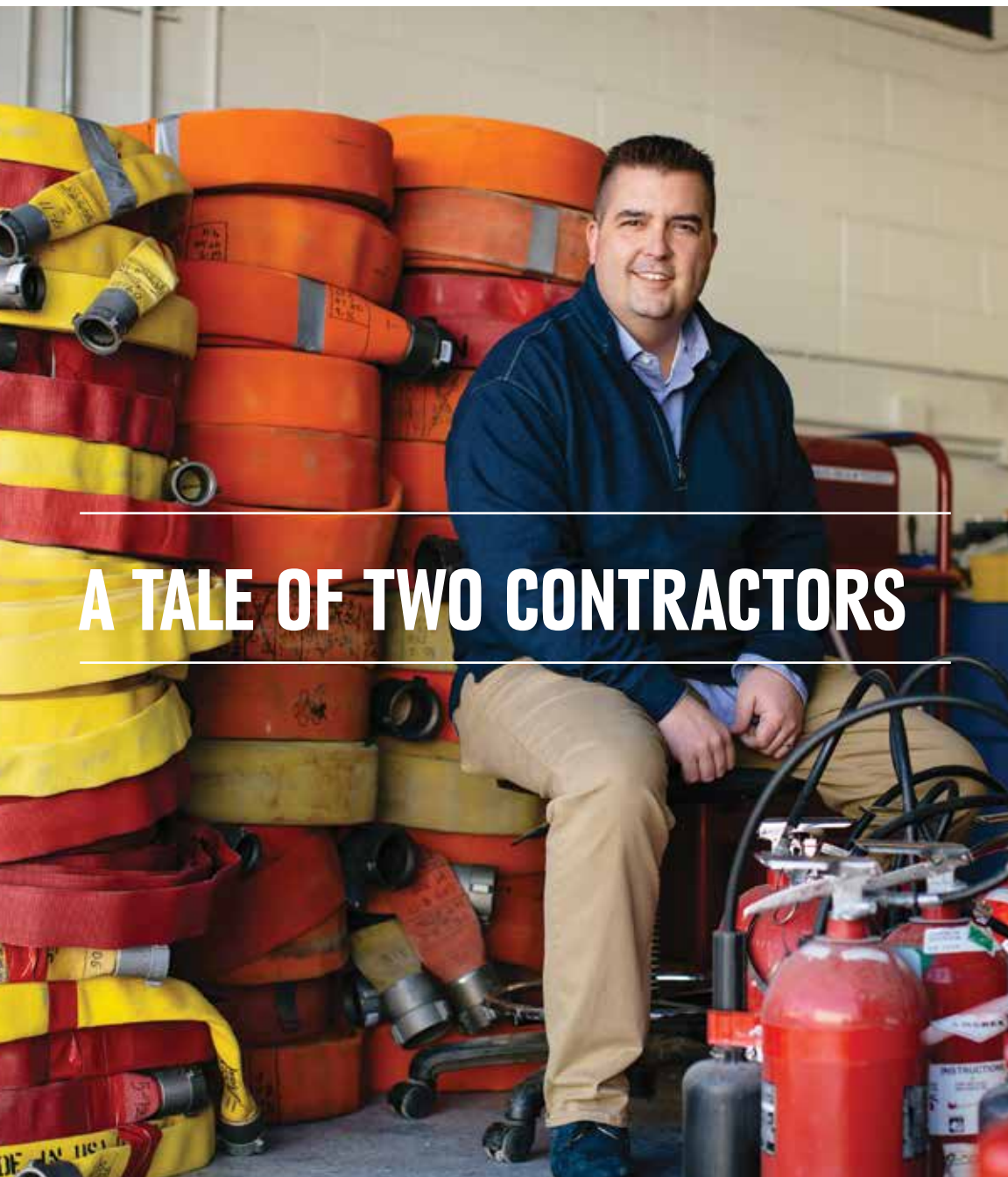
They draw customers from a roughly 200-mile radius, Matt says. "We've had people come from all the way down into Kansas."

Featured products include a large selection of firearms and archery supplies, with Armadillo Arms serving as dealer for Glock handguns, as well as Xpedition Archery and Mudhole Custom Fishing Rods. The store also houses a 20-yard shooting range for bows, crossbows and BB guns. Other services include custom rod building and bait sales.

"We try to treat everybody like we would want them to treat us," Larry Eden says. That is the kind of care they found with NBDC and McPherson, he says.



Matt and Sheila Eden. Tor Olson Photography



## A TALE OF TWO CONTRACTORS

### GENERAL FIRE & SAFETY

**W**hen the Missouri River Project Office of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers needed new fire extinguishers, NBDC Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) consultant Mary Graff wasted no time sparking the interest of General Fire & Safety Equipment in Omaha.

Graff was checking the Federal Business Opportunities website when she saw the contract being bid by the Corps of Engineers and reached out to General Fire & Safety CEO Jason McDonald.

“Mary contacted me and asked if we had access to government contracting opportunities,” McDonald says. “We didn’t, and though we weren’t actually looking for government contracts, I always thought we should be.”

Because of the impending deadline, Graff immediately emailed McDonald the synopsis, solicitation and site visit information.

“She walked me through the process and let me know precisely what we needed to do,” he says. “She explained the SAM (federal System for Award Management) registration and how to get all the necessary details up and running. It can be a fairly daunting process, and she helped us get through all that.”

One day before the solicitation was due to the contracting office, Graff made certain McDonald had the contracting officer’s email address so his company could meet the deadline. General Fire & Safety was awarded the contract.

Graff and McDonald have since met to discuss the government contracting opportunities the company may have an interest in pursuing. General Fire & Safety subsequently

Sitzmann Photography

# NAVIGATOR MOTORCOACHES

was awarded a contract for a carbon dioxide (CO2) fire suppression system installation, again for the Corps of Engineers.

“Mary was very understanding of the intimidation factor when you want to bid a government project but really don’t know where to begin,” McDonald says. “She really made us feel more comfortable bidding these projects.”

Graff helped make certain McDonald and his company continue to receive notifications of available contracts. “She’s been very proactive,” he says. “She allowed us to set up the notification process to be as focused as we want.”

McDonald says NBDC offers high quality services made even more impressive by the fact there was no fee. “When she first called, I thought, ‘What’s the catch?’” he says. “It’s a fantastic resource, and she’s always just a phone call away.”

**F**acing “a mountain of paperwork” in his initial attempt to solicit government transportation contracts, Don Oberle, the owner of Navigator Motorcoaches, got the directions he needed from NBDC procurement technical assistance.

Navigator Motorcoaches is a nationwide charter and motor coach bus service. The company is headquartered in Norfolk, with satellite offices in Kearney, Omaha and Sioux City, Iowa.

The company, which opened in 1991 offering planned bus tours and casino trips, entered into the charter bus service in 1993 with one 50-passenger motor coach, primarily to facilitate the needs of its bus tours and casino trips.

Seeing the demand for motor coach travel, Navigator purchased additional motor coaches to offer nationwide charter bus service from each of its locations.

Licensed to operate in all states and provinces in North America, and with more than 45 drivers and 15 staff members, the company operates 15-passenger vans, 26 to 29-passenger mini buses, trolleys and 40 to 58-passenger motor coaches.

Dick Uhing, government contracting consultant at the NBDC office in Wayne, had originally contacted Oberle at his Norfolk office to offer information about NBDC’s procurement technical assistance services.

Once the two discussed government contracting, Uhing suggested that Oberle refine his search for available government contracts by completing a System for Award Management (SAM) registration, as well as registrations for online government bidding databases.

“I have worked with Don for the past four years now,” Uhing says, “providing market research, yearly SAM registration updates, and setting his company up for government bid boards.”

Oberle says NBDC has been instrumental in navigating the regulations connected with government contracting. “I don’t think we’d have gotten to the point we needed to be with our SAM registration without Dick’s help,” he says. “The forms and paperwork are never-ending, and he has made sure we get the right information to the right places.”

He says that while the company’s Department of Defense certification “is still a work in progress, we’re already seeing opportunities we never saw before. When everything is resolved, we should see a lot more.”





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# LAZY HORSE

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## BREWING & WINERY

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**T**here is nothing lazy about Jim and Julie Stutzman, a hard-working couple who have dedicated the past six years to developing the Lazy Horse Brewing & Winery in Ohio, Neb.

The Stutzmans, once owners of a custom cattle grazing operation just south of Ohio, a village of about 120 people in Fillmore County, got the idea to plant a vineyard when they heard of a seminar on vineyard management in neighboring Dorchester.

“That put the idea in our heads, and Julie decided she wanted to try growing a vineyard in our backyard,” Jim Stutzman recalls. “We contacted the University of Nebraska and sent them some soil samples. They suggested we try 10 or 15 vines. Instead, we planted 300 the first year.”





The couple also contacted the Nebraska Business Development Center (NBDC) office at the University of Nebraska at Kearney, where Odee Ingersoll, center director, prepared an initial review of financial information and loan package/business planning resources.

The Stutzmans assembled initial start-up cost estimates and cash flow forecasts, and Ingersoll offered recommendations. Using these resources, the Stutzmans were able to develop the information they needed to successfully obtain a loan.

Two years after the initial planting, the Stutzmans had increased the number of vines to 2,100. Herbicide drift, however, hit the plants hard and reduced the vineyard by 60 percent.

That led the couple to focus more on the brewery side of the business. They have since increased beer production per batch from a 2-1/2 barrel, 70 gallon system to a 10 barrel, 310 gallon system.

Stutzman says Ingersoll kept the couple “headed in the right direction. It’s nice to have someone who knows what they’re doing look at your numbers and give you an honest opinion. When you look at them yourself, you’re never really sure.”

He says the NBDC’s services are worthy of a toast. “I can’t imagine a better resource out there,” he says, “for any industry and any business, especially one just starting out.”



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The Stutzmans now offer more than a half-dozen varieties of wines and have produced 55 different beers, including several award winning brews. Lazy Horse has also expanded to a total of 14 employees.

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