

SUCCESS STORY: TACO JOHN'S MCCOOK

Successful Business Transition Preserves Local Ownership



When the longtime owner of the Taco John's restaurant in McCook began considering retirement, he set a goal of handing over the keys to another local owner, and the Nebraska Business Development Center (NBDC) office in North Platte helped make it happen.

Prior to purchasing the Taco John's, Jerry Calvin was a salesman for a soft drink company and his wife, Robin, was a school secretary at a McCook church. Also a member of the McCook City Council, Calvin stopped by the Taco John's one evening before a council meeting. That is when then-owner Randy Harper talked about retiring, and about selling the restaurant but keeping the ownership local.

"The same thing happened with Randy about three months later," Calvin recalls. "So, Robin and I started thinking seriously about it. It was a very well-run, very successful restaurant. But we had no experience running a business whatsoever."

As a member of the McCook Economic Development Corporation board of directors, Calvin had heard about the work done by Charlie McPherson, director of the NBDC office in North Platte. "Robin and I had to see someone who knew what they were doing, and that was Charlie," Calvin recalls. "We told him that if we were going to do this right, we needed help. He jumped right in."

McPherson says he partnered with the Calvins in August 2017 to develop a business plan and financial projections. "Because they had never worked in fast food, they took on part-time jobs at Taco John's to learn the business and how to properly prepare the food according to corporate standards," McPherson says. "They tried to do as much hands-on work as they could to allow for a smooth transition of the business once they got the loan approval."

McPherson says he met and spoke with the Calvins numerous times during the project to answer questions, provide advice and get updates on where they were in the process. "By late spring last year, we finalized the draft of their business plan, and by June we finished the financial projections so that everything could be turned into the lender," he says.

Harper did hand over those keys, on October 2, 2018, to the new local owners, Jerry and Robin. In the time since, the Calvins report a steady increase in business.

Jerry Calvin says McPherson was "absolutely indispensable" in successfully guiding them toward ownership. "I am convinced this only happened because the NBDC and Charlie were here to help," he says. "Everything we needed was right there in his office. Resources like that are essential to continue making rural Nebraska what it is."

REPORT DATE

> March 5, 2019

INDUSTRY

> SIC 5812: Eating and Drinking Places

CONSULTING

- > Business transition
- > Financial projections
- > Business plan

RESULTS

- > Business transferred from a retiring owner to new owners
- > New owners received funding
- > New owners experiencing steady increase in business

CONSULTANTS: CHARLIE MCPHERSON | RED WILLOW | STATE SENATE DISTRICT #44