



Collins Donates \$12,000 to NIACC JPEC



Tim Putnam, NIACC JPEC Associate Director, with John and JoAn Collins.

John Collins has demonstrated an entrepreneurial spirit throughout his life. He developed new products while working for established companies, and started his own company twice. In 1996, Collins started his most recent firm, American Crane Inc. (ACI) in Garner, Iowa. In launching his business, Collins turned to the NIACC John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center for assistance. He completed an entrepreneurial training course and was one of five businesses in the state of Iowa that was awarded a \$10,000 entrepreneurial grant to commemorate the start of the Pappajohn Centers around the state.

Today, Collins is donating \$12,000 back to the NIACC JPEC to be used to support a series of high school entrepreneurial courses which will start next fall. Per Tim Putnam, NIACC JPEC Associate Director, Collins' donation will be used to fund entrepreneurship training

classes and curriculum for high school business teachers from North Iowa high schools. The first class, *Introduction to Entrepreneurship*, will be offered in Central Springs, Clear Lake, Garner, Osage, and West Fork High Schools this fall, and other local school districts are developing plans to launch the class in the near future.

Putnam said there are several entrepreneurial classes planned as part of a concurrent enrollment program between area high schools and NIACC, and students who complete the courses will receive both high school and college credits. "The goal of the first class is to teach high school students about the principles of entrepreneurship, and to help them apply these principles to a product or service that they can sell by the end of the course," Putnam said. The curriculum was developed by the Jacobson Institute of Youth Entrepreneurship at the University of Iowa, and University of Iowa instructors trained 17 area teachers during the week of June 18.

Collins' business, ACI, is a custom manufacturer of service trucks for the construction, mining, and tire service markets. He has developed a process of re-manufacturing equipment to give it a new product warranty, and has recently released a new hydraulic supercharger with splitter lines which features high-pressure shutoff valves designed to operate two systems at the same time.

Collins said, "The \$10,000 grant from the Pappajohn Center was a major contribution to get ACI started." He said he'd always wanted to return the grant to help other businesses, and he found the high school training program to be a good fit as he's had trouble finding young, mechanically-inclined workers who want to work. By supporting high school students, Collins is helping to train future business owners and workers to show initiative and passion, two characteristics he is seeking in employees today.

INSIDE

- Director's Notes.....2
- North Iowan Publishes Digital Magazine.....3
- Success at Britt Lumber....3
- Youth Academy4
- Dream Big, Grow Here.....5
- JPEC Year-End Results....5

"I want to help develop young people who care about their work, and find a sense of accomplishment in what they do," Collins said.

"This is the first time a grant recipient has essentially returned their grant," Putnam said, "and it is exciting to see how it will be used to grow the entrepreneurs and innovators of the future."



North Iowa teachers pose with YEA students during training for the high school entrepreneurship curriculum.

Entrepreneurial Credit Courses at NIACC

NIACC offers both credit and continuing education courses in entrepreneurship for traditional and non-traditional students.

The **NIACC Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Certificate** allows students in any academic program to learn the essential elements of creating and managing their own entrepreneurial venture. The 16 semester hour certificate program can be combined with another degree if desired.

The **Entrepreneurship and Small Business Management Associates Degree** is a more in-depth program in entrepreneurship and business management. This degree program is 61 semester hours and will help a future business owner be prepared to succeed.

For more information on entrepreneurial credit courses from NIACC, contact Laura Merfeld at 888-GO-NIACC, ext. 4355 or merfelau@niacc.edu

Director's Notes

Our fiscal reporting year ended June 30 and it has been another exciting year for the NIACC JPEC and SBDC. Statistics show that business has picked back up with lots of new start-ups being launched, after a downturn in 2010-11. That activity level continues to grow, although bank funding continues to be an issue for many start-up organizations. For some, the NIACC JPEC NanoLoan program can provide start-up funds for new businesses in the pre-bankable stage, with support from area banks and matching funds from the United Way.

2012 also provided a new long term commitment from our benefactor, John Pappajohn, as he committed \$1.5 million to help sustain the NIACC JPEC for another 10 years. That support is critical for us to leverage and attain other federal and state funding to grow our program and offer even more support to start-up businesses in North Iowa.

A new partnership with the City of Mason City was launched to provide additional funding support to local businesses looking to expand and grow. The City contracted with the NIACC JPEC to provide MicroEnterprise grants to local businesses that meet the criteria and accept the support and counseling that has proven to help lead to success. This is a unique program that we expect to change over time as we gain experience and feedback from businesses and the City to make it the most productive and successful program that it can be. With this innovative program, we are charting new territory and will share the best practices with other communities in North Iowa as we move forward.

The Governor has appointed me to the Innovation Corporation Board, a board which provides oversight to the Innovation Council. The Innovation Corporation Board has received start-up funding and is seeking investors to support innovation in the state of Iowa. The Board meets monthly to develop strategies to realize the dream of increased innovation in Iowa.

I have been blessed with a great team to work with over these past 9 years. As we all know, it takes a good team to achieve success, and the NIACC JPEC continues to receive accolades and recognition nationwide for our work. This year we hope to continue to expand upon the dream by establishing a MIT Fab Lab on campus and create new opportunities for existing industries and innovators to work on new ideas. Stay tuned for more developments in this area.

One area of special note is a great big thank you to John Collins of American Crane in Garner. He received a hand in starting his business and now has upwards of 30 employees and a booming business. You can read his story on the cover of this newsletter. His generous gift back to the NIACC JPEC to help us continue our work and expand entrepreneurship in North Iowa is the kind of success that this program was built to develop. It is tremendously exciting that John has chosen to "give back" so others can also receive the support and education necessary to develop their dreams. I hope his example will be followed by many more in the years to come.

Finally, we have been blessed with great support from our communities in North Iowa. Banks, businesses, chambers, economic development directors and community leaders have all engaged with the NIACC JPEC and in their communities to support entrepreneurship as one of the key legs of the economic development stool. Truly, it takes all of us working together, going in the same direction to successfully drive economic growth.



*Jamie T. Zanios
NIACC Vice President
& JPEC Director*

Britt Lumber Company Owners Celebrate 5 Years

Derek and Lizanne Engh were new entrepreneurs when they purchased the Britt Lumber Company in 2007, but they had dreams of continuing the strong tradition of the former owners, Beryl and Sharon Buffington, as well as support from the NIACC JPEC and the city of Britt. The Enghs received a \$25,000 loan from the NIACC JPEC Revolving Loan Fund to get them off the ground.

Five years later, the Enghs have paid off the Revolving Loan and their business has grown as they've developed business experience. Lizanne said, "Over the past 5 years, our business and operational experience, as well as knowledge of our market, has increased. We are always offering new products and services to meet the needs of our customers.

The Buffingtons (previous owners) were great in helping us get started, and we've received assistance from Tim Putnam and Ted Bair at the NIACC JPEC." The Enghs have been speakers at various NIACC JPEC events.

Lizanne concluded, "Although being self-employed involves a lot of hard work, if you are doing what you love, it doesn't seem like work. New business owners should pursue their businesses with passion, and always work toward a goal. And understand that cash is king!"

"Derek and Lizanne epitomize entrepreneurship. They have been wonderful to advise and work with as they have grown and expanded their business," said Ted Bair, SBDC Director.



Ted Bair, SBDC Director (left) and Tim Putnam, NIACC JPEC Associate Director (right), with Derek & Lizanne Engh, owners of Britt Lumber Co.

Digital Magazine Features Sports Stories with a Human Touch

Mason City resident Mark Miller used his experience in the media and publishing industry to help start his own business, FitnessDigest.us, which is a digital magazine which focuses on fitness and the stories behind the sports. Miller started the quarterly digest in November 2010, while taking FastTrac® NewVenture™ through the NIACC JPEC. He wrote a business plan and further developed his idea, and then took the plunge to expand a website he'd had for several years into a small business.

As a swimmer and athlete, Miller said the fitness niche was a natural fit for him. Miller is an active U.S. Masters Swimmer, Ironman finisher and holds two top-10 finishes in U.S. Track & Field. His network of swimming contacts helped him develop content for early issues. Although not a writer himself, he works with amateur writers to provide publishing experience and professional writers who receive royalties. Today Miller works regularly with more than 10 writers, and new writers can get submission information via Miller's website.

FitnessDigest.us features narrative or human interest stories about sports, or about sports causes. Miller uses FitnessDigest.us to create a platform for authors or people who are passionate about a cause, with a portion of magazine proceeds going toward the cause, or with a free subscriptions to readers who support the cause. Miller said he likes to provide readers with a specific connection to a cause, and several of the articles in his issue are related to these causes..

Miller's professional background helped him start FitnessDigest.us. He helped develop a paid-content on-line model for Freiburg Publishing in Cedar Falls, and later helped develop an on-line presence for the Globe Gazette.

Miller said, "Starting a business was a struggle, but I enjoy the people and I want to keep it going. Meeting new people is the best part. FastTrac® was very helpful for me and I've recommended it to others. The course taught me what questions I needed to ask, and the Pappajohn Center staff has been awesome in helping me develop my business." For more information or to subscribe, visit <http://fitnessdigest.us>.

Youth Entrepreneurial Academy a Summer Highlight

The NIACC JPEC hosted the 14th annual Youth Entrepreneurial Academy (YEA) on the NIACC campus from June 17-21. Thirteen high school students representing seven school districts participated in the Academy. Participants included:

- Charles City - Holly O'Connell
- Clear Lake - John Glynn
- Hampton-Dumont - Becky Wrolson and Mackenzie Benning
- Homeschool - Enoch Pedersen
- Mason City - Bailey O'Brien, Besim Pivic, Grant Johnson, Janikka Costorena, and Jessica Graham
- Newman - Alyssa Lau
- Osage - Starr Huebsch
- Riceville - Alyssa Schwarck.

The goals of the Academy included introducing students to entrepreneurship; helping them understand critical-thinking skills, and giving students a career option of being a "job creator" instead of a "job taker."

Part of being a job creator requires developing a business idea and a plan to put that idea into action, and during the week-long academy, student teams completed this challenge and developed business plans for their unique business ideas.

Following daily classroom activities, the students traveled to several area businesses to learn firsthand from area entrepreneurs. This year's academy highlighted Jendro Sanitation, Rustic Corner, and Three C's Bistro in Charles City; Eternity Wireless and Pita Pit in Mason City; and TeamQuest and GeJo's by the Lake in Clear Lake. Students listened to the entrepreneurial stories of how these businesses were formed.



YEA students pose in front of the whitewater river course in Charles City.

Mason City student Jessica Graham said, "From YEA, I took away new friendships, lasting memories, and hundreds of new doors for opportunity."

John Glynn said, "The YEA camp was a great experience for me. The camp gave me a good idea of what it would take to start my own business. I would recommend it to any student that wants a better understanding of the business world."

Bair Becomes Certified Business Advisor

Ted Bair, regional director of the NIACC Small Business Development Center, has achieved the rank of Certified Business Advisor® (CBA), a program developed specifically for the SBDC-employed professional who counsels, guides, and informs potential and existing entrepreneurs.

Developed by the University of Toledo graduate school of business and their professors, the CBA program offers a concise, yet comprehensive, up-to-date curriculum designed for maximum on-the-job performance.

Bair has been counseling businesses in Winnebago, Worth, Mitchell, Hancock, Cerro Gordo, Floyd, Wright and Franklin counties for 6 years.



SBDC Regional Director Ted Bair

The Iowa Small Business Development Center (SBDC) program provides expert, confidential business counseling and affordable, practical training workshops to hundreds of thousands of Iowa businesses and entrepreneurs in all 99 Iowa counties. A statewide outreach program of Iowa State University's College of Business, the SBDC is funded in part through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration. For more information, contact Ted Bair, North Iowa Area SBDC, at 641-422-4342.



Dream Big Grow Here is a contest for small business owners in Iowa. Contestants can win up to \$15,000 and gain statewide publicity by competing in one of the regional contests, followed by a statewide Pitch-Off event during the annual EntreFest! conference.

To participate, small business owners simply upload their 'dreams' during a regional contest administered by their regional sponsor. The sponsors of the 2012 North Central Iowa Region contest are the NIACC JPEC, the North Iowa Corridor Economic Development Corporation, Charles City Area Development Corporation, Forest City Economic Development, Franklin County Development Association, Hancock County Development Corporation, Mitchell County Economic Development, and Winnebago-Worth Counties Betterment Council.

After submitting their 'dream', the small business owners then encourage friends, customers and other business owners to vote for them. In 2011, 142 Iowa companies competed in one of six regional contests, attracting more than 90,000 supporters. Each regional contest winner received \$5,000 and a chance to win the \$10,000 grand prize.

To apply for the 2012 North Central Iowa Grant Contest, visit <http://www.DreamBigGrowHere.com> and follow the links and instructions to complete an entry in the appropriate contest based on your location. The North Central Iowa contest is open to residents of Cerro Gordo, Floyd, Franklin, Hancock, Mitchell, Winnebago, Worth and Wright counties. Participants cannot have more than 25 employees, must be for-profit or nonprofit organizations, and the applicant must be 18 years of age or older.

The North Central Iowa Contest begins September 19, 2012 and ends on October 17, 2012. Voting begins on October 18, 2012 and ends on October 31, 2012. Be sure to check out Dream Big Grow Here and vote!

NIACC JPEC, SBDC, and Business Accelerator

July 2011 - June 2012
Business Statistics



	July 2011- June 2012	Since 1997
New Business Starts	43	439
New Jobs Created	107.5	1,480.5
Entrepreneurship Program Participants	4,057	29,469



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JPEC Launch and Grow Your Business Offered this Fall

The first session of *JPEC Launch and Grow Your Business* will be offered by the NIACC John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center this fall. *JPEC Launch and Grow Your Business* replaces the FastTrac® course. The new course is designed to help the start-up and current entrepreneur in developing a business concept and evaluating it through each step of the business planning process. Participants will learn how to research, develop, and write detailed business plans. *Launch and Grow* covers all aspects of launching a business from licenses to bookkeeping to marketing to setting up shop. Participants work on their own business ideas or ventures throughout the course, with the goal of moving their ventures to reality or new levels of growth.

JPEC Launch and Grow Your Business is for you if:

- You're currently in the process of starting your own business and want to get things done as efficiently as possible, yet still do them right.
- You want to make certain you take care of all the details of getting a business underway, organize the process, and get some good advice.
- You're going to start a business soon and need a plan on how to go about it. You have an idea for a business but don't know where to start.
- You already run a business but would like to improve operations, marketing, and/or take care of essential aspects of growing a company.
- You're a student in an entrepreneurship or small business class and need to launch a complete business in a limited time period.

JPEC Launch and Grow Your Business will be held on Thursday evenings from 6:00-9:30 p.m. beginning September 13, 2012 on the NIACC campus. The cost for the course is \$199 and the course number is 83919. Call 641-422-4358 to register.