

*Together, Shaping the Future*

## Staci Ackerson Wins 2019 Neal Smith Entrepreneur of the Year Award

America's SBDC Iowa (SBDC) is pleased to announce Staci Ackerson of Shankland Insurance, Charles City, as the winner of the 2019 Neal Smith Entrepreneur of the Year Award.

The Neal Smith Entrepreneur of the Year Award honors an Iowa entrepreneur who has been in business a minimum of three years and has been significantly assisted by an Iowa Small Business Development Center. The award was established with a dual purpose—to honor long-time Iowa Congressman Neal Smith for his years of service to Iowa's small businesses, and to recognize Iowa's entrepreneurs, who are the driving force behind Iowa's economic growth.

Brook Boehmler, Regional Director, North Iowa Area SBDC, nominated Ackerson for the Neal Smith Award, stating, "Staci saw an opportunity to expand her insurance business, and began working with the North Iowa

Area SBDC to help make her vision come true. Staci and her husband rehabilitated the historic Charles City Western Railroad depot to house not only Shankland Insurance, but to also provide executive apartments and rental storage units. Staci lives her commitment to bettering her community, not only through a physical improvements to downtown, but in also volunteering her time and resources to several organizations in Charles City."

Staci Ackerson, a United States Navy Desert Storm veteran, acquired Shankland Insurance in 2012. Staci wanted to expand her business and her husband Stacy, a retired contractor, knew that Charles City had untapped potential. With Stacy's vision of rehabilitating the historic Charles City Western Railroad depot in mind, Staci reached out to the NIACC Pappajohn SBDC and Community Revitalization of Charles City to help provide cash flows and options for acquiring capital.



Staci and her husband Stacy worked to put together a plan that would not only house Shankland Insurance, but also provide executive apartments for long-term transitional corporate hires. Along with that plan, they used several pre-existing concrete piers for footing for small rental storage units, transforming a derelict property into an advantage for downtown Charles City.

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Tim Putnam, Director  
John Pappajohn  
Entrepreneurial Center

# Director's Notes

## Recognizing Entrepreneurs and Creating an Entrepreneurial Mindset

North Iowa has so many great entrepreneurs with great stories, and it's always a great source of pride when we get the opportunity to share

these stories with the state of Iowa. For the second year in a row and third out of the last four years, a North Iowa entrepreneur has been recognized as the America's SBDC Iowa 2019 Neal Smith Entrepreneur of the Year with the award going to Staci Ackerson of Shankland Insurance, Charles City. I hope you enjoy the article on Staci and her business Shankland Insurance in this edition of the newsletter.

We're happy to share more great news about Brad and Angie Barber, owners of Cabin Coffee Franchising, Inc. as they have been selected by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) as the 2019 Iowa State Small Business Persons of the Year. Brad and Angie Barber will be traveling to our nation's capital in early May to be recognized during National Small Business Week and to find out if they are named the National Entrepreneurs of the Year. This is a very well deserved honor for Angie and Brad, and all the Cabin Coffee franchise owners and employees.



### Entrepreneurial Mindset

This next fall will be the 5th year for NIACC's Common Read program. NIACC's Common Read engages faculty, staff, and students across campus by having students read a common book and engaging in classroom discussions as well as out of class activities. NIACC also brings the authors to campus to engage with the students and hosts a keynote presentation that is open to the public through the NIACC Performing Arts Series.

The past Common Read Books have been: *Wine to Water*, *Orphan Train*, *Spare Parts*, and *The Terrorist's Son*. For this fall the book selected for the NIACC Common Read is *Who Owns the Ice House? Eight Life Lessons from an Unlikely Entrepreneur* by Clifton Taulbert and Gary Schoeniger.

Clifton Taulbert was born to a teenage mom in the 1940s in the Mississippi Delta during the time of segregation when few opportunities for success, much less gainful employment, existed. Clifton worked in the cotton fields until the age of 13 when he was hired by his Uncle Cleve to come work at his ice house. Uncle Cleve ran a pretty simple business and wouldn't be considered rich by any stretch of the imagination, but when you look at how he chose to live his life you realize what a visionary he really was. This book outlines the eight

life lessons that Clifton learned from his Uncle Cleve: Choice, Opportunity, Action, Knowledge, Resourcefulness, Reliability, Community, and Persistence.

For Fall 2020, NIACC will be taking Common Read one step further by embedding a curriculum built around *Who Owns the Ice House?* into a student success class. The Ice House Entrepreneurship Student Success Program is designed to inspire and engage students in the fundamental aspects of an entrepreneurial mindset as an essential life skill. The students will be exposed to experiential learning through the process of identifying problems, finding solutions, and making connections beyond the classroom – helping students to be more entrepreneurial in their thinking but not necessarily entrepreneurs.

There are a number of community colleges who have delivered this curriculum across the country and experienced encouraging outcomes. One of these outcomes is the increased level of persistence to complete degree programs by empowering students to take ownership of their future while helping them develop the knowledge, skills, and behaviors that will enable them to succeed in academics and in life.

NIACC will be piloting this program by training 20 faculty and staff, and delivering entrepreneurial mindset to over 300 students next fall. If this program delivers with similar results, North Iowa will see an increased pool of skilled workforce who will have improved their skills in leadership, critical thinking, problem solving, and creativity. What employer wouldn't want to hire a NIACC student with these skill sets?

The Pappajohn and Small Business Development Center newsletter is going green. If you would like to receive this publication electronically, please send your current email address to [pappajohn@niacc.edu](mailto:pappajohn@niacc.edu). Thank you for helping us make a difference.





# Ibrahim Alhussain joins the NIACC Pappajohn Center as Director of Business Acceleration & Innovation



Ibrahim Alhussain, Director  
Business Acceleration &  
Innovation Services

Ibrahim 'Ibro' Alhussain is the new director of acceleration and innovation at the John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center. He comes with over 10 years of industry experience in business operations, strategy and entrepreneurship.

Upon graduating high school, he joined the family business working in real estate and contracting. Several years later, he went on to earn a

bachelor's degree in business administration from Valparaiso University. During his time at Valpo, he was involved in many different student organizations which lead him to earn an MBA and join the Office of International Programs as the Assistant Director. In this role, he worked on the development and execution of a campus internationalization strategy which increased the number of international students from 200 to over 800 within 4 years. His efforts also created new collaboration and partnership with over 20 international institutions and government around the world.

Following, he joined the Saudi Aramco Entrepreneurship Center to setup up their business incubation program which later evolved into 'StartUp Lab' encompassing different entrepreneurial programs including their business accelerator, business incubator, seed funding, business development hub and co-working spaces. In addition, he served as mentor, coach and advocate to early stage startups. In this role, he created and commercialized over 70 startups and SME's for Aramco which created a pool of investment opportunities for Aramco.

Ibrahim is a family man. His wife, Ayat, is an electrical engineer and enjoys working with circuitry and robotics. They are parents to three children, Iba'a who is 8 years old enjoys drawing, arts and crafts and being outside. Hassan who is 6 years old enjoys playing with cars, writing in his books and playing video games, he considers him a 'gamer'. Sarah

who is 2 years old enjoys being a very opinionated two-year-old and wants a lot of attention. Also, part of his family is his mother, Rosemary, who was an English lecturer at Dammam University for over 35 years. She now enjoys being a grandmother to her grandchildren.

Ibrahim considers himself a passionate and enthusiastic professional but also enjoys working with cars, computer and electronics and watching documentaries.

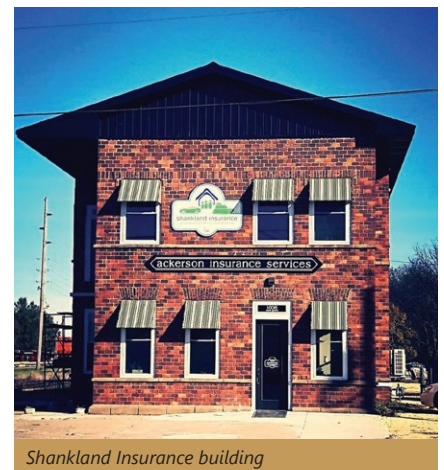


## Staci Ackerson Wins 2019 Neal Smith Entrepreneur of the Year Award *continued*

Working with the North Iowa SBDC, NIACC Pappajohn Center, Community Revitalization of Charles City, and the Main Street Program, Shankland Insurance was able to apply for and receive an IEDA Main Street Challenge Grant, the Charles City Community Grant, and funding from First Citizens Bank to rehabilitate the historic building. Mark Wicks of Community Revitalization Charles City said: "Staci had a real vision. This was a serious nuisance property – they really cleaned it up and turned it into something Charles City could be proud of. She brought that building

back to life while also expanding her business – it's a win-win for everybody in Charles City."

The SBDC Neal Smith Entrepreneur of the Year Award and the Deb Dalziel Woman Entrepreneurial Award will be presented to the winners in a special ceremony on February 26th at the State Capitol in Des Moines. This is the second year in a row a North Iowa entrepreneur has won this prestigious recognition. Brad and Angie Barber of Cabin Coffee Co. won the 2018 Neal Smith Entrepreneur of the Year Award.



Shankland Insurance building

# John Pappajohn Iowa Entrepreneurial Venture Competition to Once Again Award \$100,000 in Cash Prizes



## JOHN PAPPAJOHN

ENTREPRENEURIAL CENTERS

Applications for the John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Venture Competition are now being accepted. The fourteenth annual statewide competition will be awarding \$100,000 in cash prizes.

The \$100,000 in seed funding consists of a \$50,000 contribution from John and Mary Pappajohn and a \$50,000 match from the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA). The goal of this competition is to support Iowa's entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Iowa businesses that have been in operation for four years or less, or are not yet cash flow positive are eligible to apply. This competition is open to businesses including, but not limited to, technology, bio-technology, green technologies,

medical, advanced manufacturing, agriculture, engineering, and education industries.

Participants will be judged on written submissions, and those who advance to the final round of the competition, their presentations to a panel of judges. First place will be awarded \$40,000, second place \$25,000, and third place \$15,000. Awards for other categories will total \$20,000.

Applications for the John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Venture Competition are due Monday, May 20, 2019.

For more information or to apply, visit <https://www.pappajohncompetition.com/>

The 2019 John Pappajohn Iowa Entrepreneurial Venture Competition is co-hosted by the John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Centers and the Iowa Economic Development Authority.

## An Exciting Opportunity for ANY Student!

Free Week-Long Summer  
Entrepreneurship Event and receive a  
\$500 NIACC Scholarship and compete  
for an additional \$500 seed money

Reserve your  
spot today!



**WHAT** 2019 Youth Entrepreneurial Academy

**WHEN** Monday, June 10–Friday, June 14

**TIME** 8:30 am–4:00 pm

**WHERE** North Iowa Area Community College

**WHO** Current high school students

**DETAILS** Over 260 North Iowa students have participated in this program. Approximately 25 aspiring student entrepreneurs from North Iowa will participate. Join in the interesting activities, insightful guest speakers, and fun field trips! Students may stay in NIACC housing during the week or receive gas money for transportation.

**APPLY** Applications are available from your guidance counselor or the NIACC John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center website.  
**Applications are due by May 16 or until academy is full.**

### The Youth Entrepreneurial Academy is FREE!!

Students who choose **NIACC First** will receive an automatic \$500 YEA scholarship. Plus up to \$3,000 in additional scholarships are possible to students enrolling in the Entrepreneurship & Small Business Management AAS degree program!

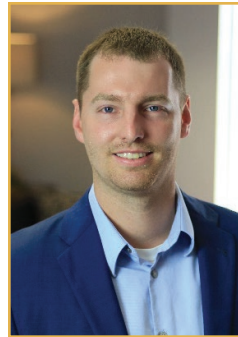
Want to learn more? Contact us: NIACC John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center, 500 College Drive, Mason City, IA 50401  
E-mail: [kelley.o'rourke@niacc.edu](mailto:kelley.o'rourke@niacc.edu) • (641) 422-4111 • [www.niacc.edu/pappajohn](http://www.niacc.edu/pappajohn)

# Pappajohn and Small Business Development Center Advisory Board Adds Two New Members

Tim Putnam, Pappajohn Director, announces the addition of Natalie Plagge from Clear Lake Bank & Trust in Clear Lake and Spencer Stensrude from Ag Ventures Alliance in Mason City to the NIACC Pappajohn and Small Business Development Center Advisory Board. Putnam noted, "Both of these individuals will bring valuable expertise to help North Iowa entrepreneurs and stakeholders."



Natalie Plagge is a Commercial Loan Officer at Clear Lake Bank & Trust in Clear Lake since May 2010. Previously she worked at Louisville Community Development Bank for three years. She earned a Bachelor's of Business Administration degree in Finance and Real Estate from the University of Northern Iowa. Natalie is married to Luke and has two girls Reese and Riley.



Spencer Stensrude is an Analyst at Ag Ventures Alliance located in Mason City. His work experience includes venture capital, commercial lending, small business management, and family farm operations. Spencer has worked with the Pappajohn Center on his many entrepreneurial endeavors from attending and mentoring the Youth Entrepreneurial Academy when he was at Lake Mills High School and while he earned his AA from NIACC. He earned a Bachelor's of Business Administration degree in Business Management / Finance and Banking from Buena Vista University. Spencer is married to Sherri and has three children Collin, Maddy and Josh.

## EntreFEST

May 16–17, 2019, in Cedar Rapids.



EntreFEST is a two-day conference, celebrating the spirit of entrepreneurship and innovation where professionals at every level can come together, share ideas, and own their success.



## Start Smart Workshops—Wednesdays

<b>April 10</b>	6:00–8:00 pm	NIACC, Pappajohn Center #117, 500 College Dr., Mason City, IA
<b>April 24</b>	6:00–8:00 pm	NIACC, Pappajohn Center #117, 500 College Dr., Mason City, IA
<b>May 15</b>	6:00–8:00 pm	NIACC, Pappajohn Center #117, 500 College Dr., Mason City, IA
<b>May 29</b>	10:00–Noon	IowaWORKS, 600 S. Pierce Ave., Mason City, IA
<b>June 12</b>	6:00–8:00 pm	NIACC, Pappajohn Center #118, 500 College Dr., Mason City, IA
<b>June 26</b>	6:00–8:00 pm	NIACC, Pappajohn Center #117, 500 College Dr., Mason City, IA

## TechBrew North Iowa—Tuesdays

<b>April 23</b>	5:00–7:00 pm	Mason City Brewing, 28 E State St., Mason City, IA
<b>May 28</b>	5:00–7:00 pm	Limestone Brewers, 518 Main St., Osage, IA
<b>June 25</b>	5:00–7:00 pm	Lake Time Brewery, 801 Main Ave., Ste C, Clear Lake, IA

## TechTalk AM– CEO Panel

### The Future of Technology in North Iowa

May 17, 2019

7:30–9:30 am

Surf Ballroom in  
Clear Lake, IA





JOHN PAPPAJOHN ENTREPRENEURIAL CENTER  
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[www.niacc.edu/pappajohn](http://www.niacc.edu/pappajohn)

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Q and A

**"How do we find you on the new NIACC website?"**

Click on Business & Community and then scroll down to our logo.



## NIACC Pappajohn Center Staff

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John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center Director

Brook S. Boehmler  
Small Business Development Center Director

Ibrahim Alhussain  
Accelerator & Innovation Services Director

Kelley O'Rourke  
School Partnership Entrepreneurial Coordinator

Mary Spitz  
Administrative Assistant – NIACC JPEC & SBDC

Joyce Martin  
Marketing & Communications Coordinator

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