

Together, Shaping the Future

Entrepreneur Spotlight: Matt Curtis of Wayne's Ski & Cycle in Mason City

Before purchasing Wayne's Ski & Cycle in 2004, Matt Curtis had never thought of himself as an entrepreneur or considered owning a business. But when the previous owner, Wayne, approached him about buying the business, Matt realized how much he liked the idea. "I followed the dream that I didn't even know I had," he said. "I discovered I wouldn't have to wear a tie or work for a corporation. I loved the lifestyle, working around all the things I liked to do, and I liked selling. It's rewarding to learn about the new products and technologies and help customers better enjoy their lifestyle through better products."

Matt had worked at Wayne's off and on since 1992; first starting while he attended NIACC and again upon his return to Mason City to pursue a career in human resources. Since its founding, as part of a regional chain of sporting goods stores, Wayne's

Ski & Cycle has been operating in Mason city for 44 years. Its continued presence in the community is largely due to the dedication and buy-in of its employees and the forethought of its owner. For their business legacy to continue after retirement, small business owners must think ahead and plan for succession. In this, Wayne's is a great local success story..

In 2004 Wayne's Ski & Cycle moved from their downtown Mason City location to a new building on the west side of town. "It was the right decision at the time," Matt said. "We needed the space and the accessibility." Now, almost twenty years later, Wayne's Ski & Cycle has moved back to downtown Mason City in a newly renovated, spacious building at 15 6th St SW. As rural downtowns strive towards revitalization, local businesses are taking notice and buying in. Throughout the process of purchasing



Matt Curtis

and renovating the new building, Matt received support and guidance from the NIACC Pappajohn Center & SBDC.

"If there's one thing I've learned, it's that you have to take a chance," Matt said. Business is always changing and evolving – what worked 20 years ago isn't necessarily what works today. Matt has worked to keep Wayne's Ski & Cycle nimble and relevant. This has included discovering a new business niche, seasonal ski swaps, growing a culture of employee buy-in, open to suggestions and new ideas, and moving the business location back to downtown Mason City. To contact Wayne's call 641.423.2851 or www.waynesbike.com.

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Tim Putnam, Director
John Pappajohn
Entrepreneurial Center

Director's Notes

Supporting North Iowa Businesses During Unprecedented Challenges

Supporting new business startups and existing small businesses is at the heart of what we do at the NIACC

Pappajohn Center and SBDC. Never had any of us imagined the challenge that lay ahead of us as the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic took hold of the world. Living in rural north central Iowa, we are at times insulated from many of the global and national events that happen; we sometimes become spectators watching events unfold across the world. In early March, the impact of COVID-19 in Seattle and New York drastically worsened and the virus rapidly began to impact every state and city across the county. As schools shut down and work from home orders were issued for all but those deemed essential, the Pappajohn Center & SBDC turned our attention to how we could help the small businesses of North Iowa

Funding Programs + North Iowa Small Business Help Line:

As we began to see federal and state organizations quickly pull together funding relief programs, we realized that many small businesses were going to struggle to understand the programs and to have the resources to complete the financial statement requirements of the applications. We had heard that businesses were calling the COVID Help Line established by the Cerro Gordo Department of Public Health which was not able to respond to those desperate pleas. Brook was also receiving feedback from the bankers in North Iowa that they were inundated with calls from small business owners. We knew we needed to help in some fashion. Through the Iowa SBDC, we were made aware of the efforts of a joint partnership established between Northeast Iowa Community College, Greater Dubuque Development Corporation (GDDC), The Small Business Development Center (SBDC), and the East Central Iowa Intergovernmental Association to help business owners, nonprofits, and self-proprietors navigate the application process for federal, state, and local funding. We quickly reached out for a quick lesson on how they were helping to provide assistance to business owners, the types of information they were providing, and the systems they were using to be effective. Within approximately six days we were able to establish the North Iowa Small Business Help Line, designed to assist businesses with the Iowa Business Relief Fund, Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), the Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL), and Cerro Gordo Relief Fund.

Working together:

When we started to take calls, the NIACC Pappajohn Center & SBDC team had a very basic guideline that was far from perfect – and we had more questions about the funding programs than we had answers. The rapid impact of COVID-19 on our local businesses required a rapid response. The most important thing was to get started and with the support of a number of North Iowa organizations that's just what we did.

What I believe to be one of the most significant outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic is how a large number of entities all started to work together to support North Iowa's small businesses and each other. The Vision North Iowa committee, lead by the North Iowa Corridor, worked to establish a COVID Response Team made up of a wide variety of entities including Chambers, Main Street, Economic Developers, NIACC, NIACC Pappajohn Center & SBDC, City Administration, Bankers, MercyOne, Elected Officials, and a number of others. Weekly, each entity provided a situation report detailing what they were working on, the results, and the gaps. It was truly an amazing experience how each entity worked to bring value by offering up a core competency and strove to make sure no business in North Iowa was left behind.

Supporting Small Businesses:

Through the Small Business Help Line we were able to assist 218 businesses in a variety of ways, including helping them understand what funding programs they qualified for, assisting with creating financial statements in order to file for the grants and loans, and answering basic questions on unemployment. In just about every call we took, the business owner was just glad to have someone to talk to and to help them navigate the rapidly changing information that was available. We also made 322 calls to past clients to make sure they had all the information they needed to apply for the funding programs available. From mid-March to end of May, we served 737 clients.

Using Zoom:

Prior to March we had all participated in only an occasional Zoom meeting. Thankfully, NIACC's Informational Technology (IT) Department was ready to utilize this technology that truly kept us engaged better than we ever would have guessed. When we moved to working remotely, the University of Iowa Venture School was halfway through its 8-week program. Candi Karsjens, Director of Innovation & Acceleration, pulled together her mentor team, including Anthony Riesen, Pappajohn Center IWI Special Projects Manager, and quickly worked with each person in the Venture School class who needed a Zoom tutorial in order to participate successfully. While we did lose a couple of participants, we were able to graduate 9 of the 13 who had enrolled in the program.

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We also recognized an opportunity to use this technology to bring education programs to North Iowa businesses through a weekly Marketing Wednesday and a Financial Friday Zoom meeting. For the Marketing Wednesday Zooms, we partnered with the Clear Lake Area Chamber, Main Street Mason City, Miriah Whitehurst, owner of All Things Advertising, and David Witzig, President of eCommerce Insights. Financial Fridays started with managing cash flow to understanding and navigating the Payroll Protection Program. We featured a weekly panel of experts consisting of CPAs, bankers, and guest speakers, including representatives from the SBA. We had great traction throughout, with 3,677 participants logging into these meetings. The recorded videos gathered 5,647 views.

Next Steps:

We know the impact of COVID-19 is going to have a lasting economic effect for the next couple of years and our services will be needed more than ever. One area we are currently ramping up is our Expert Mentor Network. These Mentors have skill sets in the areas of Accounting, Finance, Marketing, and Strategic Planning. We're utilizing these mentors with our Venture School graduates and for businesses that have immediate growth opportunities.

Entrepreneur of the Month

Every month, the Pappajohn Center recognizes North Iowa entrepreneurs who make our region a success. To read their full stories go to www.pappajohncenter.com/entrepreneurs/success-stories/

January 2020



Julia Dannen
D&S Services

February 2020



Brad Jones
Jones's Stop n Shop

March 2020



Matt Curtis
Wayne's Ski & Cycle

April 2020



**North Iowa's Chambers
of Commerce**

June 2020



**North Iowa's
Economic Developers**

Innovation Amidst COVID-19

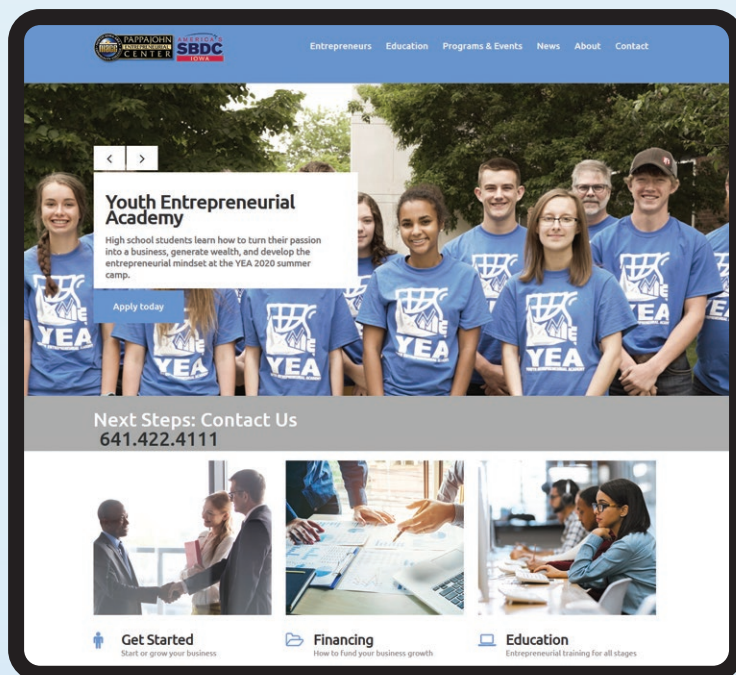
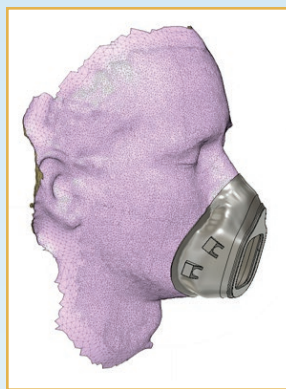
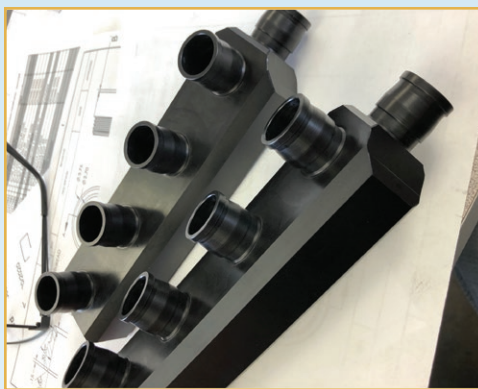
In April 2020, in response COVID-19, a group of industries met with MercyOne administrators and healthcare providers to unify local efforts to address projected shortages in essential hospital supplies and equipment. Two major objectives were identified: creating a way for ventilators to serve multiple patients and manufacturing personal protective equipment (PPE) for healthcare workers.

Matt Koch, of Sukup Manufacturing, Co in Sheffield spearheaded the ventilators, collecting requirements from MercyOne physicians and respiratory therapists. Working with Dean Sonquist of Plas-Tech Tooling, Inc in Garner, they developed a manifold prototype designed to split the output of a single ventilator; Plas-Tech Tooling, Inc produced the

prototypes. Koch also worked with Dr. Bill Riesen to develop a basic ventilator that could be rapidly produced, restoring some of the functionality the manifold removed.

Jim Miller of Metalcraft in Mason City took the lead on creating personal protective equipment, producing face shields for MercyOne physicians. Miller also helped test flexible 3D printer filament for Anthony Riesen, who developed N95 style respirators for the MercyOne Air Med Flight Crew.

To learn more about these creative ways the North Iowa community stepped forward to fight COVID-19, check out the full newsletter *Bits and Bytes* at www.pappajohncenter.com.



The NIACC Pappajohn Center and SBDC has a new online home. We're proud to announce the launch of our newly redesigned website at <https://www.pappajohncenter.com/>. The new website features a streamlined, modern design with improved functionality and easy access to essential information and resources to help entrepreneurs and community partners as we grow North Iowa's entrepreneurial ecosystem.



**REGISTER NOW
TO SELL ON
SHOP IOWA!**



Iowa businesses with a retail storefront can have a FREE shop to sell up to 25 products online through June 30th, 2021!*

Is your business right for Shop Iowa?

- ✓ You must be a small brick & mortar retail business in Iowa**
- ✓ You must have products that can be easily shipped
- ✓ You're ready to receive online orders

Ready to get started?

* Year one funded by IEDA. Rates after June 2021 start at \$25/mo. There's no obligation to commit to a monthly plan in year two.

** Retail Brick and Mortar storefronts within a commercial zoning classification. Small Business is defined as a business with fewer than twenty employees or an annual gross income of less than \$4M computed as the average of the three preceding years.

Venture School Fall 2020

The NIACC John Pappajohn Center is now accepting applications for the fall 2020 cohort of the University of Iowa's Venture School program which will be held on Thursday evenings, October 1st through November 19th at the NIACC Pappajohn Center. Space is limited. Deadline to apply is September 10th. U of I Venture School is a premier statewide program for entrepreneurs and is built from a streamlined curriculum developed by the National Science Foundation I-Corps at Stanford University and the University of California, Berkeley. Venture School emphasizes real-world entrepreneurship and innovation based on leading edge curriculum. This program works for startups, small businesses, non-profits, and corporate innovation teams. Your team will accelerate the startup process by testing your business

model hypotheses immediately. You will get out of the building to talk to customers, partners, and competitors, rather than relying on statistics and secondhand market research.

Each team is assigned a local entrepreneur as their mentor. Participating teams will be eligible to compete for cash awards both locally and at the state level during the Venture School launch day at EntreFEST 2021. Last year's graduates

from the Mason City cohort were awarded \$13,000 in prize money during the 2020 EntreFEST pitch competition. The cost for the course is \$299 (for 2 team members). Contact Candi Karsjens at candi.karsjens@niacc.edu with questions or if you are a local entrepreneur interested in becoming a Venture School mentor. To apply for the fall 2020 cohort, go to: www.venture-school.com and select the Mason City cohort in the drop down menu.



Start Smart Workshops—Wednesdays

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|-----------------|--------------|---|
| July 15 | 6:00–8:00 pm | Online via Zoom |
| Aug. 5 | 6:00–8:00 pm | Online via Zoom |
| Sept. 2 | 6:00–8:00 pm | NIACC, Pappajohn Center #117, 500 College Dr., Mason City, IA |
| Sept. 16 | 6:00–8:00 pm | NIACC, Pappajohn Center #117, 500 College Dr., Mason City, IA |
| Oct. 14 | 6:00–8:00 pm | NIACC, Pappajohn Center #117, 500 College Dr., Mason City, IA |
| Oct. 28 | 2:00–4:00 pm | IowaWORKS, 600 S. Pierce Ave., Mason City, IA |

This two-hour workshop is designed for anyone who is considering starting a business or expanding his or her current company. Participants will learn how to create a business plan, conduct market research, review different types of business ownership, and learn how to register a business. There is no cost to attend. **Registration is required to attend and to get the Zoom link, contact Mary Spitz at NIACC: 641-422-4111 or mary.spitz@niacc.edu.**

TechBrew North Iowa—Fourth Tuesday of the Month

Due to constantly updating guidelines regarding COVID-19, TechBrew North Iowa will be announcing whether events are in person or virtually on our Facebook page. TechBrews are networking events designed to bring together entrepreneurs, technologists, business people, and investors, with the first beverage on us. The event is sponsored by the partnership of the North Iowa Corridor EDC, Clear Lake Chamber, and the NIACC Pappajohn Center. To register join the TechBrew North Iowa Facebook group, select Events from the left-hand menu, select the event for that month and follow the link to register via Eventbrite.



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www.pappajohncenter.com

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"How do we find you on the new NIACC website?"
Click on Business & Community and then scroll down to our logo.



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