



Frank & Julie Fox
September 2020
Entrepreneurs of the Month

The NIACC John Pappajohn Center and SBDC are proud to announce Frank and Julie Fox of Fox Auction Co. in Mason City, IA, as the September 2020 Entrepreneurs of the Month.

Frank Fox founded Fox Auction Co. in 2004. Frank grew up on a farm and was familiar with the world of auctions and farm sales, the excitement of bidding, the camaraderie, the thrill of the win, the captivating power of the auctioneer. While working at a civil engineering firm, he decided to go to auctioneering school and discover if he could forge a new career path. Frank said, "I wanted to make a business of it. Not just punch a clock for someone else, but be in charge of managing my own time and profit."

In order to get their business off on the right foot, Frank and Julie enrolled in FastTrac (the predecessor to the Pappajohn Center & SBDC's eight-week entrepreneurship training program Launch & Grow). "It really helped us realize how much value there is to every hour when you're an entrepreneur, and how important it is to have a business plan to focus you and make the most out of your time. With the business plan, you know where you want to go, and you can keep

checking your milestones to make sure you're staying on track," Julie said. Frank and Julie have continued their relationship with the NIACC Pappajohn Center & SBDC, working with Ted Bair (former North Iowa SBDC Regional Director) and later Brook Boehmler, current Regional Director. "Working with the Pappajohn Center & SBDC has been invaluable. They asked us tough questions and made us think about the future," Julie said. Frank and Julie have utilized the Pappajohn Center & SBDC for additional training and expertise, and connections to expert mentors for the managerial expertise necessary for a business in the growth phase.

Fox Auction Co. provides a variety of services: land auctions, farm equipment sales, hay sales twice per month, farm retirement sales, estates, real estate, business liquidations, and commercial equipment. Frank and Julie pride themselves on providing a full range of auction services, catering to each client's specific needs. Fox Auction Co. also regularly holds benefit auctions for local organizations (e.g., The Friendly Garden Plant Club of Clear Lake, 4H), non-profits (Ducks Unlimited,

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Director's Notes

North Iowa Venture School (VS) is now on its 4th cohort with teams from across North Iowa and a wide range of business start-up concepts. Since the very first class two years ago the North Iowa Venture School has come a very long way.

The Venture School Mentors: This has truly been an area where we've been diligent in ensuring every team in the VS class has an experienced business mentor. While we are very close to having a one to one team-mentor pairing we still need to recruit additional entrepreneurial mentors. If you are interested in becoming a Venture School Mentor we'd love to hear from you and we guarantee that you will truly enjoy the program and the entrepreneurs will be very grateful to have you on their team. Contact Candi Karsjens at candi.karsjens@niacc.edu with questions or if you are a local entrepreneur interested in becoming a Venture School Mentor.

Connecting resources: Another area we have worked to improve is our ability to connect every entrepreneur to mentors and higher-level resources that are critical to their start-up success. While every start-up has unique needs, we have been able to connect with a number of resources locally, regionally and nationally. Most recently, we've mentored a new entrepreneur to successfully file for a Small Business Innovation Grant (SBIR) through our strong alliance with the Iowa Innovation Corporation. Two Entrepreneur's we've worked with have been accepted into a national ag accelerator

North Iowa Venture School Launches Fall 2020 Cohort

MASON CITY, Iowa – The Fall 2020 North Iowa Venture School cohort launched on Thursday October 1, 2020. The University of Iowa's Venture School is being held as a hybrid in-person/virtual event program through November 19 at the NIACC John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center. 11 teams are enrolled in the Fall 2020 North Iowa cohort. Venture School is a premier statewide program for entrepreneurs based on the Lean LaunchPad methodology developed by Steve Blank out of UC-Berkeley and adopted by the NSF I-Corps™ program.

Venture School emphasizes real-world entrepreneurship and innovation based on a leading-edge curriculum. This program works for startups, small businesses, non-profits, and corporate

program through collaborative efforts with our partner, Ag Ventures Alliance. And, recently we have assisted in securing funding for a variety of entrepreneurs by working alongside our area financial institutions and leveraging various revolving loan funds.

Why this all matters: Many times people believe the false premise that innovation only happens at the university level or in urban areas. Or, that the resources needed to help advance innovative ideas do not reach our start-ups in our rural communities. Over the past three years we've been working hard to change this narrative and it truly all began by becoming a host location for the University of Iowa's Venture School program. After training with U of I Venture School instructors and with a regional NSF I-Corps™ program at Purdue University, Candi Karsjens has been invited to serve as an adjunct instructor with the national NSF I-Corps™ program. She is currently serving as part of the Midwest I-Corps™ Hub's national teaching team in the fall cohort. This alliance, along with a number of formal partnerships we've established over the years positions North Iowa to become a rural hub for Innovation.



Tim Putnam, Director
John Pappajohn
Entrepreneurial Center

innovation teams. Teams accelerate the startup process by testing their business model hypotheses immediately through direct conversation with customers, partners, and competitors, rather than relying on statistics and secondhand market research.

Each Venture School team is assigned a local entrepreneur as their mentor. \$5,000 in prize money will be awarded during the Venture School Launch Day Competition to be held during Global Entrepreneurship Week on Thursday, November 19th. Participating teams will also be eligible to compete for cash awards locally and at the state level during the statewide Venture School Launch Day Competition at EntreFEST 2021. Last year's Mason City graduates were awarded \$13,000 in prize money during the 2020 Venture School Launch Day Competition.

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North Iowa Venture School continued from page 2

The Fall 2020 North Iowa Venture School teams are:



Lena Boehmer
Mason City



Suzanne Crane and Elisha Marin
Mason City / Albert Lea



Lynx and Ida Gregoire
Mason City



Joseph Jamigaard and Jackie Villela
Lake Mills



Bethany Langfitt and Gloria Sobek
Kanawha



Georgina Rodriguez and Arian Ortiz
Mason City



Zack Smith and Sheldon Stevermer
(not pictured)
Lake Mills



Ashley Stokke
Clear Lake



Elizabeth Thompson
Forest City



Dr. Angela VanGilder
Charles City



Dan and Brenda Thompson
Lake Mills/California

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 Spring 2021 cohort, please email Mary Spitz at mary.spitz@niacc.edu

Venture School Mentor Spotlight

Candi Karsjens, Director of Innovation & Acceleration would like to introduce David Witzig. David is one of our veteran mentors for the 8-week Venture School program. David has volunteered his time for all five cohorts we have hosted here at NIACC Pappajohn Center. His current business is eCommerce Insights based in Iowa and Minnesota. David Witzig's extensive business knowledge and years of entrepreneurial experience has contributed to his expertise in creating and scaling a business, lead generation, sales/marketing, customer service, e-commerce, and market research.

David noted that, "I help companies transform their business from traditional channels of sales and marketing to eCommerce and digital

marketing. I've managed industry-leading teams that build, fix and/or grow retailer's eCommerce business and run best-in-class digital marketing programs to drive traffic and revenue to our websites."

At the Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center we follow the same mentor manifesto put forth by David Cohen and Brad Feld of Techstars®. *Techstars® has a tested and successful model for creating a culture of entrepreneurs and innovation and building a mentor network to support them.



David Witzig
eCommerce Insights

Entrepreneurs 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/

July 2020



Jayson Ryner
ReEnvision Ag

August 2020



Dr. Brady Wilson
Victory Chiropractic

September 2020



Frank & Julie Fox
Fox Auction Co.

October 2020



Jeff & Lori Otto
Otto's Oasis

Salvation Army), and individuals in need. “This is one of the best businesses to be in to use your talents to give back to the community,” Frank observed.

Over the last 10 or 15 years, the internet has irrevocably changed the way people buy and sell. Frank, who has a background in technology and computer-aided drafting, quickly realized that the internet would shape the future of the business. Fox Auction Co. was an early adopter, one of the first in the region to develop a website and utilize online bidding

technologies like webcast bidding and online auctions, as well as important strategies like digital marketing and drone footage for land sales. But although Fox Auction Co. has nimbly adapted to technological advances, the core of the business remains the same: relationships. Frank said, “It all comes down to the relationships with our clients and our bidders and buyers. Our reputation is the best word-of-mouth marketing.” Auctions are based on trust between the seller, auctioneer, and buyer. Julie added, “We’re there for a big event in someone’s life. When

you’re conducting an estate sale, it’s a representation of that person, and it’s important.”

Frank and Julie had a few final words of advice to entrepreneurs, “Work through the process and keep moving forward through the mistakes or failures because you will make them. Find your cheerleaders, and keep them close. It’s amazing how many people want to help you when they see who you are and what you represent – not just friends and family, but also your bankers and mentors, your community.”

NIACC Pappajohn Center & SBDC to hold Entrepreneurship Events during Global Entrepreneurship Week (Nov 16-21)

MASON CITY, Iowa – The NIACC John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center & SBDC is hosting 6 days of events in celebration of Global Entrepreneurship Week on November 16-21. Global Entrepreneurship Week (GEW) inspires millions every year to explore their potential while fostering connections and increasing collaboration within their ecosystems to empower entrepreneurs and strengthen communities. Founded in 2008, GEW now spans tens of thousands of activities, competitions, and events in 170+ countries every November, aimed at making it easier for anyone, anywhere to start and scale a company. There are

four themes for GEW 2020: Ecosystems, Education, Inclusion, and Policy.

GEW reaches beyond traditional startup hubs, envisioning one global entrepreneurship ecosystem available to all. The NIACC Pappajohn Center & SBDC is celebrating GEW with a week of events for entrepreneurs and innovators of all stages: from fledgling innovators to experienced entrepreneurs, from startups to established businesses navigating the current economic, financial, and public health situation.

For more information and registration, visit <http://www.pappajohncenter.com/gew>

North Iowa Global Entrepreneurship Week Events November 16-21, 2020

Date	Event	Time
Monday, Nov. 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IASBDC Mobile Appointments for ShopIowa.com NIACC Student Entrepreneur Engagement: Vision Boards 101 Survive to Thrive: The 3 Stop Process to Restaurant Success via Zoom Innovation Workspace Initiative: Intro to 3D Printing via Zoom 	8am-4:30pm 12:30-1:30pm 3:30-5pm 4:30-6pm
Tuesday, Nov. 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IASBDC Mobile Appointments for ShopIowa.com TechTalk sponsored by Henkel Construction & Accord Architecture via Zoom 	8am-4:30pm 5-7pm
Wednesday, Nov. 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Iowa Targeted Small Business Program via Zoom NIACC Entrepreneur Organization (NEO) Student Club Meeting via Zoom Innovation Workspace Initiative: Intro to Onshape via Zoom Start Smart: Introduction to Entrepreneurship via Zoom 	9-10am 2:30-3:30pm 4:30-6pm 6-8pm
Thursday, Nov. 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Venture School Launch Day Competition 	5:30-9pm
Friday, Nov. 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial Friday: SBA COVID-19 Assistance Updates via Zoom 	9-10am
Saturday, Nov. 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovation Workspace Initiative: Intro to Onshape via Zoom 	3-4:30pm

New Pappajohn SBDC Advisory Board Member

Tim Putnam, Pappajohn Director announced the addition of Dr. Heather Rissler, NIACC Biology Instructor, and Interim Division Chair of Natural Science to the Advisory Board at the September 2020 Zoom meeting. Heather received her PhD from Australian National University and is currently a Doctor of Education (EdD) student at the University of Dayton.

Heather has expertise in Biochemistry, Molecular Biology, STEM Education, and Entrepreneurial Mindset Learning.

Tim noted, “Heather has been passionate about embedding the entrepreneurial mindset and experiential learning method into her college biology classes. Much of this passion originated with her efforts with the Verizon STEM Camp and working with middle school girls each summer. We look forward to learning from Heather on how the entrepreneurial mindset is helping her students in the classroom and how might we introduce her experiences with other faculty.”



Heather Rissler



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?

Visit www.ShopIowa.com

* 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.

North Iowa businesses invited to apply to the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses Program

Grow your business right here in Iowa with the help of the world-class Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses Program.

North Iowa businesses are invited to apply by November 19, 2020. Applicants selected for the program will receive a world-class business education and connections to a professional support network at **no cost**. The 10,000 Small Businesses program is ideal for established small businesses looking to figure out the next step.

The Spring 2021 cohort will be held virtually, making this a great opportunity for rural business owners to benefit from this world-class program without the need to travel. 10,000 Small Businesses is an investment to help entrepreneurs create jobs and economic opportunity by providing them with greater access to education, financial capital, and business support services.

The Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses business management and education program is bringing an innovative program delivery model to Iowa. Business owners learn about access to financial capital and build a powerful network of professional support. The curriculum focuses on practical business skills, including negotiations, employee management, and marketing.

Through 10,000 Small Businesses, program tuition is offered at no cost to the business owner and accepted applicants receive:

- Hands-on education for business growth
- Access to highly-trained professionals who understand what it takes to grow a small business
- An expanded peer network of small business owners from across the country

Start Smart Workshops—Wednesdays

Nov. 18	6:00–8:00 pm	Jan. 27	6:00–8:00 pm
Dec. 2	6:00–8:00 pm	Feb. 10	6:00–8:00 pm
Dec. 16	6:00–8:00 pm	Feb. 27	2:00–4:00 pm
Jan. 13	6:00–8:00 pm		

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, go to our new website at <http://pappajohncenter.com/programs-events/start-smart/> to receive the zoom link.**

TechBrew North Iowa—Fourth Tuesday of the Month

TechBrew North Iowa—is an event designed to bring together entrepreneurs, technologists, business people, and investors to better serve North Iowa's STEM and entrepreneurial ecosystems. Sponsored by community organizations in partnership with the North Iowa Corridor EDC, Clear Lake Chamber, and the NIACC Pappajohn Center. Founding partner: TAL.

To learn more, join the TechBrew North Iowa Facebook Group at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/TechBrewNorthIowa/>



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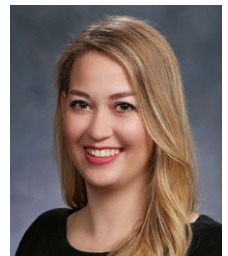
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