



John Pappajohn

July 31, 1928 – April 22, 2023

Entrepreneur. Immigrant. Business Leader. Venture Capitalist. Philanthropist.



It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of John Pappajohn, the founder, and namesake of the John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Centers. He died on April 22, 2023, at the age of 94. John Pappajohn was a man who believed in the power of hard work, the importance of giving back, and the value of helping others achieve their dreams.

Tim Putnam, former Director of the NIACC Pappajohn Center, said, "John always talked about having a Positive Mental Attitude, and this philosophy was a driving force behind how we carried out our daily work. John has created a legacy that will be passed on by the thousands of entrepreneurs assisted by the five entrepreneurial centers, something that cannot be replicated anywhere across the country. It was an honor to have been a part of the NIACC Pappajohn Center in John's hometown."

John Pappajohn was born in Greece in 1928, immigrating to the United States when he was nine months old. He grew up in the Greek community in Mason City, Iowa, with his parents, George and Maria, and brothers Socrates and Aristotle. He often said he learned the value of hard work and how to solve problems at an early age. When John was 16, his father died suddenly, leaving John, his mother, Maria, and his brothers to run the family grocery store. John graduated from Mason City High School, then earned a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of

Iowa. It took six years to complete his degree because John and his brothers took turns: while two went to school, the other would work.

After graduating from the University of Iowa, Pappajohn returned to Mason City and went into the insurance business. He then started his own company, Guardsman Life Insurance, in 1962. After seven years, he sold the company and used the money to become a venture capitalist, founding his own financial consulting firm, Equity Dynamics, and establishing a venture capital fund, Pappajohn Capital Resources. His investments in medical technology and health care were particularly successful. Pappajohn took part in more than 100 startups and 50 IPOs and has served as a director for over 40 public companies. He built his reputation as a savvy investor with a nose for potential and a tireless champion who worked hands-on with the companies he backed.

John Pappajohn was a passionate advocate for entrepreneurship. In 1996, Pappajohn provided the seed funding to establish the five John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Centers across the state of Iowa. The centers are located at North Iowa Area Community College in his hometown of Mason City, and at the University of Iowa, Iowa State University, Drake University, and the University of Northern Iowa. Thousands of startups have launched through the five Pappajohn

Centers, and countless entrepreneurs and students have benefited from the knowledge and training the centers provide.

Candi Karsjens, DBA Director of the NIACC John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center, said, "John Pappajohn's generosity knew no bounds, and his entrepreneurial spirit inspired us all. He may be gone, but his legacy will continue to live on through the countless lives he touched and the entrepreneurial ecosystem he catalyzed in Iowa."

In this Issue

Directors Notes	2
Steffens Jr., Awarded the Kibbie Award ..	2
NIACC Students Win Seed Money at Pappajohn Student Entrepreneurial Venture Competition.....	3
Your Nerdy Best Friend	3
Google Your Way to Success.....	3
North Iowa Entrepreneur Takes Home Win form 2023 Venture School Launch Day Competition at EntreFEST	4
Fall 2023 Venture School Now Accepting Applications	4
NIACC John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center Hosts 2023 Youth Entrepreneurial Academy.....	5
Venture School Coach Spotlight.....	5
Pappajohn Center Staff	6
Pappajohn SBDC Advisory Board Members	6



Director's Notes

Innovation: The Heart of Entrepreneurship

Innovation is the lifeblood of entrepreneurship, fueling the pursuit of novel solutions and transformative ideas. For entrepreneurs, innovation is not just about creating a new product or service; it is a mindset that embraces curiosity, adaptability, and the courage to challenge the status quo. Successful entrepreneurs understand that innovation is a continuous process of exploration, experimentation, and learning from failures. It enables them to identify untapped opportunities, disrupt markets, and stay ahead of the competition. Embracing innovation empowers entrepreneurs to create meaningful impact, address pressing societal needs, and build ventures that thrive in the ever-evolving business landscape. Innovation does not have to be disruptive, you can innovate across all processes and products.

I recently traveled to Denver to participate with other leaders from NIACC at the Alliance for Innovation and Transformation (AFIT) Summer Institute. At the heart of the AFIT Summer Institute was Larry Keely, an influential figure in the field of innovation management. Larry Keely's expertise has shaped the success of numerous organizations globally, enabling them to transcend conventional thinking and achieve breakthrough innovation. With a wealth of experience in diverse sectors, Keely offers unique perspectives and practical insights that entrepreneurs and business leaders will find invaluable.

The AFIT Summer Institute's focal point was the transformative concept of the "10 Types of Innovation." This pioneering

framework identifies ten distinct dimensions where innovation can be harnessed to drive growth and strategic advantage in higher education, but any business can use the process in any industry.

In his book, "The Ten Types of Innovation," Keely presents a transformative framework that revolutionizes how we perceive and approach innovation. This groundbreaking work introduces ten distinct categories where innovation can occur, going beyond conventional product-centric thinking. Keely's approach challenges entrepreneurs and business leaders to delve into all aspects of their organization, from internal structures to customer experiences, to uncover untapped opportunities for growth and differentiation. The process advocated in the book is a systematic and holistic approach, encouraging cross-functional collaboration and a culture of creativity within the organization. By adopting this comprehensive innovation methodology, businesses can drive sustainable success, disrupt industries, and gain a competitive advantage in an ever-changing market. Keely's insights empower leaders to embrace innovation as a continuous journey of evolution and reinvention, ultimately shaping the future of their ventures with transformative impact. If you are an entrepreneur or a business that is considering innovation as a part of your growth strategy, this book is a great read and a great tool for creating your own innovation strategy.



Candi Karsjens, DBA
Director, John Pappajohn
Entrepreneurial Center

Steffens Jr., Awarded the Kibbie Award

David Steffens Jr., NIACC Board President, was honored with the John P. Kibbie Award by the Community Colleges for Iowa on July 20, 2023. This prestigious award is given to a Trustee who has made a notable contribution to their community, community college, and particularly to the betterment of students. The NIACC Pappajohn Center extends our congratulations to David Steffens Jr., on this remarkable achievement.



Pictured Left to Right: NIACC Trustees: Cathy Rottinghaus, Debra Hill, David Steffens Jr., Nicki Prantner, Doug Krabbe, and NIACC President: Dr. Steven Schulz.

NIACC Students Win Seed Money at Pappajohn Student Entrepreneurial Venture Competition

On April 28, 2023, North Iowa Area Community College had two student teams compete in the Pappajohn Student Entrepreneurial Venture Competition. This event brought together students from various colleges across Iowa to showcase their innovative business ideas to a panel of judges. Maddy Kollasch from Gather and Grow Events and Oscar Madong from RetroFit Electric represented NIACC and were each awarded \$500 for being regional winners.

The competition had seventeen individuals from the University of Northern Iowa, the University of Iowa, Drake University, Iowa State University, and North Iowa Area Community College. The judges were Lisa Shimkat, state director at Iowa Small Business Development Center (SBDC); Adrienne Greenwald, managing principal at VentureNet Iowa; and Curt Nelson, CEO and President of Entrepreneurial Development Center (EDC). The

students had to submit executive summaries using the one-page Business Model Canvas format and financial projections and were judged on the concept and viability of their business ideas.

The competition was founded 23 years ago by John Pappajohn, who wanted to help student entrepreneurs pursue their business ideas while enrolled at college in Iowa. To date, the Pappajohn Student Entrepreneurial Venture Competition has awarded over \$350,000 to student entrepreneurs.



Pictured Left to Right: Ashley Page, Maddy Kollasch, Oscar Madong, Candi Karsjens, and Brook Boehmler



**Tech-Driven Productivity
Empowering Businesses for Success**

September 19, 2023, 8am-12pm

Best Western Holiday Lodge, Clear Lake

January 10, 2024, 9am-10am – Zoom

\$69.00 per ticket

**Who: Entrepreneurs, Executives,
Business Professionals**

A seminar series organized in collaboration with NIACC Business Solutions and the Clear Lake Chamber. Our esteemed guest speaker for the seminar is none other than your Nerdy Best Friend, Beth Z! Beth is a renowned expert in leveraging technology to enhance productivity, and she will be sharing invaluable insights and strategies to help you unlock your full potential for success.

- Enhance productivity through technology-driven solutions
- Increase knowledge to leverage technology for business success
- Discover practical everyday strategies to boost daily productivity
- Explore the potential of AI
- Professional development to have tech drive your success.

To register go to our webpage
www.pappajohncenter.com/nbf

Google your way to success

🔍 Unleash the power of Google for business growth

Three Part Series with Google Digital Coach Lindsey Newland

Build Your Online Presence: Establish Domain, Website, Email
September 20, 2023 | 1-2pm | Zoom

Unlock Online Success: Reaching Customers with Google
October 11, 2023 | 10-11am | NIACC PC 117

Thrive in a Digital World: Connect with Customers and Manage Your Business Remotely
November 15, 2023 | 11am-12pm | NIACC PC 224



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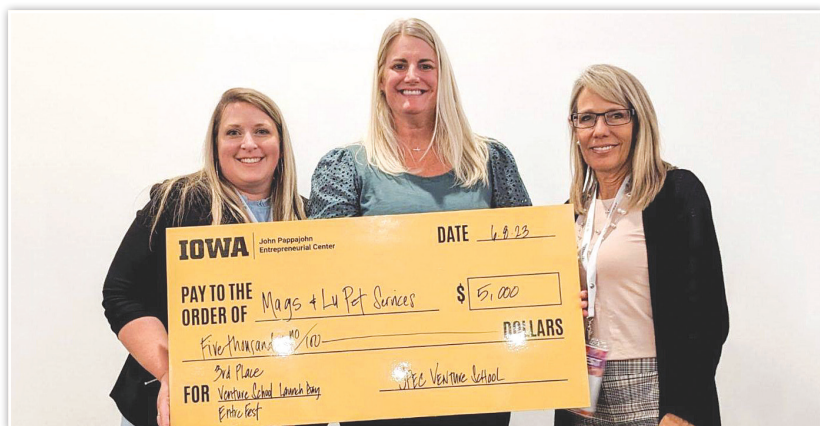
North Iowa Entrepreneur Takes Home Win from 2023 Venture School Launch Day Competition at EntreFEST

Mary Jo Vrba of Mason City, IA, took home Third Place at the 2023 University of Iowa Venture School Launch Day, which was held Thursday, June 8, 2023. Eleven teams from across the state of Iowa competed in the event, which was held at EntreFEST, a two-day entrepreneurial conference in Iowa City, IA.

Mary Jo Vrba won the Third Place prize of \$5,000 for her business, Mags & Lu, which provides full-service dog boarding and daycare. First place and \$15,000 was won by SimplSupport (Lori Palmer); Second place and \$10,000 was won by Autistic & Loved (Dr. Kit Evans-Ford). There were two finalists, Portico (Brian Nigg) and Jolt Education (Jade Peterson), and six semifinalists that received \$1,000 each. The semi-finalists were Retrofit Electric (Oscar Madong of Mason City), A Kneaded Break (Britt Bock of Charles City), Akademi Arts Progress (Alan Murdock), Level Up Boulderling (Paul Altaver), Rose and Oak Athletics (Ellen Franklin), Payroll Vault (Aaron Bontrager).

Mary Jo Vrba and semi-finalists Oscar Madong and Brittany Bock are graduates of the Venture School program at the NIACC John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center. The NIACC Pappajohn Center Venture School program is led by Candi Karsjens, Director of the Pappajohn Center and certified NSF i-Corps instructor. Candi Karsjens, Director of the NIACC Pappajohn Center, said, "EntreFest is such a great culminating event to celebrate the best Venture School graduates from across Iowa and really celebrates the spirit and culture of entrepreneurship in Iowa. Our participants did a fantastic job pitching their business ideas and representing North Iowa and the culture of entrepreneurship of our region."

North Iowa entrepreneurs continue to perform well at the statewide competition. In 2021, Zack Smith of The Stock Cropper took home First Place, and Nate Julseth of Nate's Powder Coating took home First Runner-Up. In 2022, Billie Asmus of Silicone Studios won Third Place, while Dr. Tara Nichols of Maters of Comfort and Josh Jeske of Terraform Tillage both won Honorable Mentions.



Pictured Left to Right: Ashley Page, Mary Jo Vrba, and Candi Karsjens

Fall 2023 Venture School Now Accepting Applications

The NIACC John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center is now accepting applications for the Fall 2023 cohort of the University of Iowa Venture School program. The Fall 2023 program will be held as a hybrid in-person/online on Thursday evenings and will begin with an in-person orientation session on Thursday, September 28, 2023.

U of I Venture School is the 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 a leading-edge curriculum. Participants will encounter the chaos and uncertainty of creating new ventures based on customer discovery.

The Fall 2023 Venture School in-person orientation will be held Thursday, September 28, to explain the course expectations and to meet the coaches. The following classes will be held via Zoom on Thursdays, October 5 – November 9, 5:30-9:00 pm. The Launch Day Pitch Competition will be held in-person on the NIACC campus on Thursday, November 16, 2023. The cost for the program is \$299 per team.

Each Venture School team will be assigned a local entrepreneur as their coach. 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 2024. Last year's Mason City Venture School graduates were awarded \$7,000 in prize money during the 2023 EntreFEST pitch competition.

Contact Mary Spitz at mary.spitz@niacc.edu with any Venture School questions or if you are a local entrepreneur interested in becoming a Venture School coach.

To apply for the Fall 2023 cohort, visit <http://www.venture-school.com> and select the Mason City cohort in the drop-down menu. The deadline to apply is **September 18, 2023**.

NIACC John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center Hosts 2023 Youth Entrepreneurial Academy

The NIACC John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center conducted the 2023 Youth Entrepreneurial Academy (YEA) on June 12-16. YEA is a free one-week academic camp sponsored by the John K. and Luise V. Hanson Foundation and is offered annually to all North Iowa high school students interested in entrepreneurship. Each participant receives a \$500 NIACC scholarship sponsored by John Pappajohn. This year's academy included 12 high school students.

The participants and schools represented were:

- Josh Hanson, Newman Catholic Schools
- Brian Lollar, Clear Lake High School
- Luis Morales-Calles, Belmond-Klemme High School
- Eric Pals, Mason City High School
- Eastyn Petersen, West Fork High School
- Fernanda Ramirez, West Fork High School
- Daytona Randall, Rudd-Rockford-Marble Rock CSD
- Fabian Rivera, Belmond-Klemme High School
- Addyson Runde, Northwood-Kensett High School
- Summer Schaer, Mason City Alternative High School
- Blake Vorhes, West Fork High School
- Avery Williams, Home School

Throughout the week-long camp, the aspiring entrepreneurs worked diligently to develop a business model canvas. Students had the opportunity to network with local entrepreneurs, develop leadership skills, and gain fundamental skills required when starting a business. On Tuesday, June 20, the students pitched their business ideas by submitting an executive summary that included a company description, financial plans, and business model key measures that included startup costs and sales projections. The students competed

against their peers for a total of \$2,600 in cash prizes.

The Academy's director and mentor was Kelley O'Rourke, School Partnership Entrepreneurial Coordinator at the Pappajohn Center. The facilitators were Candi Karsjens, DBA Director John Pappajohn Enterprises Center, and Ashley Page, Director of Entrepreneurship Programs & Client Success at the Pappajohn Center.

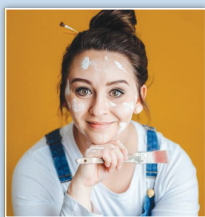
Guest speakers for the week were Joyce Martin, Pappajohn Center Marketing and Community Relations Manager; Jayson Ryner, founder of ReEnvision Ag; Brad and Angie Barber, Cabin Coffee; Stacy Doughan, President & CEO of the Clear Lake Area Chamber of Commerce.

The students presented their businesses to a panel of three judges: Hunter Callanan; Beth Bilyeu, Forest City Economic Development Corporation; and Brook Boehmler, North Iowa Area SBDC. The judges chose three businesses to win the top prizes, with two honorable mention prizes of \$250, and six honorable mention prizes of \$100.



Venture School Coach Spotlight

Introducing Billie Asmus, a member of our Venture School Coach network and the owner of Repaint Studios. Dr. Candi Karsjens, Pappajohn Center Director, is



pleased to make the introduction. Billie founded Repaint Studios in 2021 with a mission to paint a greener future using reusable and sustainable painting supplies. You can hear more about her entrepreneurial journey on her podcasts by visiting the <https://repaintstudios.com/pages/in-the-media>.

Billie has created a patent-pending silicone paint tray liner and lid, called the Repaint Tray. This product is of

high quality, non-toxic, sustainable, recyclable, reusable, and convenient. Her e-commerce/online business is based in Hampton, Iowa. As a Venture School coach, Billie specializes in production invention/manufacturing, patenting, and social media. When asked about the best business advice she has received, Billie replied, "There will be few times in your life when all your instincts will tell you to do something, something that defies logic, upsets your plans, and may even seem crazy to others. When that happens, you do it. Listen to your instincts and ignore everything else. Ignore the logic, ignore the odds, ignore the complications, and just go for it. Some of the greatest entrepreneurs were born this way," and

"The best investment you can make is in yourself."

For more information on Billie's business, please visit her website at <https://repaintstudios.com/> or send an email to info@repaintstudios.com. The Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center follows the mentor manifesto introduced by David Cohen and Brad Feld of Techstars®. Techstars® has a successful model for creating a culture of entrepreneurs and innovation and for building a mentor network to support them. The next Venture School cohort is set for the Fall of 2023. If you are interested in volunteering to be a coach for this program, please contact Mary Spitz at mary.spitz@niacc.edu.



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