

# 2024 Impact Report



## Together, Shaping the Future.

The NIACC Pappajohn Center is the expert in rural business innovation and success.

We're growing Iowa's entrepreneurial culture through grade school initiatives, college and community programs, and business training and development.



# Entrepreneur and Business Support



29

NEW BUSINESS STARTS



221

JOBS CREATED



\$162K

SEED MONEY AWARDED TO CLIENTS



\$8,876,441

TOTAL CAPITAL INFUSION



410

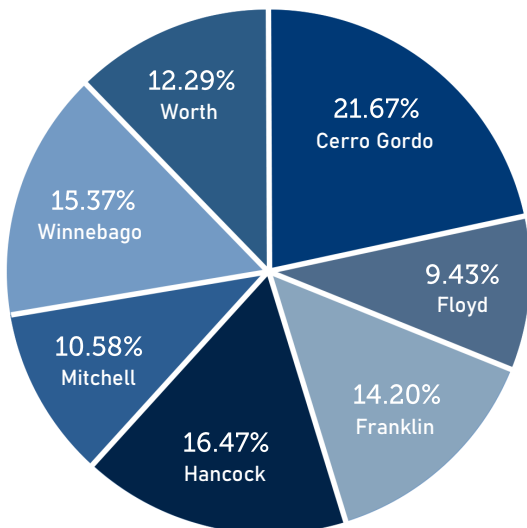
CLIENTS COUNSELED

1,636

COUNSELING HOURS



CLIENTS COUNSELED PER CAPITA



# OF CLIENTS COUNSELED PER COUNTY

County	Population	Clients Counseled
Cerro Gordo	42,406	184
Floyd	15,326	29
Franklin	9,875	28
Hancock	10,615	35
Mitchell	10,518	22
Winnebago	10,571	32
Worth	7,297	18

## Entrepreneurship Education



26

BUSINESS PROGRAMS  
& WORKSHOPS



431

ATTENDEES



24

MENTORS

### WORKSHOP TOPICS

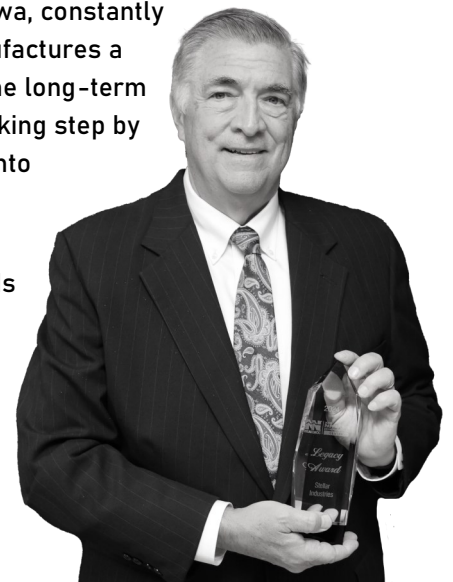
- Business Succession Planning
- Corporate Transparency Act Compliance
- Entrepreneurship Essentials
- HR Foundations
- SSBCI Lending
- Credit Card Processing
- Venture Capital
- Marketing
- Cottage Kitchen Laws & Compliance

## The 2024 Pappajohn Gala Celebrating Entrepreneurial Excellence

The NIACC Pappajohn Center hosted the 2024 Pappajohn Gala on October 3rd to recognize and celebrate the hard work, determination, and accomplishments of North Iowa's entrepreneurs. Stellar Industries was honored with the Legacy Award. The Legacy Award recognizes a business that has made significant contributions to North Iowa through their vision and leadership. Stellar Industries and the Zrostlik family embody entrepreneurship in North Iowa, constantly innovating and expanding their footprint both locally and beyond. Stellar designs and manufactures a diverse range of market-leading equipment that sets new industry standards. To ensure the long-term success of the company and the well-being of their workforce, Stellar took a forward-thinking step by establishing an Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP). This initiative turned employees into shareholders, fostering a deeper sense of community, culture, and commitment within the company. The award was accepted by David Zrostlik, President of Stellar Industries.

Entrepreneurs and businesses across North Iowa were also invited to apply for five awards categories: Young Entrepreneur of the Year (won by Cody Purvis of Pampered Pets in Kanawha), Entrepreneur of the Year (Luke Pickar and Jordan Oulman of Pickar-Oulman Plumbing in Riceville), Student Entrepreneur of the Year (Caleb Renner of Renner Ag Solutions in Klemme), the Innovation Award (Zack Smith of The Stock Cropper in Lake Mills), and Business of the Year (Pritchard Companies of Clear Lake). An additional recognition, the Entrepreneur of Purpose Award, was awarded to Cassii Calaway of Kutz by KZ in Mason City. This award recognizes an entrepreneur for their commitment to bettering their community through acts of service.

The 2024 Pappajohn Gala also served as an opportunity to thank our community partners and sponsors for their vital and impactful support.



David Zrostlik accepts the Legacy award on behalf of Stellar Industries

## Entrepreneur Showcase

### Billie Asmus Wins the InnoVenture Iowa Challenge

Billie Asmus of Hampton, IA won the top prize at the 2024 InnoVenture Iowa Challenge in December.

The InnoVenture Challenge invites the best and brightest Iowa entrepreneurs to participate in a pitch competition where three early-stage startup companies compete on-stage for a winner-take-all \$100,000 award. Billie Asmus is an innovator, entrepreneur, and the founder of Repaint Studios. Repaint Studios is an environmentally conscious and truly innovative business. In 2021, Billie invented the Repaint Tray, a reusable paint tray that revolutionizes the world of painting, home improvement, and DIY. Billie worked with the NIACC Pappajohn Center to refine her business plan and catapult her vision into reality. She is a graduate of the NIACC Pappajohn Center's cohort of Venture School, an eight-week entrepreneurial training program. Billie's ingenuity and tenacity has brought her well-deserved recognition in the startup scene. She won 2nd place at the 2022 EntreFest Launch Day Pitch Competition, and was recognized as one of the Top Ten startups in the state of Iowa. In December 2023, the Repaint Tray won the Lowe's Into-The-Blue global pitch competition for the paint department. Billie won First Place at the John Pappajohn Iowa Entrepreneurial Venture Competition in August 2024. The Repaint Tray can now be found at Lowe's and Home Depot stores across the nation, as well as on the Repaint Studios website.



### Jayson Ryner Revolutionizes Row Crops with ReEnvision Ag

Jayson Ryner of Nora Springs, IA founded ReEnvision Ag with the vision of helping family farms increase profitability through improved crop production and reduced waste. His SeedSpike™ planting system enables precision planting with minimal soil impact. This creates value for farmers by widening the planting window, expanding planting conditions, and minimizing soil compaction. ReEnvision Ag revolutionizes traditional row crop methods and provides a viable alternative that is environmentally friendly, sustainable, and profitable. Jayson has worked closely with the NIACC Pappajohn Center to take his invention from idea to reality. He took part in the NIACC Pappajohn Center cohort of the University of Iowa Venture School in 2019, and has been making waves in the Iowa ag startup space ever since. Jayson won First Place at the 2020 Venture School Launch Day Competition, a statewide startup competition held during EntreFest, and was also recognized with the Emerging Technology Award. ReEnvision Ag was named a SemiFinalist for the Ag Innovation of the Year by the American Farm Bureau Federation. Jayson also won the \$100,000 top prize at the inaugural InnoVenture Iowa Challenge in 2023, confirming ReEnvision Ag's place on the ag startup stage.

### Kayla Nagel Creates a Local Phenomenon with Fizz Co.

Kayla Nagel created Fizz Co., a full-service craft soda company, inspired by the experiences of her friends and family who were seeking delicious and creative alternatives to alcohol at events. Kayla identified an under-served niche in the market for unique non-alcoholic drinks and hit the ground running. Kayla worked with the NIACC Pappajohn Center to create a strong business plan, noting that the most important aspect of running a profitable retail business is getting the numbers and target market down. Fizz Co. began as a mobile pop-up bar, operating out of a charming renovated horse trailer with a trendy vintage look, serving unique flavors and Instagrammable beverages at both public events and private catered events across North Iowa. In 2024, Kayla expanded her business, opening a storefront on the bustling Main Ave of Clear Lake, IA. Under Kayla's careful stewardship and unstinting creativity, Fizz Co. has quickly become a Main Street mainstay with a devoted following among locals and visitors alike.

## Student Successes

### Cat Dow Wins Pappajohn Student Venture Competition

Cat Dow became the first NIACC student to win the top prize at the Pappajohn Student Entrepreneurial Venture Competition in April 2024. Cat was named one of the top three winners and received a prize of \$5,000 for her winning business Instatat. Instatat revolutionizes the tattoo industry by offering a user-friendly platform for semi-permanent tattoos, integrating advanced AI technology to instantly create the perfect design. Combining this innovative approach with premium materials like GPE, Instatat ensures vibrant and long-lasting designs without the lifelong commitment of traditional tattoos. The Pappajohn Student Entrepreneurial Venture Competition is held every spring and is open to Iowa university and college students, including private and community colleges, with an interest in starting their own business. A total of 15 student businesses competed as regional finalists selected from each of the five Pappajohn Centers: North Iowa Area Community College, Iowa State University, University of Northern Iowa, University of Iowa, and Drake University. Cat is an innovative and creative student entrepreneur, and is studying Entrepreneurship & Small Business Management at NIACC. She is also a member of the NIACC College Entrepreneur Organization (CEO) Club where she serves as President.

### AgriNet: Caleb Renner's Invention Saves Lives & Limbs

At 22, NIACC student Caleb Renner invented the AgriNet, a ground-breaking replacement for traditional bin sweeps, designed to automatically unload grain bins without requiring farmers to enter during the load-out process, saving not only time but farmers' lives and limbs. Caleb is a NIACC student and fifth-generation farmer and was inspired by his firsthand experience of the dangers of grain bin-related incidents—his grandfather is missing three fingers from a bin sweep accident. Caleb debuted his invention at the 2023 NIACC Pappajohn Center Everyday Entrepreneur Pitch Competition. He then enrolled in Venture School to develop his go-to-market plan, and went on to win Third Place at the 2024 Venture School Launch Day Competition in Cedar Rapids. Caleb has since filed two provisional patents, established a C-Corp (Renner Ag Solutions), conducted two full-scale prototype tests, secured \$50,000 in funding from the Iowa Economic Development Authority, competed in seven pitch competitions (winning four), and partnered with a professional engineering firm to refine his product design. Renner Ag Solutions aspires to establish a new benchmark for best practices in ag operations, ensuring a safer, more efficient, and sustainable future for farmers and their families, workers, and facility operators. Caleb has worked closely with the NIACC Pappajohn Center through his entrepreneurial journey. His vision is poised to make not only an impact in Iowa, but also change lives globally.



Caleb Renner pitches the AgriNet at a pitch competition

### Casey Schilling Balances High School & Business

When Casey Schilling signed up for the Youth Entrepreneurial Academy in the summer of 2023, he admits that he wasn't expecting it to make such an impact. Casey founded K2 Enterprises as a high school student when he decided that he could be his own boss while working in a field he enjoyed. K2 Enterprises is an all-seasons lawncare and landscape services business, providing year-round services from mowing to snow plowing to waste removal. Casey is an independent and motivated young entrepreneur who took full advantage of the opportunities that YEA opened up to him; he worked with mentors, learned the key financial foundations for a profitable service business, and utilized the resources and support provided by the NIACC Pappajohn Center. Casey created an impressive business plan for K2 Enterprises at YEA and competed against his peers in a pitch competition; Casey was awarded one of the three Top Prize awards of \$500. After YEA, Casey continues to run K2 Enterprises out of his family's home, balancing his schoolwork as a high school senior, managing his employees (all fellow high school students), and fulfilling his clients' schedules and needs.

## Student Entrepreneurship



# 820

STUDENTS IMPACTED

# 21

EVENTS

# \$7,400

SEED MONEY & SCHOLARSHIPS  
AWARDED TO STUDENTS

## College Entrepreneurship Organization (CEO Club)

### Activities & Events

- National CEO Conference
- NIACC Marketplace - Management
- Bags Tournament Fundraiser
- Salvation Army Service Project
- Everyday Entrepreneur Pitch Competition

## Youth Entrepreneurial Academy (YEA)

The Youth Entrepreneurial Academy is a week-long summer program for North Iowa high school students, where they discover the entrepreneurial mindset, learn from local entrepreneurs, and transform their interests and strengths into a viable business plan. The academy concludes with a Pitch Competition where students can compete for seed money to invest in their business. YEA is generously sponsored by the John K. & Luise V. Hanson Family Foundation.

# 5

DAYS

# 11

STUDENTS

# 4

CITIES

# \$2,400

PRIZE MONEY AWARDED

## Entrepreneur for a Day (E4D)

The Entrepreneur for a Day program introduces North Iowa 5th grade students to the fundamental principles of entrepreneurship, including business planning and financial literacy. In this two-session program, students learn to put these principles into action by creating their own business and running it for a day from budgeting to bank loans, and manufacturing to marketing.

# 6

COUNTIES

# 12

SCHOOLS

# 675

STUDENTS

## Marketing Impact



### Website: Our Digital Front Door

**12,300**

UNIQUE WEBSITE USERS

**14,533**

BROWSING SESSIONS

**42,823**

UNIQUE PAGE VIEWS



### Email: Communicating with Purpose

**91**

EMAIL CAMPAIGNS

**126,910**

EMAIL RECIPIENTS

**33%**

OPEN RATE

**764**

EVENT REGISTRANTS



### Video: Telling Our Entrepreneurs' Stories

2024's Featured Videos:

January 2024 Entrepreneur of the Month: Mara Bridal Boutique

March 2024 Entrepreneur of the Month: TwentyFore Seven Golf

July 2024 Entrepreneur of the Month: Kutz by KZ

2024 Pappajohn Gala Legacy Award: Stellar Industries, Inc.

September 2024 NACCE Entrepreneurial College of the Year Finalist



Scan the QR code to watch!



### Social Media: Connecting & Amplifying



**201**

POSTS

**40,934**

TOTAL POST REACH

**1,742**

FOLLOWERS



**207**

POSTS

**11,665**

TOTAL POST REACH

**332**

FOLLOWERS



# John Pappajohn

1928-2023

A self-made entrepreneur, visionary philanthropist, and generous champion of Iowa students, John Pappajohn used his success in the business world to make the greater world a better place.

Born in Greece, John immigrated to the United States with his mother at the age of nine months. He graduated from the University of Iowa, taking six years to do so because he alternated going to college with his two brothers—two would work while the other attended classes. John often said he learned the value of hard work early growing up in Mason City. After selling his insurance company in 1969, he used the funds to start his own venture capital fund, Equity Dynamics. The firm grew rapidly and has been involved in over 100 startups.

In 1996, John launched the John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Centers housed at North Iowa Area Community College, the University of Iowa, Iowa State University, University of Northern Iowa, & Drake University.

His goal was to revive the entrepreneurial spirit in Iowa and make Iowa the most entrepreneurial state in America.

**"Since I was a child, I dreamed of things I wanted to do. I wanted to make money and give it to others. I dreamed of helping people."**

— John Pappajohn



## The NIACC Pappajohn Center Team



**Candi Karsjens, DBA**  
Director



**Brook Boehmler**  
Director, North Iowa SBDC



**Ashley Page**  
Director of Entrepreneurship Programs & Client Success



**John Rosenfeld**  
Small Business Counselor



**Joyce Martin**  
Marketing & Community Relations Manager



**Raegan Hanson**  
Youth Entrepreneurship Coordinator

The Pappajohn Center seeks to elevate the quality of life in North Iowa by fostering economic growth, enriching student and stakeholder experiences, ensuring organizational excellence, and cultivating collaborative partnerships to address educational and economic development needs.

VISIT OUR  
WEBSITE



UPCOMING  
EVENTS



REQUEST  
COUNSELING



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