



IN THE Corridor

JUNE 2022

NORTH IOWA CORRIDOR ANNUAL MEETING FEATURES COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS

THE NORTH IOWA CORRIDOR EDC HELD ITS 2022 ANNUAL MEETING on Friday May 13th at the NIACC Muse-Norris Conference Center. Over breakfast at NIACC, the economic development corporation's investors, local officials, and regional partners heard President and CEO Chad Schreck give a recap of the past year.

In his remarks, Schreck highlighted several instances of business growth, including expansions at Pritchard Companies, Kraft-Heinz, Golden Grain, and First Citizens bank; new development in Courtway Park with Fairfield Inn, Old Dominion Distribution Facility, and Momberg Retail Development; as well as several new business openings including the upcoming 173 Distillery. Schreck also noted several new projects/lead activity including the purchase of the MD Products building in Mason City by Stellar Industries of Garner, 3 advanced manufacturing project leads, 2 bio-fuel project leads, 2 food processing projects, 1 office project, 3 warehouse distribution leads, and 6 retail project leads.

The Corridor also invited four local business owners and community champions to participate in a panel discussion about highlights and challenges at its annual meeting in May.

Melissa Fabian, owner of the Mason City location of Simply Nourished, an organic and specialty food store, said she and her family researched the area carefully before moving here. They were particularly interested in their children's favorite activities: hockey, dance, and wrestling. "Here there was a hockey team and arena, one of the best dance teams in the state of Iowa, and Iowa is known for wrestling," Fabian said. And on a recent survey, the number-one business people wanted to see added to the town happened to be "organic and specialty food store."

Fabian said it's exciting to know Simply Nourished supports other local businesses. "It's great to see other businesses thrive and grow because we exist," including family farms and small organic ranchers whose sales have increased through the store.

Eric Groth heads Renovo Media Group, a foray into Iowa film production launched in 2020 as a collaboration of Kingland Productions and ODB Films. Renovo aims to develop and produce short films, TV series, and feature films for various platforms. "I love Iowa, and I see it as a

wonderful place to bring film-making back," he said. Renovo recently announced that their tv pilot, *Strong Tower*, was picked up for 6 episodes by Sony Entertainment, and will begin filming in Clear Lake and Mason City this fall.

Renovo installed a state-of-the-art LED studio, the latest alternative to green-screen filming. According to Groth, it's one of only 35 places in the U.S. to offer that option. He said they have been talking to state officials about reviving an incentive program to attract filmmakers to Iowa. Renovo also is offering trainings to introduce students who are interested in filmmaking to the field.

Groth said the best thing North Iowa could do to advance media growth here is to simply "continue to develop facilities to house people, places to eat, and places to hang socially."

Matt Curtis, owner of Wayne's Ski & Cycle, is not new to Mason City, representing the fourth generation in his family to do business here. After buying the store started by Wayne Blaisdell in 1976, Curtis recently moved it downtown and added a warehouse.

He's most excited about things coming to fruition here that have been talked about for years, such as the new ice arena and the expansion of trails. "Building infrastructure and bringing more families to the community helps my business. Keeping this momentum going forward, that's what we need."

Chuck Tyson, President of Bushel Boy Farms, said the most exciting thing last year was "seeing the Hy-Vee truck arrive to pick up their first order" from the new greenhouse on Mason City's south edge.

Their biggest need is housing for employees, according to Tyson. "Labor and turnover are our biggest issues. And having housing appropriate for individuals and families at all job levels is critical." He also sees a need for more discussion about the future of agriculture. "Getting that word out about the different forms of agriculture for us would be beneficial."

The company's first high-tech greenhouse is in Owatonna, MN. Adding a 17-acre growing area in North Iowa meant Bushel Boy was able to sell products to customers for 12 consecutive months for the first time this year, as the two locations rotate crops. It also opens up their customer base to the south. "Your tagline really rings true," Tyson said. "This is 'The Middle of Everywhere.'"

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