



2020 DEB DALZIEL WOMAN ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR
Sue Tyrrell – CEO & Owner



In August 2009, Sue Tyrrell, CEO and Owner of Hands Up Communications, received her first assignment. The company began in Sue's basement. Fast forward ten years later and Sue has grown the company to more than 20 employees and \$2 million in sales. Hands Up Communications is a translation and interpretation company that offers sign language and foreign language services in Cedar Rapids. They believe that hello in a language that makes sense lets the whole world experience the comfort of belonging.

Sue understood the need for translation and interpretation services in the market, and knew she had to step forward to fill that need. She put together a small team, but they were very diverse in their skill sets and complemented each other perfectly. Through the years she has looked outside the organization for development and entrepreneurial guidance. With her passion for serving clients and staff, Sue has transitioned herself into a leader and an entrepreneur.

Sue connected with the Kirkwood SBDC in 2018 as part of the company's reboot process. Scott Swenson, Regional Director of the Kirkwood SBDC, helped the company with financial analysis and discovering efficiencies within the company. They also worked on business model planning with the management team, where they realized the company needed to focus on a sales and marketing strategy. Following this exercise, they were matched with SBDC Counselor Brandon Mateika, who is a specialist in this area. They worked with the team on organizational development structure and identified activities that generated the most impact, and helped create and measure key performance indicators. Hands Up Communications has been operating in high performance mode ever since, and are looking to expand their services.

Sue had to say of working with the Kirkwood SBDC, "There have been two key relationships in turning the corner and becoming a thriving enterprise. One has been the Kirkwood SBDC and the other has been the Dupaco Credit Union. I am so thankful to them both for believing in our Hands Up team and being the spark that set us moving ahead in a productive way."

