

Neal Smith Entrepreneur of the Year Award

This award honors an Iowa entrepreneur(s) who has been in business a minimum of three years and has been significantly assisted by an Iowa Small Business Development Center. The award was established with a dual purpose—to honor long-time Iowa Congressman Neal Smith for being instrumental in establishing the Small Business Development Center program, and to recognize Iowa's entrepreneurs, who are the driving force behind Iowa's economic growth.

America's SBDC Iowa

America's SBDC Iowa is a nationally-accredited outreach program of Iowa State University's College of Business. We have 15 regional business assistance centers located strategically across the state, to better serve Iowa's business community. Since program inception in 1981, America's SBDC Iowa has helped Iowa businesses and entrepreneurs through no-fee, confidential, customized, professional counseling and practical, affordable training workshops.

For more information on this award program or America's SBDC Iowa programs and services, call (515) 294-2030 or visit www.iowasbdc.org.



2022 NEAL SMITH ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR

Matt Curtis



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America's SBDC Iowa

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Matt Curtis

with the help of the SBDC...

Matt Curtis purchased Wayne's Ski & Cycle in 2004. Matt had never thought of being an entrepreneur or owning a business before. But when the previous owner, Wayne, approached him about buying the business, Matt realized how much he liked the idea. "I followed the dream that I didn't even know I had," he said. "I discovered I wouldn't have to wear a tie or work for a corporation. I loved the lifestyle, working around all the things I liked to do, and I liked selling. It's rewarding to learn about the new products and technologies and help customers better enjoy their lifestyle through better products."

Matt had been working at Wayne's off and on since 1992, first while he attended NIACC and later when he moved back to Mason City to pursue a career in Human Resources. Wayne's was originally founded in 1976 as part of a regional chain of sporting goods stores. Its continued presence in Mason City has been in large part due to the dedication and buy-in of its employees, and is an example of the importance of succession planning for a locally owned and operated business. Small business owners must think ahead to keep their business open after retirement. Wayne's Ski & Cycle has now been operating continuously in Mason City for 44 years.

Matt has worked to keep Wayne's Ski & Cycle nimble and relevant. This has included finding a new business niche like seasonal ski swap events, establishing a culture of employee buy-in that's open to suggestions and new ideas, and moving the business location back to downtown Mason City. For example, the seasonal ski swaps have taken the business's typically slowest time of the year and turned into a season that now generates 40% of the business's annual income. Matt's ability to identify and meet the evolving needs of his customers has made Wayne's Ski & Cycle a community mainstay.

- Realized he needed to be thinking to the future of his business
- Was able to purchase and move to a new location downtown
- Applied for the Mason City Corridor Revitalization Loan Program (CORL)

WAYNE'S
SKI | CYCLE | FITNESS

"The North Iowa Area SBDC and John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center has encouraged and inspired entrepreneurs throughout north Iowa, and I'm very thankful for the help and guidance they've given me and my business. They have helped me make connections and provided me with resources that have allowed me to grow and expand my business."

-Matt Curtis, CEO, Wayne's Ski & Cycle