

2024

Deb Dalziel Entrepreneur of the Year

This award honors a woman entrepreneur who has significantly changed or improved her life and the lives of others. The award is presented in memory of Deb Dalziel, a devoted small business advocate who was director of the Small Business Development Center at Southeastern Community College. Deb passed away from cancer in 1999 at the age of 44.

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.



2024 DEB DALZIEL ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR



Melissa Fabian

Owner of Simply Nourished Market & Mercantile

Simply Nourished is a local specialty food market with a modern twist dedicated to supporting local producers and filling food voids for people with food allergies or other dietary needs.



Funded in part through a Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration.

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America's Small Business Development Center Iowa

www.iowasbdc.org

Melissa Fabian

Simply Nourished Market & Mercantile

Melissa Fabian is transforming downtown Mason City through meticulous customer discovery, innovative repurposing of space, and a far-reaching vision for revitalizing a rural Main Street district. Melissa is a resilient entrepreneur who not only works to amplify the successes of other women entrepreneurs in North Iowa, but also continues to take obstacles and turn them into opportunities.

Melissa Fabian is the Owner/CEO of Simply Nourished Market & Mercantile and Foxtrot Properties. Simply Nourished



is a local and specialty food market, an old-fashioned neighborhood grocery store with a modern twist and a dedication to supporting local producers and filling food voids for people with food allergies or other dietary needs. Simply Nourished sources its products largely from local businesses, from vegetables and meats to olive oils and gifts. The business fosters a sense of place and community by holding cooking classes and other events.

While Simply Nourished focuses primarily on local and regional producers, they are also the most complete source of kitchenware and houseware in North Iowa, partnering with the best brands in the industry. Melissa utilized community survey research conducted by Main Street Mason City which identified a "specialty store" as one of the top five desires for downtown business. Melissa and her team pride themselves on the standards of customer service of yesteryear.

"We know your name, we make recommendations," she says. But the neighborhood grocery store has been updated for modern needs. The entire store is gluten free and is dedicated to supporting local producers.

"The biggest reward is the ability to fill food voids for local people who have allergies and issues with food to support them in their journey, but also supporting those local producers," Melissa says. "Whether it's allowing a rancher to expand or a farmer being able to plant more fields because of our store, watching the local food movement grow in North Iowa has been such a reward."

Melissa has worked with the North Iowa SBDC since 2020 when she first began her entrepreneurial journey. Melissa reached out to the North Iowa SBDC after purchasing the property, knowing that she wanted to bring a business downtown and the importance of starting it off on the right foot. She worked with Brook Boehmler on her business plan, focusing on building a sound financial foothold. Melissa says that working with the SBDC was valuable for the assurance that they were taking the right steps forward.

"They were checking up with us, and ensuring we were on the right path and assisting us with finding opportunities for funding and support," she said. With Foxtrot Properties, LLC, Melissa has transformed disused



space above Simply Nourished, undertaking a major renovation of three historic commercial spaces, transforming disused, dilapidated space into upper story housing in the heart of downtown Mason City.

The four apartments are a welcome addition to a city that is working to develop a vibrant live-work-play mix of business, residential, and recreation in the downtown district. When Melissa and her husband saw the building, built in 1875, go up for sale, they jumped on the opportunity to fulfill their dream to take on a historic renovation project.

The empty rooms above Simply Nourished have languished for years. Foxtrot Properties has made a huge change in the landscape of downtown Mason City by creating usable, desirable space. As of December 2023, the apartments are all fully occupied.



Follow along with Melissa and Simply Nourished on their Facebook!