



Northwest Iowa Regional Dream Big Grow Here Contest Winners Announced

What's Happening Thumbnail:



People from across the region gathered in Sioux City, Iowa on November 14th to attend the Northwest Iowa Regional Dream Big Grow Here pitch competition to determine the recipients of \$7,000 in grant funds and to

support entrepreneurs and small businesses throughout the region. Organizers of the competition are pleased to announce Grace Boutique from Sibley as the first-place winner and recipient of \$4,000. Brightside Café & Deli from Sioux City was awarded second place and \$2,000, and Awaken Yoga from Le Mars was awarded third place and \$1,000. These funds are provided to the business owners to help expand their businesses in northwest Iowa.

Grace Boutique provides a boutique experience shopping for women's and men's name brand clothing, decorative household and furniture items at an affordable price. Grace Boutique owner, Melinda Nasers, has a goal of expanding her consignment store to offer more for her customers. Grant funds will be used to increase the consignment store's footprint, purchase retail display fixtures and racks for the new space, and develop a website to sell items online. This will allow Grace Boutique the ability to expand the product lines offered, to include infant and children's clothing, as well as expand the number of days the store is open during the week.

Brightside Café & Deli opened in downtown Sioux City in May of 2018 with the goal of providing a positive inspiring environment while serving delicious homestyle meals. Owners, Dr. Juan & Erik Munoz, will use the grant funds to expand the restaurant's catering services by purchasing a second commercial oven and catering vehicle.

Awaken Yoga is the only yoga studio in Le Mars and creates a safe space for customers to explore stillness and movement and heal from the inside out. Owner, Carmen Ohm, will use the grant funds to purchase software that will include a personal branded app for clients to use when booking classes, as well as pursue additional certifications to be able to teach other aspiring yoga instructors.

The other Dream Big Grow Here finalists who pitched on November 14th included:

- Daniel Stillson with SnSLabz from Rock Rapids
- James VanVeldhuizen and John Emerick with Northwest Iowa Firearms from Hull

This is the fifth year the regional Dream Big Grow Here pitch competition has been held in Northwest Iowa and is a program for entrepreneurs and small business owners to earn grant funds to start or grow their business. To participate, owners upload their entrepreneurial expansion or startup "dreams" during an online portion of the program. Dream entrants then encourage friends, family, customers and other business owners to vote for them online to advance to the regional pitch off event.

Dream Big Grow Here is a program of University of Northern Iowa's Center for Business Growth and Innovation. The Northwest Iowa Regional Contest is organized and sponsored by the economic development organizations that are a part of Iowa's West Coast Initiative, Northwest Iowa Development and Siouxland Economic Development Corporation.