

REGIONAL

Scott County business accelerator expands on technology village's success

BY EDEN TELLER
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The dream of any entrepreneur is to see a good idea grow from a seed into something bigger than they could've dreamed. That's exactly what happened to Technology Village, Prior Lake's business accelerator program, which has transformed from a mentorship program and 2,000 square feet of office space for new business owners in Prior Lake City Hall to Scott County's Center for Entrepreneurship, which opened this summer in Shakopee with 12 offices, conference rooms, digital and printing lab, and countless educational and mentorship opportunities for entrepreneurs hoping to expand their businesses.

Brian Johnson runs 7 Minute Security and was a participant of the original Technology Village. At the time, he was working from home, and his coworkers included his kids who "wanted Wrestlemania in the living room while Dad's trying to write a security report," Johnson said with a laugh. The office space at the Center for Entrepreneurship has allowed him time and space to focus, he said, and guidance from his mentor, Gerry Hughes, has been invaluable.

"He really helps me stay organized and think about the things I'm not thinking about on a daily basis," Johnson said. Johnson, of Shakopee, started out wanting to "do it all" at 7 Minute Security, he explained, and Hughes' advice helped him narrow down which parts of the work he enjoyed, and which parts he could outsource to employees or contractors. He hired his first employee, a chief information security officer, in October 2020.

Hughes has been with the accelerator program from its inception, when it was Technology Village operating out of Prior Lake City Hall, and is now a Center for Entrepreneurship board member. He's mentored 18 companies in seven years and meets quarterly with his mentees, dispensing advice gleaned from his years of experience and helping the new business owners look at the big picture. When he was starting out in his own career, there were no such opportunities, Hughes said.

"When I was a partner in a software and services business, (I) had no access or knowledge of such a program," Hughes wrote in an email. "(It) would have been



PHOTOS BY EDEN TELLER

Tom Kosgei founded IntelligentRx, which won the 2021 Fast-Track Challenge for new businesses. The company helps customers find affordable prescriptions at pharmacies in their area.

very helpful to reduce the amount of 'learn by fire.'"

Eric Brown, of Shakopee, heard about the business accelerator program through Johnson — the pair work together on occasion — and moved into an office this summer. His work at information technology and security company IT Audit Labs generally takes place in his customers' offices, which posed a logistical challenge for a new business.

"There was no place for the business itself to have a central office," Brown said, which meant no professional address, and the situation lent itself to some isolation.

Participating in the Center for Entrepreneurship's accelerator program has given Brown opportunities to connect with other business owners and take advantage of roundtables and informational workshops. With connection over roundtables and mentorship programs, "it kind of feels like you're not all by yourself," he said.

"Starting a business can be a lonely journey, as there are so many things that are required to do in order to properly manage the business," Brown added in an email. "The Center for Entrepreneurship is a support group, and I've never felt like I'm alone in this journey. There is always someone who can help."

On the flip side, part of the joy of being one's own boss is the autonomy, Johnson and Brown said. For Johnson, that looks like steering clients toward the best security solutions for their business, rather than upselling them on flashier, more expensive deals. While that approach

means a smaller price tag in the short term, he's seen more "stickiness" with customers long-term because they trust his expertise, Johnson said.

In previous roles, Brown felt himself bumping up against limited vision from supervisors when he found an exciting project.

"It wasn't met with the same enthusiasm that I was bringing," he explained. As a supervisor of seven employees at IT Audit Labs, his guiding questions — "Did we do what we set out to do?" and "Are we learning from the mistakes that others made?" — help steer conversations and workflow, Brown said.

Thomas Kosgei certainly learned from his 12 years in the pharmacy business when he created IntelligentRx in 2019. He was inspired by the number of customers he saw choose to skip a month of medication because they couldn't afford the cost, he said. As an industry professional, he knew what many don't: That the price of prescription medication can vary wildly from one pharmacy to the next, and coupons can reduce the sticker price wildly.

The tipping point came when a woman at his pharmacy realized she couldn't afford both her son's \$65 asthma medication and groceries for the week because she'd been laid off recently. Kosgei told her to wait a moment and tracked down three different coupons that lowered the price to \$18.

IntelligentRx provides customers with that same knowledge, for free, Kosgei said: He and his two employees (one being his wife, an accountant) get paid by the

pharmacies they work with, who pay IntelligentRx for referring patients. It's hard work, he said, but even staying up until 11 p.m. working is energizing.

"My wife says, 'you don't even say you're tired,'" Kosgei laughed.

Kosgei came to the Center for Entrepreneurship when he won the 2020 Fast-Track Challenge, Scott County's "Shark Tank"-esque program that challenges entrepreneurs to pitch their business to a panel of judges to win a variety of business services from local companies. He's looking forward to the new services that the Center for Entrepreneurship will have access to now that it shares a building with the SouthWest Metro Intermediate District, including a videography lab, podcast equipment and digital editing suites.

A business doesn't need a lease to take advantage of the Center's services, said Jo Foust, a business development specialist with the Scott County CDA. Virtual memberships are also available, with access to roundtables, mentorship, and 32 hours of access to the building every month. Participating businesses will also be able to take continuing education classes through the program's partnership with SouthWest Metro Schools and hire interns from the pool of students who will take classes just down the hall from their offices.

The website for Scott County's Center for Entrepreneurship is scottcda.org/center-for-entrepreneurship. Its new building is at 4601 Dean Lakes Blvd in Shakopee.



Eric Brown, of IT Audit Labs, moved his company into an office through the Scott County's Center for Entrepreneurship business accelerator program. The program shares a building with the SW Metro Intermediate School District.

PUBLICNOTICES

OFFICE OF THE MINNESOTA SECRETARY OF STATE CERTIFICATE OF ASSUMED NAME Minnesota Statutes Chapter 333

The filing of an assumed name does not provide a user with exclusive rights to that name. The filing is required for consumer protection in order to enable customers to be able to identify the true owner of a business.

ASSUMED NAME: 215 Painting and Carpentry
PRINCIPAL PLACE OF BUSINESS: 4327 W 137th St Savage MN 55378 USA

NAMEHOLDER(S): David Joseph Frank, 4327 W 137th St Savage MN 55378 USA

If you submit an attachment, it will be incorporated into this document. If the attachment conflicts with the information specifically set forth in this document, this document supersedes the data referenced in the attachment.

By typing my name, I, the undersigned, certify that I am signing this document as the person whose signature is required, or as agent of the person(s) whose signature would be required who has authorized me to sign this document on his/her behalf, or in both capacities. I further certify that I have completed all required fields, and that the information in this document is true and correct and in compliance with the applicable chapter of Minnesota Statutes. I understand that by signing this document I am subject to the penalties of perjury as set forth in Section 609.48 as if I had signed this document under oath.

SIGNED BY: David Frank
Mailing Address: None Provided
Email for Official Notices: 215remodeling.david@gmail.com
Date Filed: 08/06/2021
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EXHIBIT A SUMMARY OF ORDINANCE NO. 841 AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF SAVAGE, MINNESOTA, ESTABLISHING BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SAVAGE, MINNESOTA, ORDAINS:

Summary: This ordinance amends the composition, term, vacancies, oath, organization, powers and duties of the

Planning Commission, Parks, Recreation and natural Resources Commission, Economic Development Commission, and Advisory Communication Commission.

Effective Date: This ordinance shall take effect immediately upon passage.

(A full copy of the text of this Ordinance is available from City Clerk.)
(Published in the Savage Pacer on Saturday, August 28, 2021; No. 2362)

City of Savage Scott County, Minnesota Summary of Ordinance No. 842

Ordinance amending City Code Title XV, Chapter 152, Sections 152. 170 to 152. 171, Sections 152. 205 to 152. 210, Sections 152. 245 to 152. 246, and Sections 152. 280 to 152. 285.

The following is only a summary of Ordinance No. 842. A full copy of the text is available for public inspection by any person during regular office hours at the office of the City Clerk.

This Ordinance amends City Code to create a C- 4, Highway 13/101 Hybrid Commerce District which

expands the list of allowable uses for current C- 2, General Commerce District properties with frontage on Highways 13/101. Additionally, allowable uses within both commercial and industrial districts are expanded to include new uses such as brew pubs and garage condominiums. Lastly, requirements for outside display have been added, which include approval of an interim use permit and limits on the area utilized for such display.

Effective Date: This ordinance shall be effective from and after its passage and publication.
(Published in the Savage Pacer on Saturday, August 28, 2021; No. 2363)

**Early Deadline
Notice Due
to the Labor
Day Holiday
will be Friday,
September 3,
2021 at noon for
the September
11, 2021
Savage Pacer**