

Starting and running your own business is the dream of many Americans. In a recent Gallop survey 57% of Americans said they would rather run their own business than be an employee. Among people who are already an employee 67% said they would prefer working for themselves than their current employer.

And why not – stories of people starting a business in their garages and becoming billionaires are part of American lore and the promise of a free market capitalistic society. Be your own boss! Build a better mousetrap and the world will beat a path to your door. It's quite a lure to a better more fulfilling life for many Americans.

We are all better off because of this entrepreneurial American mindset. Small business is the backbone of our economy. About 48% of our Gross National Product comes from small businesses and about half of jobs in this county are found in businesses with 20 employees or less. 63% of new job creation comes from small businesses. That's pretty impressive.

And there are other perks.

When my wife was a girl her father ran his own business. She loved going to his shop because she would get to help from time to time. He would rig the soda machine so it didn't need coins. Jen was paid for her labor in unlimited Grape Crush and peanuts from the vending machine. That was a pretty great employment contract when you are 9 years old.

NCCC is committed to helping folks start their own business.

We start fueling that entrepreneurial mindset early. In 2013 NCCC started a summer entrepreneurship camp for middle school students, called ESI: Camp (EntrepreneurShip Investigation). Twenty-eight middle school students have participated in the free program. Participants hear presentations from local entrepreneurs to learn the "dos" and "don'ts" of starting a business. They then identify their business and their market niche.

Each student develops a business plan and takes it to a local bank to ask for a loan. All of the local banks – Bank of Commerce, Community National, Commercial Banks, Emprise, and Home Savings – generously donated start-up funds to assist the students in developing their businesses. The students work toward preparing their goods and marketing them in preparation for the Marketplace which is held on the last day of the camp. The Marketplace gives students the opportunity to sell their goods and services.

The program gives students the technical skills of being an entrepreneur as well as life skills such as time management, communication, financial responsibility, and work ethic. The curriculum is provided by the University of Nebraska Extension program. The program is supported financially by NCCC, Chanute Regional Development Authority, Chanute Chamber of Commerce, and the startup funds from the banks.

Of course NCCC has coursework specifically for entrepreneurs in everything from marketing, to accounting, to creating a business plan, to website creation, to business software like QuickBooks. Students come for a single course or an entire two-year degree and everything in between. Our instructors are ready to help you with the knowledge you need to get started.

Probably the best service Neosho County Community College can offer you to start your business is our partnership with KSBDC. NCCC is the regional hub for the Kansas Small Business Development Center

(KSBDC). The KSBDC is a Kansas Department of Commerce service that provides help to anyone who is thinking of starting their own business. Tom Byler and his staff bring years of knowledge and lots of resources to anyone who is thinking of being their own boss and wants to make sure they do it right.

In 2016 KSBDC helped 15 area small businesses on a wide range of topics including managing a business, marketing, HR issues, connecting suppliers, workflow and on and on. Two of those businesses were startups! KSBDC held 8 workshops in Chanute last year which included workshops on starting your own business. They also field numerous calls from entrepreneurs looking for a little advice on a range of topics. In 2017 KSBDC is focusing on helping existing businesses assess their outcomes and help them achieve better results. The KSBDC then helps them through training on a variety of topics using a method they call Value Acceleration.

And now a word of warning. There is an old saying, “The person who works for themselves has a jerk for a boss.” People who run their own business can tell you that it means long days and long nights. The idea of a 40 hour work week is a bit of a dream. Your new boss, yourself, will run you ragged, especially when the business is just getting off the ground. My wife remembers as a little girl going to her dad’s business with the whole family in the evening so they could tell him about their days while he continued to work, sometimes long into the night.

And there is also this. She remembers after over 10 years of trying, he had to close the business. It was the incredibly sad day in her life, watching her dad who gave his all to something every day, shut it down. Small business owners not only risk their money, time, and energy when they start a business they risk their hearts too as they pour their whole selves into the endeavor. When it works it is a wonderful feeling, and if it fails it can be devastating in many ways.

With so much at risk you’ll want to make sure you know as much as you can long before you start and know even more as you create this endeavor. NCCC and the KSBDC is ready to help you with your new business idea. Our community relies on small business as well as large employers to make our economy prosper. The more business, the more goods and services, the more employees, the more quality of life, the more there is for everyone. That’s why NCCC wants to help. Enriching our communities and our students’ lives is our mission statement.

So if you are ready to get started you can call the KSBDC at (620) 235-4921 or go to their webpage at CIBD.pittstate.edu. If you would like to take a few classes in business you can call the College (620) 431 2820 and ask for the business program.

With a little help and a lot of hard work it can be done. And if you are fortunate, there will be more than just unlimited Grape Crush and peanuts in it for you!

If you have a comment about this article or anything else about NCCC please contact me at binbody@neosho.edu.