2007 Emerging Business of the Year

Name of Business	Pony Express Service Center, LLC
Owner	John L. Diederich
Nature of Business	Truck Stop, Service Center, Restaurant
City	Hanover
County	Washington
Phone	785-337-2900
e-mail	PonyExpress@bluevalley.net
Business Structure	Limited Liability Corporation
Business Began	2003
Employees at Start Up	6
Employees in 2007	11
Sales in 2006	$2,659,577
2007 Sales Forecast	$3,137,000
Start Up Capital	$263,720
Source of Initial Capital	Liquidated Farm Assets / CNB Loan
SBDC Counselor	Linda Sutton, M.B.A.

"I would never have been able to realize my dream of having my own business were it not for the help I received from Linda Sutton at the CCCC KSBDC."

"She assisted me in preparing a business plan and cash flow projection that enabled me to get a bank loan. These projections helped me manage and set goals for the future."

John Diederich, Owner

One day, John Diederich drove past a closed, run-down business known as the Pony Express Truck Stop. All he could see were possibilities for himself and his family. John, a life long farmer, had previously worked for a gas station for eight years. He remembered a once thriving business that served his community of Washington County admirably for 44 years.

John met with The Citizens National Bank of Greenleaf and discussed his idea of returning the Pony Express to a flourishing business. He also found the services provided by Linda Sutton at CCCC KSBDC and Brandon Vering at The CNB invaluable. Through their guidance, he created a business plan, cash flow projections, and multiple financial statements.

John realized that his vision would soon be reality. He and his family prepared to transition from the family farm business to the new venture by liquidating his farm machinery, equipment, grain and cattle to provide start-up funds for his new business.

"If you're not treating your customer right, you're not doing the right thing."

In December 2003, The Pony Express Service Center, LLC was formed. John spent hours learning management strategies to successfully grow his business. However, the facility was in worse shape than John originally thought. Cash flow was tight and he was dealing with each crisis and equipment breakdown as it occurred. He injected more money into his dream by replacing tire machines, vehicle lifts, furnaces, A/C, plumbing, and electronics.

Eventually, John's belief in personal interaction, customer service and honesty, helped distinguish his business as a leader in the fuel and tire service sector.

After a 2006 tornado caused considerable damage to the property, John chose to find a positive in the situation. As he examined his damage, he again envisioned that once thriving station. In 2007, the business completely reconstructed their fuel pump area with a new concrete pad, canopy, and pumps. Today, three high-volume diesel satellite pumps put out 50 gallons per minute, twice as much as the old pumps. Two 24-hour pay-at-the-pump gasoline units were added, allowing customers more access and reducing labor costs. He also added a new sign, logo, and color scheme.

Once the new canopy went up, focus turned to environmental improvements. For example, he replaced old shop heaters with an energy efficient oil burner that consumes the shop's recycled oil.

Eventually, John saw monthly fuel sales and service work increase. He credits his staff for their work and suggestions in making the business a success. "We have fun. I can't praise my help enough. My goal is to make The Pony Express Service Center what it used to be — a truck stop that runs a lot of trucks. The day I drove by and saw the business closed, I saw a need for the community and an opportunity for my family."

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