

Kennedy's Fresh Foods



Owner: Kyle Kennedy
Hettinger, ND 58639
701-567-2404
Kmkennedy2@yahoo.com
Opened: September 2003

Most small towns would kill for one grocery store. Hettinger has two, and has for a long time. But a few years ago, a young man decided to move to this small town and do something he'd dreamed of—buy a grocery.

Meet Kyle Kennedy. Originally from Moorhead, Minnesota, he grew up in North Dakota and fell in love with small town life. He tried the college thing, majored in business. But it wasn't for him, so he talked to his dad, Mike, who'd managed grocery stores for 25 years, and he put in a call to his brother-in-law, who works for Dan's in Bismarck, and Kyle soon had a lead on store that was for sale.

"We looked at it in May of 2003," Kennedy says, "and we made the decision to move forward. The process of getting the paperwork through SBA and the finances from Dakota Bank in Hettinger took until August."

Kyle added new equipment to what is now Kennedy's Fresh Foods. He improved the lighting in half the store and did a lot of old-fashioned cleaning. The biggest thing he did was change the shopping pattern by reversing it! "I was wondering if the community would accept us and be willing to give us a change and see what we were like. We got a lot of

comments about changing the layout of the store, but it's for the better."

The members of the Kennedy clan, who all work in the store, added a deli, a small liquor store, video store, and a private-owner coffee shop to the grocery business. Kyle says, "We are always open to new ideas. We like to bring as much 'flavor' as possible to the store to make it more attractive."

Kennedy credits the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) for helping him properly cash-flow the business and come in line with grocery industry standards for a healthy profit/loss ratio. "I can't thank Ron Newman enough. We've been meeting on a monthly basis to look at the numbers and see where we can improve and where we are doing well. It's a huge help as far as managing the store effectively and making sure that we are viable."

Look towards the future, Kennedy says he's never really satisfied and wants to keep growing the business to keep it "fresh," no pun intended! Kennedy's Fresh Foods serves 1,600-2,000 customers a week. Kyle says the Hettinger regional medical center draws a lot of clientele, especially from rural South Dakota. The grocery store employs about 20 people, including Kyle's mom and dad, which has been good for the family and the community. Kyle also thinks the competition between the two grocery stores in town helps keep food prices fair and honest.

An added bonus that Kyle hadn't really thought about was meeting his now wife, Stephanie, and having a daughter, Sophie. He says, "Owning the store has definitely changed my life. I didn't know I'd come to a town this small and find a wife. I want to stay in Hettinger the rest of my life; I really like it here!"

CONTACT: Ron Newman, SBDC, DSU North Campus, 1679 6th Ave. W, Dickinson, ND 58601, 701-483-2062, www.ndsbdc.org, ronald.newman@dickinsonstate.edu