



BUENA VISTA, CLAY, DICKINSON & EMMET COUNTIES

## **Dream Big Grow Here Corridor winner** *Regional winner to compete at state competition*

SPENCER – The Iowa Lakes Corridor held a Dream Big Grow Here contest for entrepreneurs in the Corridor region in August and September. Twenty-four businesses participated in the virtual contest. They submitted videos, pictures and text to [www.DreamBigGrowHere.com](http://www.DreamBigGrowHere.com), and explained why their business deserved to win the \$5,000 award.

The purpose of the contest was to reward an enterprising entrepreneur while bringing more attention to entrepreneurship and the support services the Corridor offers to entrepreneurs. “With 24 entrepreneurs submitting their dreams, and 11,545 votes being cast, a great deal of awareness was generated,” said Brian Dalziel, senior vice president with the Corridor. “This contest successfully shined a spotlight on many of our region’s small businesses.”

Online voting decided the winner. Safari Child Care Center, owned by Cassidy Hofmeyer and Christine Stahly, won the contest with 3,329 votes.

In their submission, Safari Child Care said:



**Bill Bumgarner, center, Chairman of Iowa Lakes Corridor’s Board of Directors, presented the \$5,000 Dream Big Grow Here award to Safari Child Care owners Cassidy Hofmeyer, left, and Christine Stahly, right.**

“Safari Child Care is a licensed daycare/preschool catering to children ages 6 weeks to 5-year-olds. Our mission is to provide a safe, fun, nurturing, and educational environment to encourage children to explore and learn about the world around them. We strive to create trusting relationships with our families and to make learning fun for our kids. We feel that there is no better thing than to see kids smile as they learn! We are applying because meeting all of the state guidelines for health and safety can be spendy. Starting costs, supplies, furniture, and equipment added up fast. We have been open for nearly 2 years and have worked very hard to get where we are at now, but we dream of doing more. \$5,000 could be stretched a long way for us. This money would go toward educational supplies for the kids, and also to expand our playground. With the help of friends, family, and the community we have started building our dream playground, but production is on pause due to the lack of funds. Right now we have the enclosed area, but no equipment. We would plan on using \$3,000 toward industrial strength equipment, which we feel is the safest for the kids. The other \$2,000 would go toward improving our classrooms with furniture and supplies needed to prepare our kids for kindergarten the best we can. Our generous friends and family can only take us so far toward our goal, and this money would definitely help make our dream a reality.”

Eight regions across the state held a Dream Big Grow Here contest. Each region created the rules for their competition. The Corridor did not place an age or industry restriction on the contest. The Corridor works to create the next generation of successful entrepreneurs, with entrepreneurial programs for students in kindergarten through college. Because of the Corridor's involvement in youth entrepreneurship, the contest was open to these resourceful and innovative youth.

Other rules included the business must be small, with 0-30 employees. Persons competing must reside in Buena Vista, Clay, Dickinson or Emmet County, or their business/prospective business must be located in one of the four counties.

The regional winners will compete for an additional \$10,000 at the EntreFest! state competition in March 2012.

According to the Dream Big Grow Here blog, the University of Northern Iowa Regional Business Center developed a partnership with the Iowa Bankers Association and the Community Vitality Center in mid-2010 to launch Dream Big Grow Here, an online entrepreneur contest featuring \$1,000 monthly grants awarded online to emerging and existing Iowa small business owners who uploaded their "dreams," then encouraged customers, family and other business owners to vote for them.

Dream Big Grow Here attracted 63,489 visitors during the five month beta test. Given the initial success of Dream Big Grow Here, a group of statewide sponsors stepped up to provide matching funds for more customized regional contests – with bigger cash awards of \$5,000 – and to fund a statewide pitch-off among winners for a grand prize of \$10,000. The Iowa Bankers Association, the Technology Association of Iowa, Renew Rural Iowa, Iowa Department of Economic Development, Iowa Area Development Group, and the Community Vitality Center make up the 2011 team.

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The Iowa Lakes Corridor Development Corporation is the regional economic development agency for Buena Vista, Clay, Dickinson and Emmet counties. Its mission is to foster, encourage, aid, promote or otherwise assist in the economic growth and development of the region. For more information about the Iowa Lakes Corridor Development Corporation, call 712-264-3474 or visit [www.lakescorridor.com](http://www.lakescorridor.com).