



Prairie Brothers Brewing Co. Fargo ND

Owner Don Kenna

FARGO – After teaching physics and biology to high school students, Don Kenna decided to combine his knowledge of science with the art of brewing craft beer. Kenna is the owner of Prairie Brothers Brewing Co., a brewery and taproom that opened in April 2017 in Fargo.

With a rapidly growing demand for craft beer in the community, Kenna said he knew there was a thirst for more, especially in south Fargo. Most of the other breweries are concentrated in downtown Fargo or Moorhead.

Prairie Brothers has nine beers on tap at its 3,600-square-foot facility, a large seating area in front and an open production facility in the back. The goal was to start with a lineup of flavors that had something to appeal to everyone, according to Kenna.

Kenna had been brewing beer for about eight years out of his home. Along the way, he realized beer was

much more than a hobby. After getting help from Wil Petik, who now serves as Prairie Bros Operations Manager, and support and encouragement from friends and family, Kenna left his teaching career of 12 years to open the brewery.

To make his dream a reality, Kenna knew he would need assistance and outside funding. He met with Paul Smith, Regional Director of the ND SBDC – Fargo Center who reviewed his business plan and developed comprehensive financial projections along with an investor summary sheet.

After securing a commitment from several individual investors, Kenna was successful in obtaining a commercial bank loan with the SBA 7(a) loan guarantee and “gap” funding through Dakota CDC. The funds were used for leasehold improvements, equipment, furniture and fixtures and working capital.

“Getting sufficient financing was critical, especially since we had to cover several months of rent and other pre-opening expenses while waiting for our federal alcohol license to be approved,” Kenna said. “The ND SBDC was instrumental in helping us to be successful in obtaining funding for our project.”

Kenna has ambitious plans for the next two years. He is already in discussion with several bars to carry Prairie Brothers on tap, and he also plans to start bottling or canning eventually to get his beer to more customers.

For now, he wants the new brewery to be a gathering place. Kenna shares his love for the craft with hobbyist brewers and beer-drinking patrons who come to the taproom. “We want people to come in, relax, start conversations, have a good time and feel like they’re part of a family here,” he said.