



Craig's Small Engine Repair Williston ND

Owners: Craig and Rena Helberg

Expanding a business is a big deal... so when the owners of a longtime Williston business needed more space, they invested a lot of time preparing for the project. They studied property listings, met with a lender and went over their plans with their ND SBDC Business Advisor. All of those preparations were helpful – but their faith and can-do attitude were equally important!

Craig's Small Engine Repair is owned by Craig and Rena Helberg. The business revolves around Craig's knowledge and ability to repair small engines. Their store also sells outdoor power equipment and parts and rents equipment.

In 2007 the Helbergs decided to purchase two lots in Williston to build a much larger shop. They met with Chris Jundt, at First National Bank and Trust, and Keith Olson, Director of the Williston ND SBDC office, to set up a financial game-plan that included utilizing programs from the U.S. Small Business Administration, Williston STAR Fund and Bank of North Dakota.

The Helbergs broke ground on their new facility in 2011, but their immediate joy turned to frustration as Mother Nature delivered one of the wettest, snowiest and coldest years on record. That was just the beginning.

"To be honest, I didn't know if any lending institution was going to stick with us, with our atypical construction schedule, over five years," said Craig. Despite the construction setbacks, their partners in the community remained steadfast.

The Helbergs' construction schedule may have been a bit unconventional, but that was due in part to their resourcefulness. Craig and Rena always said the build out would be a family affair and they asked for the blessing from their children (all 12 of them) before they started.

"He came to us and asked us to commit to the project," said Sarah, who helps run the Rental Shop with her brother Joseph.

"He said there would be no vacations, no frills during construction. But, we have survived. We are kind of like the pioneers," she chuckled.

Ten of the Helberg children (ranging in age from 12 to 28) still live in Williston. They all have varying roles in the business; the school-aged children help out when they can while their older siblings have more permanent positions.

Rena says "We are a family business and everybody has exposure to various aspects of the business. All of our kids have a basic knowledge of tools, practical application, theory, and all other various aspects of running a business."

In the summer of 2017, the Helbergs and Craig's Small Engine Repair celebrated their 30th anniversary. Craig and Rena were also honored at the Williston Economic Development –Small Business Development Centers Awards banquet as the 2017 Existing Business of the Year.