

# 2021 SUCCESS STORY

GRAND  
FORKS

NORTH DAKOTA  
SMALL BUSINESS  
DEVELOPMENT CENTERS

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## CUSTOM KUT MEAT

**CARRINGTON** -- Growing up on a farm in St. Michael, North Dakota, Thomas Solwey understood the value of fresh meat in the retail world. He spent time working for the Department of Transportation, but also worked at the bison plant and had been butchering meat ever since he was a kid. Seeing the large demand for processing rural farm-raised animals, and for providing a local meat market, Thomas decided it was time to open his own Butcher Shop.

Solwey decided that Carrington would be an ideal spot to open his business. "Carrington allows me to fill a much

needed niche in the meat processing market," said Thomas. "In addition to processing, we are able to provide retail sales of deli meats and cheeses in a small rural town in Central North Dakota."

Although Solwey had a familiarity and background with butchering, he had little experience in running his own business and where to get started in the process. However, Thomas did understand that having a sound business plan was imperative to paving a path to success.

He was pointed in the direction of the ND SBDC and started working with Grand Forks center director, Nicole Evans. She worked to assist Thomas in building the business plan that he was hoping for.

"The ND SBDC provided substantial guidance to me," said Solwey. "In addition to referrals to financial outlets, Nicole was a great resource in researching statistics necessary to understand the demand or needs for the particular business enterprises, and for making projections and proposals that are within rational boundaries."

With a solid business proposal, lots of determination, and three years of preparation, Thomas was able to open Custom



Kut Meat Inc for business on April 1st, 2021. The opening was delayed due to the pandemic and supply chain issues making it difficult to get materials.

"Everything was back-ordered. Equipment, parts, replacement items, metal – all back-ordered," said Solwey.

Despite the difficulties, the Carrington community has been quite supportive, and Custom Kut Meat is doing well.

"If a person really wants to do something, the American dream is there, but there are a lot of blood, sweat and tears that go with it," said Nicole Evans. "Even more so in this day and age. You've really got to have the vision to accomplish your dream - but it can be done!"

That is just what Thomas has done. Currently Custom Kut Meat processes and provides fresh cut meats on a daily basis, as well as deli, and meat & cheese trays. Solwey is eventually looking to expand by use of more efficient equipment.

Thomas considers himself fortunate to be in this line of work. He stated that, "This is something that I loved doing growing up on the farm, and just carried through. I love what I do."

