

Jim Correll – Ice House Entrepreneurship

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

“Who Owns the Ice House?” That’s not a question one hears every day. This unusual question is the name of a book which has helped inspire the creation of an entrepreneurship program being utilized in Kansas and beyond. It’s today’s Kansas Profile.

Jim Correll is facilitator of the Successful Entrepreneur Program at Independence Community College in Independence, Kansas. He is utilizing a curriculum called the Ice House Entrepreneurship program.

Jim comes to this program with experience as an entrepreneur and businessman. He grew up at the rural southwest Kansas community of Satanta, population 1,222 people. Now, that’s rural.

After two years of community college at Garden City, Jim went into the photography business and worked in manufacturing for a time. Then, to be closer to his wife’s family, they moved to Coffeyville where he started a small business.

In 2006, Independence Community College was starting an entrepreneurship program. Jim took the job as facilitator and business coach. “ICC wasn’t looking for an academic program but one that is more hands-on,” Jim said. “A lot of business curriculums aren’t so much for people wanting to start businesses but rather to train people for middle management in a big company,” he said. “We wanted something more nuts and bolts (for small businesses and startups).”

At the beginning, the program was targeted to people who were in business or who wanted to have their own business. Now more traditional community college students are joining the program.

ICC offers several entrepreneurship classes. One is called Entrepreneurial Mindset, which provides insights into the thinking and behaviours of successful entrepreneurs. The class uses a curriculum supported by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation called the Ice House Entrepreneurship Program.

The Ice House Entrepreneurship Program is a project of the Entrepreneurial Learning Initiative (ELI) using a text called “Who Owns the Ice House?” which was co-written by ELI founder Gary Schoeniger and Clifton Taulbert. Taulbert is a noted entrepreneur, Pulitzer-nominated author and international speaker based in Tulsa.

The book begins with a description of African-American Clifton Taulbert growing up poor in the segregated deep South and working long hours in the cotton fields. However, Clifton’s Uncle Cleve was also poor but he had used his last penny to buy the local ice house when it came up for sale. During the steamy Mississippi summer days, Cleve cut 15 to 20 pounds of ice and delivered them to families in the community - both white families and African American.

As his business grew, Cleve hired Clifton Taulbert as his assistant. As they worked together, Cleve taught him about entrepreneurship, tenacity, focus, diligence and other valuable lessons.

Clifton Taulbert enlisted in the U.S. Air Force. After his service, he graduated from Oral Roberts University and then SMU. He authored 13 books, one of which was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. Today he is President and CEO of a human capital

company known as the Fairmount Corporation and of Roots Java Coffee, a national African-American coffee brand.

The Ice House Entrepreneurship Program was created to share and encourage this type of entrepreneurial mindset in others. In Independence, Kansas, Jim Correll chose to use this program for his entrepreneurship educational initiative.

Jim shows his classes the program's video interviews with successful national entrepreneurs and then brings in local entrepreneurs as well. At the time that ICC adopted the Ice House Entrepreneurship Program, only ten other community colleges in the world were using it. Jim believes the entrepreneurial mindset is fundamental.

"Everyone should be a problem-solver, whether they are going out on their own or working for someone else," Jim said. For more information, go to

www.indycc.edu/entrepreneurship.

"Who Owns the Ice House?" That unusual question is the title of a book which has inspired an educational curriculum that is encouraging entrepreneurs across the country, including rural Kansas. We salute Jim Correll and Independence Community College for making a difference by encouraging entrepreneurs.

And there's more. Jim's educational efforts also included technological innovations which have the potential to revolutionize manufacturing. These innovations can even give new hope to a little girl who was born without fingers. We'll learn about that next week.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.