

## Three area operations compete for Small Business of the Year award

by Lori McGinnis Black

Three businesses dealing with filters, irrigation and moving and storage, respectively, are up for the Small Business of the Year Award. Each are previous Small Business of the Month recipients from the Greater Omaha Chamber.

The nominees include the Filter Shop, I-Go Van and Storage Co. and Quality Irrigation.

Working in corporate America gave Ryan Dahlgaard the motivation to start his own business. He started The Filter Shop about seven years ago and has now grown it into a \$2 million a year company.

"We are hitting our growth numbers every year and are currently looking to expand again," he said.

Ryan Jardine was a business student at the University of Nebraska at Omaha when he started Quality Irrigation in 2003.

"While many companies offer irrigation as a secondary service, it's all we do spring through fall and it's why we have become very good at it," he said.

When asked why I-Go Van and Storage is being considered for this award, President Steve Nogg said, "it is due to our longevity in the area, our reputation, and how we give back to the community."

The company participates in Discover America with Aldrich Elementary and Touch

a Truck & Substitute Santa projects with the Child Saving Institute.

The Filter Shop is a full-service master distributor of filters, providing everything needed for commercial and industrial customers to the



Dahlgaard

basic home filter, he said.

We deal in what seems to be a commodity product," Dahlgaard said. "It is a needed part for people breathing clean air in their work environments."

The Filter Shop has moved three times and added square footage. It started with 800 square feet and now has 10,000. The business currently is looking to move again.

"We are now planning with more intention, which means looking for something that



Jardine

will work for more than just the next couple years," Dahlgaard said.

Dahlgaard promotes his business by being involved in the community.

"You have to get out there and being a part of the Omaha chamber is one of the best ways to be out there," he said.



Nogg

Jardine, president of Quality Irrigation said the company designs and installs water-efficient sprinkler systems for residential and commercial properties in Omaha.

Quality Irrigation

is one of a few sprinkler system companies in Omaha and Nebraska recognized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as a Nebraska EPA WaterSense Partner, which recognizes companies helping to preserve water supplies for future generations.

The company received a 2012 Best of Omaha Best Irrigation Award, the Angie's List Super Service Award two years in a row and was named Small Business of the Month in March 2011 by the Greater Omaha Chamber.

Quality Irrigation has received many positive comments from its customers, Jardine said.

"It's more than irrigation — it's making our customers' lives easier and giving them outdoor areas that they and their families, friends, employees and customers can enjoy," he said.

I-Go Van and Storage Co. has been serving the transportation and storage industry for the last 114 years. Through its network of offices in Omaha, Lincoln, and Sioux City, Iowa, the business performs household relocation services, office/industrial facility relocations, hospitality solution projects (hotel, health care, restaurant, retail and entertainment), as well as household goods/commercial warehouse storage, distribution, and installation services around the country and the world.

Nogg, who owns the business with his sons, Brian, CFO, and Jeff, vice president of sales, attributes success to the experienced people that work for them.

"This award would be a tribute to the I-Go team," Nogg said. "It would be a strong message to our organization that we are sending a positive signal to our community and that we should strive to continue our good work."

## Nonprofits show fiscal responsibility, commitment to families, communities

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more of a say in their lives than those in the middle income bracket, with Medicaid decisions, childcare benefits, housing. Without an attorney they are in a worse place."

Pantos is looking to innovate and grow the 10 percent of funding received from private donors, local contracts and other types of grants. The rest of the money — about one third from each — comes from Congress-appropriated money and state court filing fees.

The legal organization has 15 attorneys in Omaha providing advice over the phone or doing direct representation. In 2011, they helped more than 14,000 people statewide and 3,000-4,000 people in the Omaha area.

Completely Kids has an investment in the neighborhood that houses their building, offering out of school programs and programs for parents with education classes and group work year round in the building, as well as after school programs.

Over the past 20 years, Parker has increased the number of children served in after school programs from 300 to more than 2,000 each year. The number of children served in violence

prevention programs has gone from 3,600 to 8,000 each year and the volunteer base has risen from 50 to over 1,000 each year.

They provide after school programming in area homeless shelters, and provide healthy snacks with the out of school time program and backpacks filled with food for kids to take home on Fridays through their Weekend Food Program.

Lutheran Family Services is celebrating its 120th Anniversary in Nebraska this year. It began as two orphanages in 1892.

LFS manages open case files for more than 2,000 children on any given day — children who have been sexually abused, children who have been traumatized by their parent's deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq, children who have behavioral issues causing problems at school, children who are in foster care and hope for a permanent and loving home, Henrichs said.

"We serve people one child and one family at a time," she said. "It may seem small on any given day, but it makes a huge impact on these families."

Legal Aid of Nebraska recently debuted

a Spanish language website that mirrors the English version just by clicking a button.

An online application for legal services allows people to apply at any time, and has cut down on hold time from about 45 minutes to four minutes to schedule a call back time.

The agency also debuted automated courtroom pleadings that produce court approved legal pleadings online.

"We debuted online intakes the first working day of January," Pantos said. "Now 40 percent of new cases are through online applications. The demographic is largely single working moms applying for services after 9 p.m., after kids are in bed."

People can utilize a bank of 10 to 12 free computers at the legal offices with the Access to Justice Self Help Center, and get assistance and resources on how to plead their own case, for example, if they are trying to get a deposit back from a landlord, or to adjust their status if, as another example, they have a shoplifting charge from seven years ago — to get that off their record so they can get a job.

Legal Aid of Nebraska is celebrating its 50th anniversary in Omaha next year.

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## Award nominees

Continued from preceding page.  
quality civil legal aid for those who have nowhere else to turn.

**Year Founded:** 1963  
**Number of Employees:** 60  
**One-Year Goal:** Improve capacity to provide more high-quality legal services to low-income Nebraskans who have nowhere else to turn.

**Business Tip:** Invest in the nonprofit sector, and you invest in the community.

**Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska**  
Ruth Henrichs, president and CEO  
**Service:** Human Care  
**Year Founded:** 1892  
**Number of Employees:** 310

**One-Year Goal:** Opportunities to serve are everywhere. LFS will make strategic and pro-active decisions to address the unmet needs within our community, especially when those needs involve children, those with behavioral health issues, or new communities such as refugees and victims of human trafficking.

**Business Tip:** Integrity is sustainable and foundational to a successful organization.

## Small Business of the Year

**The Filter Shop**  
Ryan Dahlgaard, president  
**Service:** HVAC commercial and industrial filters

**Year Founded:** 2005  
**Number of Employees:** 13  
**One-Year Goal:** 20 percent growth while maintaining current margins.

**Business Tip:** Create "raving fans."

**I-Go Van and Storage Co.** (an agent for United Van Lines)  
Steve Nogg, president  
**Service:** Moving and storage/warehousing

**Year Founded:** 1898  
**Number of Employees:** 38  
**One-Year Goal:** To make sure that all expectations are fulfilled and the customer is pleased to the point where they would feel comfortable and confident to refer our services to their best friend, business associate, or closest relative. I

**Business Tip:** Your choice of moving and storage company should not just be based on price — do your due diligence by getting recommendations from friends, family, Better Business Bureau, customer reviews, quality of facilities, etc.

**Quality Irrigation**  
Ryan Jardine, president  
**Services/Products:** Design and install water-efficient sprinkler systems for residential and commercial properties in Omaha and provide service and repairs for all brands of sprinkler systems.

**Year Founded:** 2003  
**Number of Employees:** 10

**One-Year Goal:** To be Omaha's best irrigation company with a cohesive team working together to achieve unified objectives — such as giving our customers the best possible service, supporting our families, having fun in our work, achieving our personal dreams — while taking time to "stop and water the lawn" along the way.

**Business Tip:** Hire talented, enthusiastic people and everything else becomes easier.

## Nonprofits show fiscal responsibility, commitment to families, communities

by Becky McCarville

Three nonprofit organizations are up for the Nonprofit of the Year award, which recognizes an organization for its excellent stewardship of resources and exceptional outcomes.

Completely Kids, Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska and Legal Aid of Nebraska all provide services and aid for those in need in our community and the state.

Over the past year, Executive Director Penny Parker has led a campaign to disaffiliate the renamed

Completely Kids from the national Campfire USA organization to keep \$50,000 per year in the community.

The name change more accurately reflects the holistic approach to dealing with a child and his or her family as well as the community, Parker said.

The budget has increased from \$200,000 to \$2.6 million in the time Parker has been at the agency, and has successfully overseen a \$5.7 million capital campaign over 14 months.

Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska (LFS) has approximately 290 employees who work from 30 offices across Nebraska, as well as an office in Council Bluffs and Wichita, Kan.

There are three areas of core competency, including behavioral health services, children's

services and community services.

In 2011, the organization more than doubled support and revenue from close to \$7 million in 2000 to \$16.2 million in 2011, with more than \$4 million raised through donations,



Parker



Henrichs



Pantos

and 85 cents of every donor dollar went to support programs and services, said Ruth Henrichs, president and CEO.

Providing free legal representation for low income people in civil cases — ranging from foreclosures, evictions, and job loss to domestic violence, child custody and child support to the elderly being targeted by scammers — helps those who are at or lower than 125 percent of the federal poverty level, who make about \$27,000 per year for a family of four, said Dave Pantos, executive director of Legal Aid of Nebraska.

"We want to help people get over those legal hurdles so they can become self-sufficient," Pantos said. "The court system seems to have

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