



For Immediate Release

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North Judson-based Lewellen Blooms wins Starke Tank

Papa Farm Pizza of Knox Finishes Second

KNOX, Ind. – A growing family business emerged victorious from a crowded field of contestants to win the 2023 Starke Tank Countywide Small Business Pitch Competition presented by the Starke County Economic Development Foundation and the City of Knox. Lewis and Joellen Matzat own Lewellen Blooms, LLC, in North Judson. Their cut flower farm offers fresh flowers directly to customers as well as to florists. They also provide wedding and event arrangements and a flower subscription service.

The Matzats plan to add a business website, build a greenhouse, add more perennials, irrigation, land, and staff to operate their larger farm. The greenhouse would extend their growing season by about nine weeks, which in turn would increase their profit.

They say the irrigation system would add nearly an acre of tillable ground to their farm which could be used for agritourism opportunities like photography in a large sunflower area, while a website will create more sales opportunities for the business.

Lewellen Blooms received a \$10,000 prize and a one-year Starke County Chamber of Commerce membership.

This year's runner up was Papa Farm Pizza, located in downtown Knox. Owners Lenny and Julie Dessauer operate the storefront restaurant as well as a wood-fired pizza trailer that is a popular attraction at festivals and events throughout Starke County. They grow or locally source many of their menu items, and their sons Jacob and Joey assist with the business operations.

They plan to use their \$5,000 runner up prize to add a new hood vent, larger fryer, and a cooktop to their kitchen.

“Starke Tank is unique because all of the prize money comes from local sources,” SCEDF Executive Director Lisa Dan said. “The City of Knox was this year’s presenting sponsor, but we also received funds from our local utilities, solar developers, banks, realtors, industries, and service-oriented businesses. They know how important a robust small business community is to the county’s overall growth and well-being. Additionally, several other small businesses donated door prizes, which were given away free to audience members.”

A total of nine contestants took part in this year’s competition. They were: Tasty Treats & Eats in Knox, Alley Side Café in Knox, Honey Bee Creations in San Pierre, Starke County Graphics in North Judson, Elite Truck & Auto in Knox, Renew U in Knox, and Hard Knox Gym in Knox.

“The judges even remarked how difficult a choice this was,” Dan said. “All three are from out of the area, and they were extremely impressed with Starke County’s entrepreneurial spirit.”

This was the fourth annual pitch competition hosted by the Starke County Economic Development Foundation. The winner is required to establish, grow, or expand a business in Starke County.

ABOUT SCEDF

The Starke County Economic Development Foundation is a not-for-profit local economic development organization (LEDO) providing economic development opportunities on behalf of Starke County, Indiana, the City of Knox, and the Towns of North Judson and Hamlet through the development of industrial parks, rail spurs, greenfield sites, shovel-ready sites, infrastructure, and workforce development. For more information regarding the Starke County Economic Development Foundation, visit www.scedf.biz.

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