

# SUCCESS STORY

## GRAND FORKS 2023



### POPPLERS MUSIC

**GRAND FORKS** - From a young age, Joshua Gratton has had a passion for music and a dream of owning a music store. In 2017, he began working at Popplers Music, a Grand Forks staple that originally opened in 1909. After five years of employment, Gratton had the opportunity to purchase the business and went for it. He was able to reach his ownership dream while also feeding his passion for music.

Joshua's journey to becoming an entrepreneur was driven by his strong dedication and a deep love for music. He devoted extensive hours to studying business, including college courses, taking advantage of online resources,

and attending conferences. He looked for advice from mentors and gained valuable insights from a range of jobs.

When the opportunity came about to purchase Popplers Music, it was what he had been waiting and preparing for. The store, with locations in Grand Forks and Sioux Falls, provides a wide range of musical instruments, supplies, and educational services.

A key component of Joshua's journey to success was the role of the North Dakota Small Business Development Centers (ND SBDC). Early in the process of working to purchase the store, the ND SBDC was recommended to Joshua by a

personal advisor. He recognized the value of diverse outlooks when making crucial decisions. Nicole Evans, ND SBDC Grand Forks Center Director, was able to assist with financial projections to help prepare Joshua for the financial aspects of the purchase and future operations.

As a business owner, Joshua finds the most value in being of service and making a positive impact on people's lives. His journey was not without challenges as he purchased the business during the chaotic times of the COVID-19 pandemic. Navigating an ownership transfer during economic uncertainty presented unique obstacles.





Despite the hurdles, Popplers Music has thrived, owing its success to Joshua's commitment and the strength of his team. He gives much credit to the hard working and dedicated team across both locations noting that they are what makes the business successful. Joshua attributes his personal success to qualities like education, hard work, discipline, good decision-making, and calculated risk-taking. Additionally, maintaining a customer-focused approach has been crucial to his business principles.

The community's support has also played an important role in the success of Popplers Music. Joshua extends his gratitude not only to the local community but also to the broader communities they serve across the Midwest and the nation. While the Grand Forks community and region has been supporting the business for over 100 years, the Sioux Falls location was just added in 2016 with the purchase of an existing music store. That expansion allowed the business to directly serve communities in South Dakota, southern Minnesota, and western Iowa.

Joshua was pleased with the insight and expertise received from his ND SBDC advisor, Nicole. "Regardless of if you have no experience or years of experience working in finance, working with someone that has a process setup to analyze financials, helps you gain insight. Not only can it show you what other entrepreneurs have done to purchase a business, it is another data point that will help you move forward with confidence."

Joshua's journey with Popplers Music serves as an inspiring example of how dedication, passion, and the right support can lead to entrepreneurial success. He encourages aspiring entrepreneurs with practical advice. "If you feel inspired or compelled to own your own business, go for it, especially if you are young. If the endeavor doesn't work out, you'll be able to move forward knowing you tried and undoubtedly you will have learned something from the process that will help you in the future."



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