

# MCC Small Business Plan winners running local water pump company

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Three years ago, Chris Snodgrass and Harry Trent won the Annual Business Plan Competition at Mitchell Community College, and today they are president and manufacturing director of Liqua Flow Pump Co. in Statesville.

The two partners had decades of experience from all sides of the pumping industry — as manufacturers, distributors and mechanics for end users — and entered the contest as a way to make sure their ideas made sense before taking the plunge and starting a business.

Friends from inside the pumping industry had already given them positive feedback, but Snodgrass said they wanted some more objective analysis because, with each of them having families to support and ages ranging in the 50s, failure was not an option.

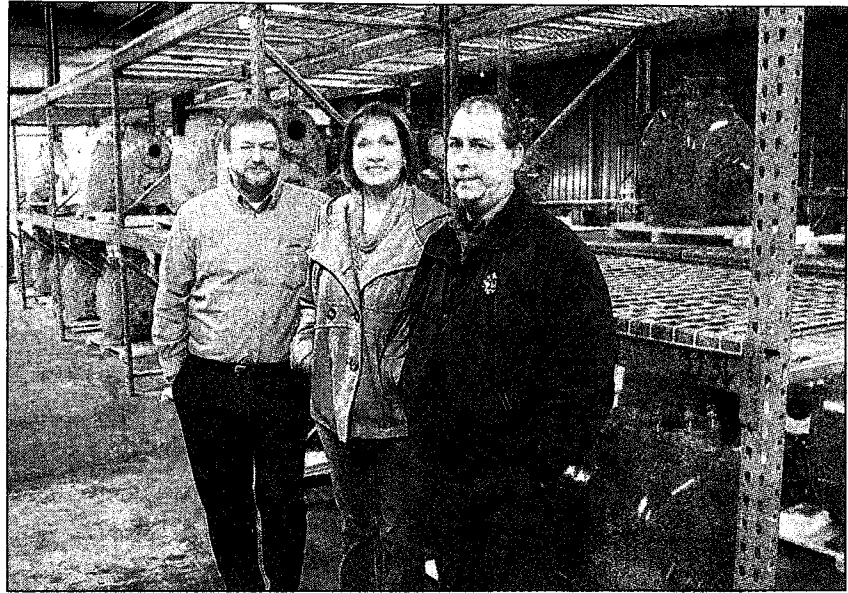
"We truly wanted the truth because we're feeding our families and putting our livelihoods on the line at a time when most people are getting prepared for retirement," Snodgrass said.

"It's like if you made a painting and went to your mom and said, 'Hey, Mom, what do you think of my painting?' and she says, 'Aw, I love it! It looks great!' and then you go put it on display and people are laughing."

Suzanne Wallace, director of Mitchell's Small Business Center, said she had people like Snodgrass and Trent in mind when she helped create the Annual Business Plan Competition.

"We had judges who were business people in the community, and the premise was to judge the plan that looked like it would be the most successful if they were to start a business," Wallace said.

A number of groups partnered with Mitchell for the competition, including the Greater Statesville Chamber of Commerce, which awarded \$1,000



JOHN HAMLIN/STATESVILLE RECORD & LANDMARK

Harry Trent (left) and Chris Snodgrass (right) have gotten a lot of advice for their business, Liqua Flow Pump Co., from Suzanne Wallace (middle) of Mitchell Community College's Small Business Center.

to Liqua Flow Pump Co. when they won. The whole purpose is to foster and support the entrepreneurial spirit in Iredell County, chamber President David Bradley said.

"We're looking for people that are either making a significant change in the process, or a significant improvement in the product, and what was interesting about this particular business plan is they did both of those," Bradley said.

Over the summer, Liqua Flow Pump Co. moved into a 40,000-square-foot facility in west Statesville, and the first pumps were sold in August. The company specializes in water and wastewater pumps, and Snodgrass said they expect 80 percent of their products to go to municipalities and 20 percent to wind up in factories.

There are four basic designs of Liqua Flow pumps, and each can be ordered in dozens of sizes to suit the needs of a customer. And because most pumps on the market are painted blue, Snodgrass said they decided

to make a statement by painting theirs bright orange and red.

The big difference is quality and reliability, Snodgrass said, and the pumps are designed to keep running with minimal maintenance for the first five years. That's a far cry from most other small players in the pump industry, who Snodgrass said plan on their pumps dying after two years and make their real money on parts and replacements.

A major key to that quality is manufacturing as much of the pumps as possible in the United States, and Snodgrass said Liqua Flow Pump Co. plans to grow to about 50 employees from its current workforce of 11.

"We're wanting to be a factory that can be here in Statesville, here in America, and not ever go offshore," he said.

"We've positioned ourselves with what we feel is the best mousetrap on the market, and the products we've sold have had no breakdowns or failures."

## Man charged with indecent

A 38-year-old man accused of indecent exposure has pleaded guilty to a charge of indecent exposure in her small city. The man was later arrested at Statesville Police Station. Tom Anderson, Gregory A. Merritt of Statesville was arrested on a count of indecent exposure. Bond: \$10,000.

Anderson

## Cap

Capital Correctional weekly update in Iredell County in the North Carolina Ass

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## Senate Repeals Votes

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