



Homegrown entrepreneur gains top state business award. Travis Kelley of JenTra Tools in Backus is the U.S. Small Business Administration Young Entrepreneur of the Year for Minnesota. Submitted photo

Minnesota SBA young entrepreneur of the year is homegrown

BACKUS - Travis Kelley of JenTra Tools in Backus is the U.S. Small Business Administration Young Entrepreneur of the Year for Minnesota.

Kelley, who owns JenTra Tools, is inventor of the CHEATAH Door Level Kit.

The Small Business Administration (SBA) Young Entrepreneur of the Year is selected annually based on success as measured by sales and profits, increased employment opportunities created by the business, development and/or utilization of innovative or creative business methods, and demonstrated entrepreneurial potential necessary for long-term business success and economic growth.

All of these accomplishments are done before the Young Entrepreneur reaches the age of 30. Sarah Dregney, Owner and Marketing Communications Consultant for J&J Solutions of Staples and Business Consultant at the North Central Minnesota Small Business Development Center (NC MNSBDC) at Central Lakes College in Brainerd, nominated Kelley for this award.

Kelley started his career at Scherer Bros Lumber Company in Hopkins working in retail sales. After two years, Kelley returned to north central Minnesota and continued working in sales and installation of residential and commercial doors for J.B. O'Meara Company. Kelley is currently employed by Marvin Windows and Doors and is one of the top regional salespeople for the company.

JenTra Tools was started by Travis and Jennifer Kelley in 2011 with the launch of their invention, the CHEATAH door level.

The inspiration for the CHEATAH door level came from experience with door sales and installation. When Kelley noticed that doors often warped after installation, he and his wife Jennifer decided to figure out a solution, since improper installation of doors is the leading cause

of warranty claims to door manufacturers and distributors. The first CHEATAH prototype was crafted using tin, cardboard and a level from Menards. Today, JenTra Tools sells the CHEATAH door level kit to contractors and do-it-yourselfers through their website www.jentratools.com and through dealers in the U.S.

The CHEATAH door level consists of three individual levels and spacers. The levels mount to one side and the top of the door while the spacers create a perfect reveal between the door and the jamb. The installer instantly knows when the door is positioned level and plumb by simply monitoring the levels. When positioned, traditional shimming and securing of the jamb assures perfect installation and function. Door kits are made using DuPont's ZYTEL nylon resin for strength and durability.

Using the door level, doors can be installed in one-third the time and with more precision than the traditional method, resulting in better door operation, fewer callbacks and fewer returns. Everyone benefits: the building owner, the contractor, the wholesaler, the retailer and the manufacturer.

JenTra has been featured on the DIY Network, and reviewed positively in several leading trade publications, such as ProSales Magazine, Builder Magazine and the LBM Journal, as well as other publications. It was named one of the top new products and the International Building Show in Las Vegas in 2012. Most recently, Kelley participated in the University of Minnesota's Carlson School of Business Minnesota Cup competition and was named runner-up in the general division.

In November, JenTra expanded its product line with a version of CHEATAH level specifically for door manufacturers and distributors. This December, the design of a high-end CHEATAH was completed and will be marketed to professional contractors and door trimmers.

Kelley lives in his hometown of Backus with his wife and his two children. Kelley will be honored at the Minnesota Small Business Week Awards program on May 7 at the Minneapolis Marriott Northwest.

The Central Lakes College Small Business Development Center assisted the Kelleys through their startup, in obtaining early financing for their business, in participating in the Minnesota Cup competition and now is working to expand the company. The company also received assistance from the Cass County Economic Development Corporation, SCORE and Legal Corp programs.

For more information regarding the CLC Small Business Development Center contact 218-855-8145 or email director Greg Bergman at gbergman@clcmn.edu.