

ENTREPRENEUR FIELD DAYS

2026

Welcome to the Greater Des Moines Partnership's Entrepreneur Field Days series

This six-session series will take place at locations across Greater Des Moines (DSM). Drawing on Iowa's rich agriculture heritage, field days have been taking place since the turn of the 20th century. Now, this event series expands the lessons learned from farming into all forms of entrepreneurship, spotlighting the brilliant business minds in our communities — rural, urban and suburban, big and small — and visionary leaders building businesses in DSM.

During the Entrepreneur Field Day series, tap into peer-to-peer knowledge and skillsets that will help you become a resilient entrepreneur. The series is also an opportunity to continue building a strong small business and startup community in DSM.

Entrepreneurs learn best from entrepreneurs. Approach these events with a spirit of curiosity, and shared respect, using these guides as a tool for your experience and notes.

SESSION	HOST	DETAILS
1 August 21	Ntontan RE	Reimagining Place: North DSM City Townhall
2 August 25	Sabanto Ag	Transforming Agriculture with Autonomy
3 September 1	Thelma's Treats	Baking a Sweet Success
4 September 10	Liz Lidgett Gallery + Design	Creating Spaces that Inspire
5 September 15	Bound	Transforming Youth Sports
6 September 17	Early Morning Harvest	From Soil to Stone Mill: The Story of Early Morning Harvest

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SESSION 1

Friday, Aug. 21, 3 – 5 p.m.

Host: North City Hall Redevelopment Site
1601 Sixth Ave, Des Moines, IA

Speaker: Kuuku Saah
Real Estate Developer + Owner of Ntontan RE



Reimagining Place: North DSM City Townhall

Join real estate developer **Kuuku Saah** for an exclusive field day at the historic North City Hall redevelopment site. Experience first-hand how a landmark building is being transformed into a catalyst for neighborhood revitalization through innovative financing, thoughtful housing development and community-centered design.

This Field Day is limited to the first 30 people to register. Light appetizers and beverages will be provided. Learn more and register at DSMpartnership.com/fielddays.

LEARN AND DISCUSS:

- How to revitalize a historic community building.
- Creating a financial model that works with today's real estate world.
- How to navigate the "who's who" of real estate and urban development.
- Building for affordable housing and fostering community.
- Using data to understand Des Moines at neighborhood-level picture.

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SESSION 2

Tuesday, Aug. 25, 10 a.m. – Noon

Host: Sabanto Ag
1710 W K Avenue, Nevada, Iowa 50201

Speaker: Craig Rupp, Founder + CEO of Sabanto



Transforming Agriculture with Autonomy

What if the tractor could keep working—even after the operator calls it a day? Autonomous technology is transforming agriculture, helping farmers overcome labor shortages, reduce costs and get more from the equipment they already own.

Join Craig Rupp, who grew up on a northwest Iowa farm and became an electrical engineer before founding **Sabanto**, to learn how he's bringing practical autonomy to the field. Rather than replacing tractors, Sabanto upgrades existing equipment with autonomous technology, enabling safer, more efficient operations and extending productive hours without the cost of buying new machinery.

Discover how autonomy is reshaping modern farming and why smarter—not just bigger—equipment is the future of agriculture.

This Field Day is limited to the first 50 people to register. Lunch and beverages will be provided. Learn more and register at DSMpartnership.com/fielddays.

LEARN AND DISCUSS:

- Learn why customer feedback — not assumptions — should drive product innovation.
- Explore how engineering, entrepreneurship and firsthand agricultural experience can combine to solve some of farming's biggest challenges.
- Gain insight into the future of AgTech and the trends shaping modern agriculture.

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SESSION 3

Tuesday, Sept. 1, Noon – 2 p.m.

Host: Gravitare Coworking
500 Locust St., Des Moines, IA

Speakers: Dereck Lewis, Founder and CEO of Thelma's Treats
Nola Morris, Chief Brand Officer of Thelma's Treats



Baking a Sweet Success

Step behind the scenes at **Thelma's Treats** to discover how a family recipe became a beloved brand that's warming hearts across the country. Built on Great-Grandma Thelma's original cookie recipe, Thelma's has transformed a simple ice cream sandwich into an unforgettable customer experience where every treat is made with premium ingredients—and a whole lot of love.

During this Field Day, you'll hear how Thelma's has grown from a local favorite into a nationally recognized brand while staying true to its mission of creating moments of joy and connection.

This Field Day is limited to the first 50 people to register. Thelma's Treats and beverages will be provided. Learn more and register at DSMpartnership.com/fielddays.

LEARN AND DISCUSS:

- Growing from a local Iowa farmer's market favorite to a national brand without losing the heart of the business.
- What it takes to build a manufacturing operation from the ground up for food and consumer package goods.
- Creating a brand with award-winning packaging (Little Oven Box) to telling an authentic story with family roots.

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SESSION 4

Thursday, Sept. 10, Noon – 2 p.m.

Host: Liz Lidgett Gallery + Design
2921 Ingersoll Ave, Des Moines, IA

Speaker: Liz Lidgett, Owner of Liz Lidgett Gallery + Design



Creating Spaces that Inspire

Go behind the scenes at **Liz Lidgett Gallery + Design** to learn how a contemporary gallery connects artists with collectors and businesses to create meaningful spaces. From private homes to hospitality and corporate environments, discover how original artwork can elevate communities, workplaces and everyday experiences while making art collecting welcoming and accessible for all.

This Field Day is limited to the first 40 people to register. Lunch will be provided.

Learn more and register at DSMpartnership.com/fielddays.

LEARN AND DISCUSS:

- How to design spaces that tell a story.
- Building a platform to champion local Iowa artists, emerging youth, and contemporary worldwide artists.
- Launching a book around how "art is for everyone" to collect, whether they are first time or seasoned buyers.
- Going from a "company of one" to building a strong, creative team.

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SESSION 5

Tuesday, Sept. 15, 4 – 6 p.m.

Host:

Bound

327 Main Street, Suite 3 & 4, Ames, IA 50010

Speakers:

Sam Schill and Nathan Haila, Co-Founders of Bound



Transforming Youth Sports

It began with a simple question: How can we solve communication challenges in youth and high school sports? **Bound** has used that mission to grow into one of the nation's leading sports technology platforms, serving more than 300 high schools across Iowa and 1,700+ schools in 14 states.

During this behind-the-scenes experience, attendees will learn how Bound develops technology that connects schools, coaches, athletes, parents and fans through scheduling, statistics, communications and event management. Hear directly from the leadership team about building and scaling a software company, creating products that solve real customer problems and continually innovating to meet the evolving needs of communities.

This Field Day is limited to the first 50 people to register. Appetizers and beverages will be provided. Learn more and register at DSMpartnership.com/fielddays.

LEARN AND DISCUSS:

- Understand how sports technology is transforming the management, operation, and fan experience of high school athletics.
- Building and scaling a software technology company in the era of AI.
- How to listen to your customers and apply those insights across product development.

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SESSION 6

Thursday, Sept. 17, 10 a.m. — Noon

Host: **Early Morning Harvest**
2436 Willow Avenue, Panora, Iowa 50216

Speaker: **Jeff Hafner**, Owner of Early Morning Harvest
and That Iowa Girl



From Soil to Stone Mill: The Story of Early Morning Harvest

Step behind the scenes at **Early Morning Harvest**, a regenerative organic farm where history, sustainability and innovation come together. Learn how a century-old family farm evolved from a dairy operation into one of Iowa's leading producers of fresh, stone-milled organic flour. During this Field Day, guests will tour the farm, explore the stone milling process and discover how regenerative farming practices create healthier soil, better grains and exceptional flour.

You'll also visit the farm's aquaponics greenhouse and learn how **That Iowa Girl** distribution supports local food systems by connecting consumers with more than 150 Iowa-made products. Experience how one family's commitment to stewardship continues to nourish communities — one harvest at a time.

This Field Day is limited to the first 50 people to register. Lunch and beverages will be provided. Learn more and register at DSMpartnership.com/fielddays.

LEARN AND DISCUSS:

- Learn how stone milling preserves flavor and nutrition.
- Grow your understanding of regenerative agriculture and aquaponics greenhouse farming.
- Building a wholesale distribution business for Iowa-made products.
- Understanding value-added agriculture and how to focus on direct-to-consumer and local distribution to strengthen rural businesses.

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