

SELLING SMALL

BUSINESS OWNERS OF LSE

Erin Geschwender | Design Editor

While many people have a hobby or interest they are passionate about, few are able to find a way to make it profitable. According to research by nonprofit Junior Achievement and accounting firm Ernst and Young Limited Liability Partnership, 61 percent of teen girls and 54 percent of teen boys have

considered starting a business. Despite this, only 10 percent have followed through. This is due, in large part, to the fear of failure and the uncertainty of how to get started.

“Many teens have a great interest in starting their own business someday, but the risks associated with entrepreneurship are a major

concern for them,” President and CEO of Junior Achievement USA Jack Kowsakowski said.

Despite the challenges that come with starting a business, two Lincoln Southeast High School (LSE) students, junior Jacob Axelson and senior Emma Gammel, have done just that.

JACOB AXELSON :

Axelson started creating websites for businesses in 2018. “I primarily got into coding because of honest boredom. I was always looking for something to do on my off time,” he said.

Axelson originally began creating websites by trying to make his own and eventually shifted to system administration.

“[To create websites] I tend to use Javascript frameworks for the more fancy stuff and just HTML and CSS for static pages,” Axelson said.

He did not originally plan to turn his website creation hobby into a business.

“[It was] my infinite problem with being way too bored. I thought, why not make some money off it,” Axelson said.

“I just wanted to make some

spare cash to fund my hobbies.”

Although Axelson does not plan to make coding his full time career he does plan to continue for the foreseeable future.

“I think most of this is going to continue being a side hustle to make the fun money after hitting bills,” Axelson said.

When starting his business Axelson said the hardest part was getting clients.

“[I] spread primarily by word of mouth around Lincoln,” he said.

In addition to word of mouth Axelson now uses a “hire me” page on a personal site as his means of advertising.

Axelson emphasizes time management as a crucial aspect of running a business.

“Deadlines are important or

you will procrastinate; I will work for so long and not realize it,” Axelson said.

Just like any other business owner, Axelson has faced struggles as well, sometimes having to work long nights due to unexpected changes requested by a client. Despite the challenges, Axelson stays motivated by being able to spend the money he makes on his hobbies and knowing that he has made a difference for his clients.

Axelson offers advice to students considering starting their own business.

“Be willing to burn the boat,” Axelson said. “Have a ‘no going back’ kind of mindset so you can survive the hard times.”

EMMA GAMMEL :

Gammel spends much of her time painting, and she started her business taking art commissions during the summer of 2020, but has been doing art for a significant portion of her life. Her love of art arose from a teacher she had when she was younger.

“Around Elementary school, I had an art teacher named Mrs. A, and she was the greatest teacher ever,” Gammel said. “I’ve always been into art from that point on.”

Although Gammel has had a longtime interest in art, the pandemic is what really pushed her to pursue it seriously due to her sudden increase in free time.

When Gammel began painting more frequently, she did not originally plan to sell her art. “It was just for fun at first,” Gammel said. “Then my family and people from work were saying ‘you should definitely start selling them and taking commissions.’”

Typically when making a commission, clients send her a reference photo as well as specifics they want for their piece. Though it varies from client to client, Gammel said she en-

joys when she is given creative freedom. “It’s the nicest thing to hear as an artist, really,” she said.

Selling commissions comes with its own set of challenges. Sometimes clients will ask her to fix parts of an already var-

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- Emma Gammel (12)

nished painting.

“The hardest part is people are too critical,” Gammel said. “Sometimes you get in your own head and think you’re not good enough.”

Although she faces challenges, Gammel continues to stay motivated.

“My parents are my biggest supporters,” Gammel said. “Every time I get done with a piece, I’ll come out and I’ll show them and they say, ‘oh my gosh, it’s so good you should really keep going.’”

In the future, Gammel is unsure whether or not she will turn this into a full time job.

“It’s kind of like a back-up plan,” Gammel said. “I know that I want to do something creative. Specifically, I’ve always wanted to be an art teacher, elementary, or just art education in general.”

When running a business Gammel said it is important “to set a schedule on what you need to get done. Make sure you’re giving yourself mental breaks so that you don’t become burnt out.”

“[If you are thinking about starting a business] do it, don’t let anything hold you back,” Gammel said. “You may not think you will sell anything but, [there will be] one person who will be interested and that person will reach to other people. There’s no reason you shouldn’t chase after your dreams, you only live once.”

Art by: Emma Gammel

