

# Meeting future entrepreneurs

**Future entrepreneurs will be meeting other future entrepreneurs at the third annual Innovation Week on the North Dakota State University campus in Fargo, N. D. on Jan. 23-27.**

The #1 thing entrepreneurs seek when starting a new company is not lawyers, accountants, or even finances....its other entrepreneurs," states James Burgum, co-founder of Arthur Ventures, a venture capital firm located in Fargo, N.D. Burgum's experience includes angel investing, venture capital, government policy, international trade, agribusiness and entrepreneurship. "Creating the right environment will help foster an entrepreneurial culture and it's great to see NDSU working to facilitate that."

Another innovator, Howard Dahl, President and CEO of Amity Technology in Fargo, believes one of the greatness of America is the passion to make things better, innovate and create. "For us, if we don't continue to innovate, we will get run over and lose out in the long run," says Dahl, whose Amity Technology is a fourth generation company that follows in the proud tradition of a family that has been involved in the manufacturing business in North Dakota for more than 60 years. Howard and Brian Dahl, the founders of Amity, are grandsons of E. G. Melroe, the founder of the Melroe Company, which developed the Bobcat Loader. "You have to have continuous innovation to succeed."

This year, Innovation Week is being expanded to include an innovation competition, Innovation Challenge 12. Student teams will compete on the innovative work being done on campus. Students will prepare poster and oral presentation for judging. Criteria for both the poster and presentation will focus on the attached areas of innovation. Three prizes will also be awarded: First Prize - \$5,000, Second Prize - \$2,500, Third Prize - \$1,000.

Tom Walter, the Chief Culture Officer (CEO) of Tasty Catering, a corporate catering company based out of Chicago, Ill., will address the students. He notes that innovation and technology is critically important because market place changes drastically. "You have to stay on top of innovation and technology," says Walter, who has been in business for 40 years. The company is now being directed by younger employees who understand market change, technology and innovation and bring it into the workplace, Walter comments.

Because of his involvement with young entrepreneurs, including mentoring young people, Walter's talk will focus on different aspects of entrepreneurship.

He also says that innovation and technology means survivability and sustainability for business. "If you don't understand technology and innovation within your market and how to apply technology to your product and organization, you will not survive," he says.

Dahl believes the week-long event will allow students to "rub shoulders" with business people who have been innovative in their business. "This really gives some inspiration to students. I think it can provide encouragement for them to see that they can do this too," Dahl adds. "The biggest value to the students is inspiration."

Burgum agrees that businesses need to stay on the forefront of innovation and technology. "Technology can disrupt, it can enable, and it can be a major competitive advantage for businesses. Because of that, innovation and technology needs to be front and center as part of business strategies," he states. PB



**TOM WALTER**  
CEO, TASTY CATERING

## Schedule of events

### ► Tuesday, Jan. 24:

A kick-off breakfast with President Dean Bresciani will be held at Richard H. Barry Hall. During the breakfast, the innovation teams will be available to discuss their projects and answer questions. Some members of the innovation teams will also be interviewed during a morning radio show.

### ► Wednesday, Jan. 25:

Oral presentations for *Innovation Challenge 12* will be held from 10 a.m. to noon in the Century Theatre in the Memorial Union. The entire campus and the public are invited to attend the oral presentations.

### ► Wednesday, Jan. 25:

Poster judging will take place between 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. in the Prairie Rose room in the Memorial Union. The entire campus and public are invited view the posters.

### ► Thursday, Jan. 26:

The awards ceremony and keynote speaker will be held in the Great Room in the Memorial Union beginning at 4 p.m. The keynote speaker is Tom Walter, Walter is the CEO of Chicago-area Tasty Catering and is a serial entrepreneur. He has been a business owner for over 40 years and has started 29 companies and acquired three. Walter is a national speaker on topics that include leadership, employee engagement, entrepreneurship and brand image. After the keynote speaker, the awards ceremony will conclude the activities for the week. The entire campus and public is invited to attend the awards ceremony.

For additional information on Innovation Week 2012, go to: <http://www.ndsuresearchpark.com/about/Pages/events.aspx>