

January 19, 2018 | [Ryan Underdahl](#)

Lifeworks Entrepreneur Launches Lawn and Snow Service With Help from Microgrant



Josh Schultze has been mowing grass, shoveling, and snow blowing for as long as he can remember – over 15 years, in fact.

Last summer, he decided to make it a career by founding Schultze’s Lawn & Snow Service.

I’ve had other jobs that I’ve done and it didn’t seem to work out,” Schultze said. “I just decided that it was good idea to start up my own business, [and] be my own boss.”

One of the first steps for any aspiring entrepreneur is securing the capital necessary to launch the business, something Schultze has invested plenty of time in.

With some help from Lifeworks staff member Jodi Iverson, Schultze applied for a grant through the Minnesota Microgrant Partnership, which is administered by The Arc Minnesota and funded by the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

The program is designed to support people with disabilities who have financial barriers to achieving their goals. In Schultze’s case, his dreams of being an entrepreneur were held back by his need for viable equipment.

After receiving a \$500 microgrant, Schultze purchased a new leaf blower that he expects will make a big difference in the efficiency of his work. He was so thrilled with his new acquisition that he decided to test it out, despite the fact that it was winter.

As his ambition for his business grows, Schultze has identified Vocational Rehabilitation Services as a possible funding source.

“They have a program for people that are starting their own business,” Iverson said. “But before they’ll work with anybody, the first thing he had to do was list out things that he wanted and he had to go out and find it and get the information on it.”

In hopes of securing additional funding, Schultze has also prepared a business plan, registered for a federal identification number, completed a competitor analysis, and applied for a license from the city of Cottage Grove where he lives.

He’s also received quotes for additional equipment that he hopes to purchase, totaling approximately \$2,500.

Help along the way

Throughout the process of launching and growing his business, Iverson has worked with Schultze about four hours per week, but he’s also received support from his mother, aunt, and uncle.

“His mom found a business consultant in Cottage Grove,” Iverson said. “It’s a free program that helps people throughout Minnesota with starting their own business. She’s totally on board and willing to try to make this work, and she believes in Josh.”

Though Schultze is skilled at fixing equipment, his uncle is there to help when needed, and his aunt helped him create business cards.

But that’s not to say he hasn’t done most of the heavy lifting himself.

He’s really good at marketing,” Iverson said. “Josh has done everything on that end by himself.”

Schultze has invested time in developing a logo and slogan, and when he first started his business around June 2017, he would drive around with business cards and put them up at local businesses.

Soon, his seasonal advertisements will be on Carbone’s pizza boxes, which he hopes will bring in new customers.

“After that gets done,” Schultze said. “I’m going to ask ‘how did you hear [about] me?’ If I get enough customers through the Carbone’s pizza boxes, it might be [worth] doing it for summer. Then if I get enough, it might be worth doing it in winter again.”

Commitment to quality and value

As a new business owner, there is nothing more important to Schultze than quality and value.

Whether it’s snow removal service in the winter or lawn care in the summer, Schultze said he likes to drive by every few days to check out his customers’ property. And he’s there more often when it has rained or snowed heavily.

What differentiates Schultze’s business from others is something he calls a “helping hands” service. Through this unique service, he charges an hourly rate to work alongside people who may enjoy working in their yard, but need a bit of extra help.

“Like you’d help your neighbor,” Schultze said. “The only thing is, that neighbor is a little further away.”

Currently, Schultze is serving “neighbors” in Cottage Grove, St. Paul Park, and the surrounding area.



Growing pains

As his business continues to grow and develop, Schultze is navigating the complexities of pricing and bidding for jobs.

“The hardest thing for me is bidding the jobs,” Schultze said. “That’s been the number one thing I’ve been struggling with. Mowing grass, shoveling, it comes natural to me.”

For snow removal, he has elected to price his services based on the size of the job, which is one of three methods that competitors are using.

For lawn care, Schultze has struggled with the seemingly endless ways in which businesses charge for services. Because of this, Schultze said he’s looking for a mentor who can offer advice.

“The problem that I have sometimes is that some jobs I bid I should be higher, and others should be lower,” Schultze said. “I’m trying to get enough in for me that’s worth my time, but yet not overly charge them or undercharge them.”

Besides the complexities of bidding, Schultze also has a need for new and better equipment. Though he has a lawn mower, snow blower, and shovel, in addition to the leaf blower he acquired with help from the microgrant, he needs to expand his repertoire to make his work more manageable and efficient.

“Some jobs I figured out I can’t do it anymore because I don’t have the right equipment,” Schultze said. “I finally had to say I can’t do this job. She was kind of a little disappointed, but I tried it the best I could. It would have been a lot easier if I had a riding lawn mower. Definitely it was my biggest lesson learned.”

The future of the business

Besides purchasing a riding lawn mower, Schultze said he hopes to buy a weed-whip and other basic equipment he needs to do the job as his business continues to grow.

And his vision for the future goes far beyond that.

“To expand more, maybe hire one more person,” Schultze said. “Maybe move out further. Expand, but don’t get too big where I can’t handle everything. My dream would be to have a five hour or seven hour or eight hour day, but constantly go from jobsite to jobsite.”

His vision includes three to five customers each day, so he can ensure each job is done with quality and care.

I love being my own boss,” Schultze said.

Schultze’s Lawn & Snow Service serves Cottage Grove, Newport, St. Paul Park, and the surrounding area. Contact Josh at 651-900-0856 for pricing and availability.