Joe LaPlante
Regional Director
Riley Mortensen
CARES Support Specialist

Bear Paw Development Corporation
of Northern Montana

Havre Regional SBDC

Tom Jones Cooling & Heating

Havre, MT



"It was great working with the SBDC. They answered all my questions and helped with the business plan and financial projections."

Tom Jones, *Owner*

Tom Jones has worked in the heating and air conditioning industry for more than 13 years. Demand for HVAC services in the local market continued to increase, and Tom saw an opportunity. In 2021, Tom and his wife Emily decided to explore options to open their own business.

When beginning their initial planning, Tom and Emily received a referral from another local business owner to the Havre Small Business Development Center. They reached out to Joe LaPlante, SBDC Regional Director at Bear Paw Development Corporation. Joe spent time with Tom and Emily working through their initial questions about starting their business. They reviewed possible business entities and discussed potential liabilities and how to reduce risk. Emily, who has bookkeeping experience, filed all the paperwork necessary to start the business.

Joe continued to meet with Tom and Emily. He assisted in writing a business plan, developing financial projections, and creating a loan package. Within a couple of months of approaching Joe at the SBDC, Tom and Emily received the loan they needed to purchase equipment and get started. The company quickly launched a Facebook page, website, and other marketing to promote the new business. The marketing efforts proved effective as the business was busy from the onset.

Tom's industry experience, professionalism, and continued training are part of his strategy to ensure he continues to increase market share. He understands the latest technology, like Wi-Fi thermostats, and can explain the benefits to his customers. He stays up-to-date on industry standards and refrigeration variances to help his customers make environmentally friendly decisions.

The business supports two full-time jobs and has a mission to give back to the community. They sponsor a local youth soccer team and have provided giveaways at local events. After only a few months in business, they purchased air duct cleaning equipment and expanded services. They are now serving other nearby communities as the business and its reputation continues to grow.