Living the double life

Written by Lauren VonSeggern

All of a sudden, an ambulance comes driving through your neighborhood. "What happened? Where is it going? Is everyone okay?" are a few of thoughts that race through your head as your heart is pounding. You peer out the window to snoop around, as any normal person would, and see that it's not just a normal ambulance. On the side, instead of "Gretna Fire and Rescue," it reads "Lawn Care Medics." And a familiar Gretna High School senior, Caleb Haecker, is behind the wheel.

"I didn't want to work an hourly job, and I knew that there was plenty of money in it, so I just started mowing lawns for neighbors and stuff, and I was like, 'Well this is a lot better than $15 an hour at fast food,' so I was like 'This is gonna be something, a good high school gig for me,'" Haecker said.

In the summer of 2020, Haecker started the seedlings of his business, Lawn Care Medics, by mowing lawns for neighbors and doing other miscellaneous jobs. Two summers ago, Haecker ramped up the business by expanding the reach of jobs from just Gretna to include Elkhorn, Ashland, Millard and Papillion.

"He would go out and start bidding on jobs, and I kind of just let him go for it and do it himself," Caleb's father, Nate Haecker, said. "It's always made me a little nervous, like 'Does he know how to price things? What kind of promises is he making to these customers?' But I think it was a really good thing to just sorta force him to just do it."

This once pet project for Haecker turned into a successful business. Days over the summer were filled with jobs and continue to be filled even after school has started.

"After school, I probably get ten (lawns) done. Over the summer, we would mow anywhere from 20-25 in a day," Caleb Haecker said.

With school back in session, though, Haecker's time is now cut in half. While balancing owning his business and going to school every day, Haecker is also an active participant in both varsity show choir and choir, an officer for Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), President of National Honor Society (NHS) as well as a member of Gretna High School's student council. So how does Haecker balance it all while not going absolutely crazy with stress?

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>
> -Caleb Haecker

"I have a good calendar, but I also have paper lists; I have lists lying everywhere," Caleb Haecker said. "I usually carry one in my bag. I have this black folder in my truck that I carry. I just always have a to-do list and am crossing things off. And then Sundays are like a reset. I get all my work done, send invoices out and just get the new schedule for the next week."

These activities that he is all very active in, though, have given Haecker many skills that are useful not only in each individual extracurricular, but in many other aspects of his life.

"Since he's joined FBLA, he's really grown and evolved and taken on the leadership role seriously," FBLA sponsor Christine Swantek said. "I can always count on him to pitch in, to do the things that we do in the club with volunteering for activities. He's always available, saying, 'Yep, I'm available. I can help out.'"

Haecker's not the only person in the school with a dream of success or running a business. To achieve his dream, Haecker worked and worked (and worked even more) until his business is where it is today. Haecker offers advice for anyone wanting to start their own business.

"Stay organized and use the most of your time," Caleb Haecker said. "You gotta hustle, so whatever it is you want to do, do it with passion, and you can't sit around. You always gotta be movin'."

So, where does the business go after this? After Haecker graduates this upcoming spring, he has plans to continue and stick with his once summer job.

"I think when I go to college, I'll probably take it with me, probably to UNL. So, I'll keep doing Lincoln and wherever it goes, it goes," Caleb Haecker said.

At the end of the day, no matter what happens, Haecker knows that he's got supporters all around him.

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Enzo Palumbo

"I feel like I have developed a better work ethic when it comes to getting tasks done," said Enzo Palumbo, 29

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