

John C. Sweet
Niedlov's Breadworks
2010 Tennessee Small Business Person of the Year

Niedlov's Breadworks, according to owners John and Angela Sweet, is a "dream in progress" that started in 2002 as a wholesale bakery specializing in organic, naturally leavened whole grain bread. John's recipe for success included a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Covenant College followed by a course of study at the American Institute of Baking where he graduated as a Certified Baking Technologist in 2000. He met and married Angela at Zingerman's Bakehouse, where both were serving their artisan baking apprenticeship in a large baking facility in Michigan capable of producing over 5,000 loaves of bread per day.



SBA District Director Walter Perry presents John Sweet of Niedlov's Bakery the 2010 Tennessee Small Business Person of the Year Award.

In 2002, John and Angela returned to Chattanooga to open Niedlov's Breadworks, initially a wholesale baking facility serving the baking needs of fine restaurants in the southeast Tennessee-north Georgia area. Niedlov's slogan, displayed prominently at www.niedlovs.com, is "We Knead to Love, We Love to Knead." The hand-crafted, artisan breads the Sweets became so famous for soon demanded a retail outlet. In 2003, a counter and some makeshift walls were erected in front of the production space of the bakery in order to accommodate the half dozen customers who would routinely walk into the shop wanting to buy bread.

Also in 2003, Niedlov's Breadworks began a successful relationship with Greenlife Grocery, Chattanooga's local organic grocery store---and still Niedlov's largest customer. In 2005, the breadworks began a new private labeling arm, catering to larger customers who have specific bread needs. Niedlov's has prospered by being able to reproduce client's recipes for bread products to their exacting specifications. In 2006, the Sweets benefitted from counseling sessions at the SBA-sponsored Tennessee Small Business Development Center in Chattanooga. The Sweets also applied for, and received a SBA guaranteed loan for capital improvements and working capital from Cornerstone Bank in Chattanooga in 2006 and paid off the loan in 2009.

John and Angela Sweet were able to purchase and renovate a historic property in Chattanooga on Main Street, across from the famous Firehouse # 1 in 2007, and were also able to expand their retail operation to include coffee, homemade pastries and sandwiches, along with offerings of ten to fifteen varieties of bread every day. Niedlov's revenues have grown from \$412,000 in 2007 to over \$600,000 in 2009, with a steady increase in profits, and the bakery now employs eighteen. As a successful home-town business, the Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce honored Niedlov's during its Small Business Award Program in 2009.

In 2010, John Sweet was awarded recognition as Tennessee Small Business Person of the Year by U.S. Small Business Administration's Tennessee District. As the state winner for the Volunteer State, his company was honored at National Small Business Week in Washington, DC, which included a visit to the White House to meet President Barack Obama and celebrate small business success throughout our nation.

Today, more than half of American's either own or work for a small business. It is the entrepreneurial spirit of John Sweet at Niedlov's Breadworks that lives the American Dream of owning your own small business on Main Street in Chattanooga, Tennessee.