



## **Iredell's Small Business Ombudsmen Program Supports Start Up**

*How Iredell EDC helps Gatherings Catering & Event Center establish a location in Iredell County*

Statesville, NC- Gatherings Catering & Event Center (Gatherings), a new family business, is opening in Statesville. Gatherings offers event space, catering service, and grab-and-go meals.

Norris Allison and his family began working with Iredell Economic Development Corporation's Small Business Ombudsmen (SBO) program when deciding on a location in May of 2019. "The SBO program walked along the way with Gatherings," said Matthew Pierce, Director Business Retention & Expansion. The program assisted Gatherings with the location process, suggested architects for the project, and guided them through interactions with several city and county departments, including backflow, environmental health, zoning, and building standards.

Gatherings is one of more than sixty small businesses that have worked with Iredell County Economic Development's Small Business Ombudsman Program.

When asked about the experience of working with Iredell EDC's SBO Program, Norris Allison noted how helpful it was to have someone who had knowledge of the development process and whom they could call with questions. "I felt like Iredell County Economic Development Corporation was on our side. There was somebody that we could go to who would give us good information," said Allison.

The idea for this catering and events center began with family gatherings. What began as small holiday get-togethers at Allison's and Stainbrook's home eventually became annual events that brought together over one-hundred family and friends, an event catered by Allison and his mother, Margaret Allison. The couple wanted to combine their love of hosting these events with what they had learned during more than a dozen years managing local restaurants.

Though Allison and Lisa Stainbrook are the two you are most likely to encounter when visiting Gatherings, the business is a family affair. "My whole family is involved," said Allison. "Our daughter Megan does our online marketing. My sister Shelia Adams has been out knocking on the doors of doctors' offices and other businesses in the neighborhood. My other sister, Lechay Allison, lives in Atlanta and makes phone calls to drum up business. My mother helps me in the kitchen. She's back there now making a sweet potato pie."

The Greater Statesville Chamber Commerce will be hosting a ribbon cutting for Gathering Catering & Event Center's in honor of their opening on Tuesday, November 10<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 am at 232 Signal Hill Drive in Statesville, NC.

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About Gatherings Catering & Event Center:

Gatherings Catering & Event Center's mission is to provide a beautiful intimate space for any and every event. To schedule an event or at Gatherings Catering & Event Center, to have them cater an event, or to order your Thanksgiving meal kit, call 704-380-3202.

You can also find them at <https://www.gatheringscateringandeventcenter.com/> .

About Iredell County Economic Development Corporation:

Iredell County Economic Development Corporation is a 501(c)6 private-public partnership dedicated to the growth and success of Iredell County. We work with partners at the local, county, region, and state levels to address business opportunities and challenges to ensure a vibrant business community.

The Iredell EDC Small Business Ombudsman program was started in 2018 at the recommendation of the Iredell county Board of Commissioners. The program is designed to support small businesses in need of assistance with finding a location, navigating planning, assist with permitting and zoning questions, and identifying resources that can support their growth.

For more information about the Small Business Ombudsman program, call 704-799-5863 or email [Matthew@IredellEDC.com](mailto:Matthew@IredellEDC.com).

