



Local Metal Recycling Company Resilient Amid Pandemic, Supported by Illinois SBDC for the Metro East at SIUE

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ALTON - After learning by doing, and accumulating 20 years of first-hand experience in the scrap industry, Douglas Francis launched his entrepreneurial journey with his company Alton Dock Works, LLC.



Since June 2021, he has been a client of the Illinois Small Business Development Center (SBDC) for the Metro East at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville and Director Jo Ann Di Maggio May, after first contacting the SBDC for help with his SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL).

In high school, Douglas was introduced to the scrap industry. He attended Greenville College and continued his career in not just scrapping but specifically ferrous and non-ferrous metals. He worked at Azcon Corporation, PSC Metals, and then Azcon Corporation again trading scrap metal and shipping all around the world.

Francis then decided to use his contacts in the metal industry to venture out on his own. He began his journey full force. Finding a location in Alton, building a clientele, networking, and recruiting staff were all imperative duties. This included hiring four to six employees, based on demand.

Francis has grown his business by focusing on “how to make money and upgrading materials to process and make new materials.”

But, like many businesses, Alton Dock Works, LLC, ran into the challenges of running operations amid a pandemic. In Francis’ case, that involved working through the metal industry’s competitive market that fluctuates based on the market price of the metal.

Since metal prices are driven by consumption, when the market tanked in 2008, the scrap industry felt the pain. Likewise, in 2020. Not only was there a decrease in the market price of metals but also employees became harder to find.

Di Maggio May assisted Francis with a much-needed support system. He reached out for SBA EIDL assistance and help navigating the confusion of the endless paperwork. Di Maggio May assisted Francis with submitting for SBA reconsideration and the additional requests for paperwork. Finally, in January 2022, after about 15 months of effort, he received funding.

“If it were not for Jo Ann, I would not have received a dime. She has been a blessing to me and my company through her tons of devoted time and endless phone calls,” Francis shared.

In September 2021, the SBDC also assisted Francis in applying for Illinois Back to Business Grant.

“It has been my pleasure to assist Mr. Francis with his EIDL and Back to Business Grant,” said Di Maggio May. “I know how vital this is for small businesses and am thrilled that he received the financial help he truly needed. I look forward to seeing Alton Dock Works, LLC get back on its feet, running a successful operation again.”

For more information, visit Alton Dock Works, LLC, in person at 703 W Broadway in Alton, or contact Francis at scraper416@sbcglobal.net or 618-410-3370. ?

The Illinois SBDC for the Metro East assists start-up ventures like Alton Dock Works, LLC, as well as existing businesses headquartered in the nine-county region of Calhoun, Jersey, Madison, Bond, Clinton, St. Clair, Washington, Monroe, and Randolph. It is funded in part through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, and [SIUE](#) as a service to Illinois small businesses.????????

By aiding entrepreneurs and companies in defining their path to success, the SBDC network positively impacts the Metro East by strengthening the business community, creating, and retaining new jobs, and encouraging new investment. It enhances the region’s economic interests by providing one-stop assistance to individuals by means of counseling, training, research, and advocacy for new ventures and existing small businesses. When appropriate, the SBDC strives to affiliate its ties to the region to support the goals and objectives of both the [SIUE School of Business](#) and the University at large.

To learn about the SBDC, contact the [IL SBDC for the Metro East at SIUE](#) at 618-650-2929.?