

ANNUAL REPORT



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Letter from the Board Chair

01



Jake Green

Board Chair

As we reflect on the past year, I am filled with pride and gratitude for the success of the Spoon River CEO Program. This year demonstrated the power of community investment, mentorship, and the incredible potential of our students. Our class of ten students successfully completed the program, showing tremendous growth in leadership, communication, professionalism, and entrepreneurial thinking. Throughout the year, these young leaders embraced challenges, built meaningful relationships with local business leaders, and gained real-world experiences that will serve them well in their future endeavors. Watching their confidence grow and aspirations take shape has been one of the most rewarding aspects of serving this organization.

A highlight of the year was our annual Trade Show, which welcomed outstanding attendance and overwhelming community support. The event showcased the creativity, dedication, and entrepreneurial spirit of our students while allowing investors and community members to engage directly with their businesses and ideas. The impact of our mentors and investors cannot be overstated. Their continued commitment provides students with invaluable guidance, practical business knowledge, encouragement, and opportunities that extend far beyond the classroom. Together with our business hosts, educators, families, and volunteers, they create an environment where students can thrive, develop workforce-ready skills, and discover their potential as future leaders and entrepreneurs.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, thank you to our facilitator, investors, mentors, school districts, business hosts, volunteers, families, and community partners who make this program possible. Your belief in our mission is an investment in the future of our students and our communities. We proudly celebrate this year's accomplishments and look forward with excitement and optimism to the opportunities ahead.

"Together, we are investing in students today to build stronger communities tomorrow."

87.5%

Participants wanting to stay in the community after CEO

69%

Participants believe that their community invests in them and their potential

Letter from the Facilitator



Payton Arnett

Facilitator

As we close the inaugural year of Spoon River CEO, I am surrounded by the many incredible achievements that resulted from this program. Our school districts, local professionals, area businesses, and communities saw the value in providing an unconventional entrepreneurial learning experience for our students and moved mountains to ensure this first year was a success. The result of this immense support is evident in the growth, professional development, creativity, and lifelong bond of the Spoon River CEO Class of 2026, who navigated this inaugural year so gracefully. These students were an excellent example of the level of dedication that comes with participating in a program like CEO, and they represented our program with such pride. Walking alongside this inaugural class of ten students as they stepped outside their comfort zones, embraced challenges, and discovered new confidence in themselves as leaders, innovators, and future business professionals has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my career.

Thank you to each and every community partner who played a part in supporting our program; your dedication has helped create a strong foundation for Spoon River CEO to thrive. Thank you to our Board of Directors for finding time within your busy schedules to prioritize, support, and advocate for Spoon River CEO. To our investors and partner businesses, thank you for seeing the value in our inaugural year and pouring into the next generation. To our mentors, thank you for your consistency, wisdom, kindness, and willingness to build a relationship with a Spoon River CEO student. Thank you to our participating school districts for trusting the mission of our program, and to Spoon River College for providing multiple host locations for CEO events, and for supporting our students academically. Thank you to the Midland Institute for Entrepreneurship for your vision and dedication to expanding entrepreneurship education. And finally, thank you to our inaugural class for having the courage to say “yes” to something new. Your willingness to take the leap has helped shape the culture, foundation, and future of Spoon River CEO.

This first year has shown the power of connecting education, business, and community with a shared purpose. The future of Spoon River CEO is bright because of the people who have invested their time, talents, and resources into making it possible. It has been an honor to serve as facilitator, and I look forward to watching this program continue to grow and transform lives in the years ahead!

Program Overview



Spoon River CEO is an immersive entrepreneurship program that prepares students to be enterprising, responsible thinkers through real-world experiences where they take risks, manage outcomes, and learn directly from business and community leaders.

Vision

CEO nurtures entrepreneurial thinkers who possess an awareness of themselves and their communities.

Mission

Being and developing life-long learners, owners, creators, communicators and connectors.

Culture

Expecting the best of ourselves and others that reflects the spirit and accountability found in CEO.

Participating Schools

Astoria High School
Canton High School *
Cuba High School
Farmington Central High School*
Lewistown High School*
Spoon River Valley High School*
VIT Sr High School

**Student Participation 26-27 School Year*




PARTICIPATING
SCHOOLS

4


CURRENT
STUDENTS

10


TOTAL
ALUMNI

0


ACTIVE
INVESTORS

40


BOARD
MEMBERS

11


YEARS
ACTIVE

1

Financial Overview

The Spoon River CEO Program's inaugural year demonstrated strong financial stewardship and outstanding community support. The program generated \$51,902.54 in total revenue, with \$42,743.72 (82.35%) coming directly from 40 dedicated local investors. These investors—made up of area businesses and individuals—are the driving force behind the program, investing in the future workforce and the leaders of tomorrow.

Revenue

\$51,902

Expenses

\$36,270

Net Surplus

\$15,632

Investor support allows the CEO Program to remain completely free for both students and participating schools, ensuring that financial barriers never limit opportunity. Because of this local investment, students experience a transformative, hands-on entrepreneurial education that builds confidence, leadership, and real-world business skills while strengthening the communities they will one day serve.



Income Statement Report

Class of 2026 | August 1, 2025 - July 31, 2026

ITEM	AMOUNT
REVENUE	
Investors	42,743.72
Friends of CEO	1,500.00
Class Business	7,331.13
Other	327.69
TOTAL REVENUE	51,902.54
EXPENSES	
Wages	21,926.31
MIE Chapter Fee	5,000.00
Class Supplies & Support	6,176.19
Other	3,168.04
TOTAL EXPENSES	36,270.54
NET INCOME	15,632.00

Investors

Powering the Next Generation

Our Program Investors provide support to our community driven program. An annual investment of \$1,000 provides the necessary resources for current-year facilitator salary and operating expenses, and ensures the sustainability of the Spoon River CEO class for future students. Investors also contribute their time to the program, hosting business visits, provide guest speakers and serve as mentors. All crucial to the success of Spoon River CEO.



Art Hossler Auto Plaza	Stu Harrison	Pioneer Seed Sales -
Bank of Yates City	Havana National Bank	Scott Welker
Buckheart Solar	Holthaus Companies	Pleasantville Solar Park
Cameron Roofing, Inc.	Hummel Farms	Prairieland FS / Fulton FS
Canton Area Chamber of Commerce	Ipava State Bank	Quick Electric
Canton Park District	Jed & Hailey Rhoades	Scott Miller
City of Farmington	John Graham & Associates	Spoon River College
Compeer Financial	Midwestern Securities -	Spoon River Counseling-
Country Financial -	Josh Miller	Dr. Andrea Steliga Phillips
Canton Agency	Kevin & Debbie Stephenson	Spoon River Electric CO-OP
Davis Ford / Line - X	Kiesewetter Insurance	Spoon River Valley
Edward Jones -	The Loft of Canton	Foundation
Rusty Melhouse	Lozier Oil	Eric Stanley
Fairview State Bank	Mid Century Fiber	State Farm Insurance -
Fulton County Farm Bureau	MidAmerica National Bank	Tom Conklin
Graham Health System	Oakdale Veterinary Center	TBK Bank
	Andrea & Ben Phillips	TimbukTech

Investor Testimonial

When Rick Klinedinst asked me to get involved with Spoon River CEO, I said, "Absolutely!" Fulton County needs to develop the entrepreneurial spirit in our high school students and help create the business owners of the future. As we raised funds to launch the program, it became clear that area business leaders shared the vision. Its first year was wildly successful, and I'm thankful to invest in our local business community's future! **Daniel Kiesewetter - Kiesewetter Insurance**

Mentors

Guiding the Next Generation

A mentor is a business owner, entrepreneur, or intraprenuer from the Fulton County business community who plays a vital role in shaping the next generation of leaders. By sharing their time, expertise, and real-world experiences, mentors provide invaluable guidance, encouragement, and insights that help CEO students develop confidence, critical thinking skills, and an entrepreneurial mindset.



ERIN AHART

SYCAMORE ACRES

MENTORING: RAYDEN CULP

LISA QUICK

QUICK ELECTRIC

MENTORING: ALYSSA FIDLER

KARA FITZJARRALD

MIDSTATE APPAREL

MENTORING: BAILEY EMMONS

ALI SOURS

GRAHAM HEALTH SYSTEM

MENTORING: BRYER NELSON

MICHELLE HOWE

SPOON RIVER COLLEGE

MENTORING: BECCA GRAHAM

JENNA SPOTLOE

PRAIRIE STATE BANK

MENTORING: AHNNA RICHARDSON

JASON PARSONS

SNOWMAN REINDEER FARM

MENTORING: WILL PHILLIPS

BRENT WHEELER

CANTON PARK DISTRICT

MENTORING: QUINN GATES

LACEY NEAL

ROCK VALLEY PHYSICAL THERAPY

MENTORING: ALAINA TOWERY

RICK KLINEDINST

MIDAMERICA NATIONAL BANK

MENTORING: CHASE DRISKELL

Mentor Testimonial

Serving as a mentor in the Spoon River CEO Program was a rewarding experience. I was impressed by the engagement, enthusiasm, and growth demonstrated by the students throughout the year. Despite coming from different high schools across Fulton County, they built a strong network of support and collaboration that will benefit them well into the future. The CEO Program provides valuable real-world experiences while developing leadership skills, confidence, and an entrepreneurial mindset. **Rick Klinedinst - MidAmerica National Bank President**



Board Members

Steering the future of
Entrepreneurship



JAKE GREEN
GRAHAM HEALTH SYSTEM
CHAIR



AMANDA ATCHLEY
BLACK MAPLE COFFEE
VICE PRESIDENT



MITCH COONRADT
MIDAMERICA NATIONAL BANK
TREASURER



RYAN BAKER
IPAVA STATE BANK
SECRETARY



CARLA BOBELL
RETIRED CHAMBER DIRECTOR
Past Chair



NATHAN COLLINS
COLLINS & COLLINS LAW
Board Member



CHRIS JANSSEN
SPOON RIVER VALLEY
Board Member



CASSIE NELSON
CUBA HIGH SCHOOL
Board Member



DAN KIESEWETTER
KIESEWETTER INSURANCE
Board Member



KERRY HATFILL
LEWISTOWN HIGH SCHOOL
Board Member



JOSH DEWEES
SPOON RIVER ELECTRIC
Board Member

cevo[®]
SPOON
RIVER

Board Member Testimonial

Spoon River CEO is a great opportunity for our students to learn about professionalism, communication, and leadership while building relationships with local business and community leaders. It has been rewarding to watch the students grow in confidence and discover new interests and career paths. I appreciate all the work put into the program and am proud to support an opportunity that is making a positive difference in our students and our community. **Chris Janssen - Spoon River Valley Superintendent**

English High Tea

Where Learning Meets Doing

The Spoon River CEO Class of 2026 brought an English High Tea to Fulton County in December of 2025 as its Class Business Venture, creating an elegant brunch experience that brought together such a meaningful learning experience. Guests enjoyed a thoughtfully curated menu of English-inspired cuisine paired with hot tea, served in vintage thrifted china and unique teacups that students hand selected for the event. The event also featured live jazz music performed by members of the Canton High School band, along with a variety of silent auction baskets that were a hit just in time for the holiday season.

Revenue

\$5,656

Expenses

\$1,131

Income

\$4,525

Through months of meticulous planning and continuous collaboration, the Spoon River CEO students curated not only an incredible event supported by so many community members, but also an irreplaceable learning experience for the entire class. Students generated more than \$5,000 in profit to be put towards the start up for their individual businesses for the spring semester, but it would not have been possible if it weren't for the generosity of Old Dog LLC for donating the venue, the many community members that purchased tickets to attend, those who bid on silent auction baskets, and so much more. The English High Tea was a terrific representation of Spoon River CEO's entrepreneurial spirit!



Business Visits

Beyond the Classroom: Learning from Real Businesses

A key part of the CEO experience is visiting local businesses in Fulton County. Every day, people pass these businesses without realizing their impact on the local economy. Through these visits, students gain a new perspective—walking away with a deeper appreciation and never seeing these businesses the same way again.



PRAIRIE STATE BANK

HILLTOP HONEY

IPAVA STATE BANK

IMMEASURABLY MORE

GRAHAM MEDICAL
GROUP

THE SIMPLE THINGS

CANTON PARK DISTRICT

BLACK MAPLE COFFEE

MIDAMERICA NATIONAL
BANK

SYCAMORE ACRES

BIG HORSE VINEYARDS

ROCK VALLEY
PHYSICAL THERAPY

FULTON COUNTY FARM
BUREAU

KEMMY'S KENNELS

PRINCESS CREATIONS
CAKES

FAIRVIEW SALE BARN

COOK MEDICAL

COLLINS & COLLINS LAW

COOK POLYMER

KIESEWETTER
INSURANCE

JIMMY JOHN'S

TOWERY
CONSTRUCTION

THE 1909

SPOON RIVER ELECTRIC

WHAT'S SHAKIN' &
WHAT'S BREWIN'

SNOWMAN'S REINDEER
FARM

TEAM GREEN FITNESS



Business Testimonial

Hosting the Spoon River CEO students was an incredibly rewarding experience. We love the opportunity to share an authentic look at running a business, from celebrating the successes, to navigating challenges and learning from failures along the way. The students brought thoughtful questions with genuine curiosity, and an impressive level of engagement. We have tremendous respect for the Spoon River CEO program for its invaluable real-world experiences while encouraging young people to think creatively, develop leadership skills and recognize the opportunities available within themselves and their communities. **Lacey Neal - Rock Valley Physical Therapy**

Guest Speakers

Wisdom from Those Who've Been There

CEO participants gain a unique experience as guest speakers serve as instructors for the program. Community leaders share their life stories, entrepreneurial journeys, and valuable lessons on a variety of business topics.

MICHELLE HOWE

JAKE GREEN

MIKE OSBORNE

BAILEY LYNN

CARLA BOBELL

MICHELL SPIVA

MEGAN GILSTRAP

JAMIE BUTLER

MEGAN WILSON-FRIEDRICH

AMANDA ATCHLEY

BRENT WHEELER

EMILY MORTON

LACEY NEAL

MIKE HORSFIELD

NATHAN COLLINS

DAN KIESEWETTER

RANDY TOWERY

JOSH DEWEES

ERIN AHART



Guest Speaker Testimonial

"I was honored to speak to the Spoon River CEO students. Their passion and dedication was on full display and I am excited to see their business ideas grow. It feels great knowing our local area is investing in itself with this program." **Mike Osborn- Havana Junior High Principal; owner of Bald Man Marketing**

Class of 2026

The Entrepreneurs of Tomorrow

Rayden Culp



Rayden Culp, a senior at Canton High School and member of the Spoon River CEO program, participated in marching band and soccer. Passionate about cooking, he planned to attend culinary school after graduation and eventually open a restaurant with William Phillips.

"Being a part of the CEO program is a great opportunity for me to explore the world of business where I can learn important skills that will aid in future career endeavors."

Ray's Canton Crunch

Inspired by his grandmother "Oma's" cherished English Toffee recipe, Rayden Culp turned a beloved family tradition into a business. Through Oma's Original, one of four flavors, he shares her legacy, offering handcrafted toffee perfected over years of practice and family memories.



Bailey Emmons



Bailey Emmons, a junior at Farmington Central High School, serves as student senate treasurer and competes in track. She co-owns What's Shakin' food truck with her sister and plans to study electrical engineering at Auburn University.

Bailey valued her experience in Spoon River CEO because it provided hands-on business and entrepreneurship opportunities that helped her grow personally and professionally.

What's Shakin'

What's Shakin' is a mobile beverage business started by sisters Bailey and Camryn Emmons in 2022. Beginning with a small lemonade stand, it grew into two trailers offering drinks like lemon shake-ups, teas, sodas, and coffee, serving events across their community.



Chase Driskell



Chase Driskell is a senior at Canton High School and a Spoon River CEO student. He is a captain of his soccer team, head drum major of the marching band, leader of the Canton Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and cofounder of his church's Servant Leadership Team.

He is very passionate about following Jesus and studying the Bible. His future plans include attending Moody Bible Institute in Chicago to obtain a degree in Pastoral Studies.

Thirty 8 Twenty Guitar,

Founded by Chase Driskell in March 2026, Thirty 8 Twenty Guitar was inspired by Isaiah 38:20 and his passion for music. A self-taught guitarist, Chase shared effective learning methods through affordable lessons, helping others develop their guitar skills and love for music.



Alyssa Fidler



Alyssa Fidler, a junior at Spoon River Valley High School and member of the Spoon River CEO Class of 2026, is involved in FFA and volleyball. She enjoys raising and showing cattle and has learned the value of hard work. She plans to attend college and later law school.

She states the Spoon River CEO program is greatly growing her professional and business knowledge that will give her a solid foundation for her future goals.

Fidler Media Management

Alyssa Fidler, Spoon River CEO Class of 2026 member, founded Fidler Media Management to help local businesses manage Facebook and Instagram accounts. She saw a need for stronger online presence and is committed to helping community businesses grow and stay connected.



Class of 2026

The Entrepreneurs of Tomorrow

Quinn Gates



Quinn Gates is a homeschooled senior on track to earn an associate degree from Spoon River College in 2026. He plays club soccer, coaches youth sports, and works as a lifeguard. He helps operate his family cattle farm and plans to study agriculture before returning to run his own business.

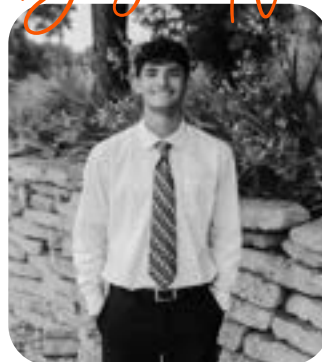
Quinn participated in the Spoon River CEO program to build relationships with local businesses and gain skills that would prepare him to own and operate businesses in the future.

Spoon River Traditional Crafts

Spoon River Traditional Crafts, creates handcrafted wooden bowls, cups, plates, ornaments, and custom pieces from wood harvested on his family farm. Using traditional woodworking techniques, Quinn crafts each item by hand, creating timeless pieces designed to become treasured family heirlooms.



Bryer Nelson



Bryer Nelson, a senior at Canton High School, was active in National Honor Society, Youth Leadership Academy, soccer, and FFA, serving as Section 12 President. He earned his State FFA Degree, pursued the American Degree, and plans to study biology at the University of Illinois.

He was excited to be part of the inaugural Spoon River CEO program and is looking forward to the unique opportunities it provides.

The Daily Batch

The Daily Batch serves hot, fresh mini donuts made to order for a quick and delicious treat. Focused on quality, speed, and flavor, every batch is prepared fresh to deliver warm, sweet donuts that customers can enjoy anytime and keep coming back for.



Rebecca Graham



Rebecca "Becca" Graham, a senior at Lewistown High School, participated in cross country, track, color guard, FFA, and drama. She plans to gain accounting experience through an internship, attend Monmouth College for Business Administration, pursue opportunities with Caterpillar, and later earn a welding certificate.

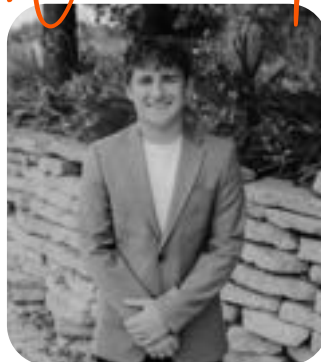
Through the Spoon River CEO program, Rebecca gained confidence in public speaking and developed skills that prepared her for future leadership opportunities.

Detail Dynasty

Detail Dynasty is a mobile car detailing business that helps busy parents maintain clean vehicles. By bringing detailing services directly to customers, she created a convenient solution for families balancing work, activities, and everyday responsibilities.



William Phillips



Will Phillips, a senior at Canton High School, was involved in National Honor Society, student council, and soccer. He volunteered with the Fulton County Soccer Club, worked at a local restaurant, and refereed soccer. Will plans to study business and entrepreneurship with hopes of opening a restaurant.

Will gained valuable knowledge in establishing and managing a business while building strong connections with local business leaders throughout his community.

Ardente Food Experiences

Ardente Food Experiences, offers a fully mobile private chef service with customized, restaurant-quality menus. Focused on exceptional cuisine and personalized hospitality, Ardente transforms gatherings into memorable, fine dining experiences at home.



Class of 2026

The Entrepreneurs of Tomorrow

Ahanna Richardson



Ahanna Richardson, a senior at Lewistown High School, was a member of the Spoon River CEO Class of 2026. She participated in track and volleyball, where she developed teamwork and discipline. She enjoys walking and pickleball and plans to attend Tricoci University to pursue her career and entrepreneurship goals.

She enjoyed her time in the Spoon River CEO program and gained valuable entrepreneurial knowledge and experiences that supported her personal and professional growth.

Black Halo Scents

Ahanna Richardson, a senior from Lewistown High School, was guided by the Spoon River CEO program in entrepreneurship. She founded Black Halo Scents, offering natural oil-based roll-on perfumes and colognes made with clean ingredients for people with sensitive skin and fragrance preferences.



Alaina Towery



Alaina Towery, a senior at Canton High School, was involved in soccer, media team, Club Unified, and Unified P.E. She plans to attend college to become a pediatric physical therapist and aspires to eventually open her own physical therapy business.

Alaina feels she received a head start and better understanding of business with the help of Spoon River CEO.

Alaina's A+ Pathways

Alaina Towery founded Alaina's A+ Pathways, an affordable tutoring business offering fun, engaging sessions using games and creative learning methods. Sessions start at \$20 per hour per student, with pricing varying by group size, time, and location.



INAUGURAL CLASS!

This is not a traditional classroom experience. In CEO, students learn entrepreneurial education firsthand from local businesses and leaders by doing real-world work every day. The inaugural class demonstrated strong growth personally and professionally, building lasting friendships and valuable connections with community business professionals and each other.

Transform Our Community Get Involved



GUEST SPEAKER

Come join class as a guest speaker, this is such a critical part of CEO. We love for speakers to tell us stories about how their business started, personal philosophies about work and success, life topics or specific business topics. Guest speakers are really the true teachers in CEO.



BUSINESS VISIT

Students look forward to visiting the many different businesses that create our community. Consider inviting the class to tour and learn more about your business. Contact [facilitator@spoonriverceo.com] to learn more.



MENTOR

Become a mentor if you are ready to experience CEO right along with the students. Being a mentor is a rewarding way to get involved.



INVESTOR

CEO is free for students and schools. The program relies on local investors to support this transformative learning experience. By helping us connect our young people with local businesses and area leaders, you can make a direct impact on the workforce and leaders of tomorrow.



BOARD MEMBER

Becoming a board member for CEO offers a rewarding opportunity to shape the future of aspiring entrepreneurs. Serving on the board allows you to contribute to the growth of the next generation of innovators and make a lasting impact on our community.



WE NEED COMMUNITY-MINDED INDIVIDUALS LIKE YOU.

CEO is free for students and schools. The program relies on local investors to support this transformative learning experience.



INVEST IN TOMORROW, TODAY.

By helping us connect our young people with local businesses and area leaders, you are making a direct impact on the workforce and leaders of tomorrow.

AS AN INVESTOR, YOU RECEIVE:

- Name/Logo Recognition on CEO Website
- Social Media Acknowledgement
- First Rights to host/visit the class



"The CEO experience has been life changing for me. I learned a lot of skills I wouldn't have been able to gather otherwise and I feel more prepared for my future. CEO opened up more doors for me than any other opportunity ever has."



"CEO is so much more than how to run a business. It is teaching students the life skills and all of the things that go into being successful in any career path you choose. It exposes all of our students to what endless opportunities are right here in our backyard."



"In 20+ years in economic development, the chamber of commerce and the economic development corporation, CEO has been the most beneficial most gratifying program I have been involved with."

DISCOVER HOW TO TRANSFORM OUR COMMUNITY THROUGH CEO®

The CEO (Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities) Program gives young people hands on business experience and transforms them into entrepreneurial thinkers who are invested in our community.



ABOUT THE CEO PROGRAM

CEO is unlike any other class. It is a program for high school juniors and seniors that teaches them about business. But even more, it teaches them about life.

Kids think that opportunity exists everywhere but in their hometowns. The CEO Program shows them that there are thriving businesses, opportunities for growth, and people who want to support them right here in their community - all they have to do is look.

76%

Of participants report that they plan to return or are open to returning to their community down the road.

63%

Report that they can see themselves working for a business they encountered during CEO.



CEO IMMERSES STUDENTS IN THE COMMUNITY.

CEO is never held in a classroom. Instead, participants spend each day, five days a week, in area businesses, absorbing essential skills from local business owners and community leaders.



CEO INSTILLS AN ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSET.

Each student is guided through the creation of two real businesses, with the support of a local mentor. These aren't classroom exercises - they are real products, real services being exchanged for real money.



CEO INSPIRES THE NEXT GENERATION.

It shows young people the opportunities that exist to them and challenges them to own their work, innovate creative solutions, and think big - because they have the support of the community behind them.



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RIVER

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Social Media

[@spoonriverceo](https://www.instagram.com/spoonriverceo)

