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## Sioux City aircraft maintenance business takes off

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Aviation Consultant Expert Solutions owners Jim Sponder, left, and Travis Stein are shown in front of an aircraft at the company's new Sioux City maintenance and repair facility in January 2012.

March 31, 2013 12:00 am • DAVE DREESZEN ddreeszen@siouxcityjournal.com (0) Comments

SIoux CITY | A Sioux City business recently overhauled and refurbished a commuter jet that transports passengers

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to Caribbean destinations.

The SAAB 340B jet, owned by Seaborne Airlines, left Aviation Consultant Expert Solutions' hangar at at Sioux Gateway Airport in February.

"The ACES team has done a superb job supporting Seaborne Airlines in all aspects of adding the Saab 340 to the Seaborne fleet," said Dave Ziemer, chief operating officer for the airline, which offers departures to San Juan, St. Thomas, St. Croix, Tortola, and Virgin Gorda.

A similar Seaborne aircraft was featured in an episode of the hit ABC series "The Bachelor" this season.

ACES, owned by Jim Sponder and Travis Stein, has been attracting clients in the U.S., Caribbean, Mexico and Africa since starting up operations in Sioux City last year. Certified by the Federal Aviation Administration, the business offers a variety of services, from routine checks to major overhauls, and specializes in serving commuter airlines operating regional jets with 30 to 100 seats.

In the last year, ACES has grown to employ 20 full-time repair mechanics. Company officials anticipates further hiring in the future.

"We are proud to be part of this community and pleased to see continued growth, not only for ACES, but also in the aviation industry taking place right here in our hometown," Sponder said.

A Sergeant Bluff-Luton High School graduate, Sponder has more than more than two decades of aircraft maintenance experience. He is trained to work on not only regional jets, but also larger body aircraft, such as 757s and 767s.

His experience includes managing two different aircraft maintenance facilities formerly housed in Hanger 802, the same hanger that ACES now leases from the city-owned airport. After the second facility, operated by commuter carrier Mesaba Airlines, closed in 2008, the more than 40 skilled aircraft mechanics scattered to different parts of the globe.

Stein, a pilot for the last 20 years, is a former captain with Mesaba Airlines, flying connecting routes for the former Northwest Airlines into such small airports as Thief River Falls, Minn., and Detroit Lakes, Minn.

Later on, he moved into the maintenance and management side of the industry. Along the way, he performed nearly every job, from checking in passengers to working as a flight attendant. In 2003, he received his mechanics license.

They began by traveling to hangars around the country to work on aircraft. They eventually tired of being constantly on the road.

After considering sites in Illinois and Florida, they settled on the Sioux Gateway hangar. Sponder's strong family ties in Siouxland contributed to the decision.

The city of Sioux City also put together an attractive package of incentives, including tax credits from the state's Targeted Jobs program for border cities.

ACES signed a 20-year lease with the city for the 24,000-square-foot hangar, which also includes 12,000 square feet of office and shop space.

ORANGE CITY, Iowa | Plans to build a new airport in Sioux County got a financial lift Wednesday. Read more

### Aviation Consultant Expert Solutions

Type of business: Maintenance and repair of commercial aircraft

Owners: Jim Sponder and Travis Stein

Address: 2500 Keokuk Ave., near Sioux Gateway Airport

Size of hanger floor: 24,000 square feet

On the Web: [www.top-ACES.com](http://www.top-ACES.com)



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