

# BUSINESS



Press Photos by Dustin Monke

Above, The Fisher Group building is seen Wednesday on Third Avenue West in Dickinson. Below, The Fisher Group President Mike Fisher stands in his office on Wednesday.

## Striving to be 'best in class'



*In only a few years, The Fisher Group has grown Dickinson's business community*

By Dustin Monke  
dmonke@thedickinsonpress.com

Four years ago, Mike Fisher set out to bring a handful of companies he ran together under one roof.

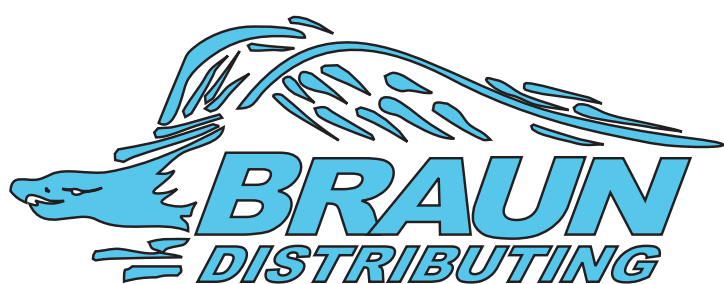
Today, The Fisher Group employs an estimated 250 people at a more than a dozen area businesses and has turned into a management company that has given area residents businesses they not only want but, in many ways, need.

"We want to be the best at what we do," Fisher said. "We want to be the best in class."

Fisher — the son of the late Gene Fisher, a long-time Dickinson businessman and founder of Fisher Industries — began The Fisher Group with just three employees: himself, his sister and his longtime friend and colleague, Scott Wax. Dave Bren, now the company's operations manager, joined not long after that.

"We're a tight-knit group," Bren said. "We've always worked with each other."

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# BUSINESS

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It didn't take long for The Fisher Group to expand.

In the past three years, the company has brought a restaurant, truck stop and dry cleaners to Dickinson. Players Sports Bar and Grill, County Line Truck Stop and Paradise Dry Cleaning are only a few of the businesses that fall under the management group's banner that already included Dickinson Ready Mix and the Tiger Discount truck stop.

Trucking company Rock Solid Express was one of the group's first ventures. It has since purchased longtime Dickinson businesses Camp on the Heart RV park, The Pit Stop convenience store, Frontier Liquors and, most recently, Action Cleaning Service.

"I always took that approach that you can manage more than one company at one time," Fisher said. "It does take a lot of work, but it gives you great reason to get out of bed in the morning. I was kind of born and raised and brought up that way"

While operating and starting such a variety of different business has not come without challenges, Wax said the company feels fine with learning as it goes.

"There's a learning curve to every entity that we have," said Wax, the vice president of the company. "Each one is a little different in its own way, but the reason we have so many entities is because we're vested into the Dickinson community."

Fisher took that sentiment a step further.

"It is our hometown," he added. "This is where we're going to be forever. We'd like to see Dickinson be as good as it can be."

Still, some businesses took even Fisher by surprise.

"I never imagined in 100 years that we'd have a dry cleaner business," he said

But Paradise's opening in November 2014 filled a need in the community after Dickinson went two and a half years without a dry cleaning service.

"It's going how we planned it to go," Fisher said of the businesses' success so far.

The trick, he said, is investing in ideal properties and smart people.

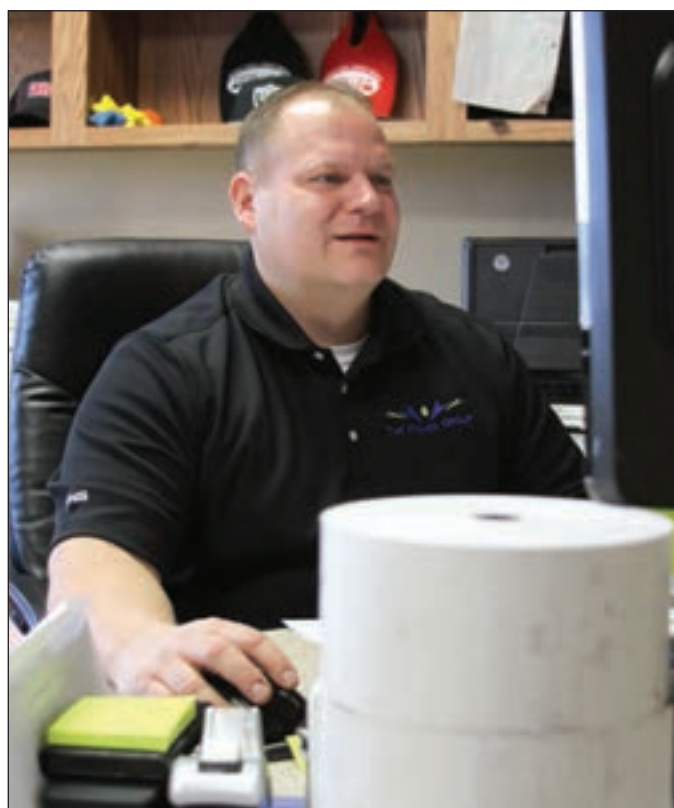
"You always should hire people who are smarter than you are," Fisher said with a smile. "It makes your job easier."

He isn't joking either.

Tony Elliott, general manager of Players, said The Fisher Group's leadership takes a hands-off approach with its entities, choosing instead to trust the people they hire.

"They let us make our decisions, fail when we have to fail and learn from those decisions and try to let us do what we know how to do," said Elliott, who started as Players' executive chef when the business opened in 2012 and worked his way into the GM role.

Fisher and Bren said they'll do nationwide searches to find the right person to operate their businesses. Elliott came to Dickinson from Colorado.



Press Photo by Dustin Monke

Left, Scott Wax, vice president of The Fisher Group, works at his desk on Wednesday at the company's Dickinson office. At right, Dave Bren, operations manager for The Fisher Group, talks on his cellphone while working at his desk on Wednesday at the company's Dickinson office.

Paradise Plant Manager Steve Mensches is from New York. Ron Johnson, director of strategy for The Fisher Group, calls Chicago home. Daniel McIntosh, the new executive chef at Players, is a Salt Lake City native.

"As we find these key people, we want them to grow with The Fisher Group or the entity," Bren said. "It's exciting for us to have someone like Tony who can grow with us and make the facility a much better place as well."

Providing environments where people actually want to work is the key to success, Fisher said.

"We try to give out the best product we can," he said. "It's our image. It's their image. It's easier for us to do that when you have the best product out there, we believe, in that entity — something you can be proud of."

That philosophy is apparent in the creation of businesses like Players, which has the aesthetics of an upscale restaurant instead of a sports bar, and Paradise, which uses the latest in environmentally-sound cleaning technology. Even County Line Truck Stop, completed in 2013, was built with oilfield customers in mind.

"We don't cut corners," Bren said. "All the facilities, I think, are state-of-the-art facilities. We try to place great people in there for great customer service. We're here for the long haul."

Fisher said while the group has no new businesses immediately on the horizon, they're always working to determine what Dickinson residents need or will want in the future. His only condition? It can't be a franchise.

"We want our images on our businesses, not a franchise," Fisher said, "because we believe we understand Dickinson better than any franchise does, and we want to give them what we believe in."

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A welder in The Fisher Group's shop works on a piece of equipment Wednesday.