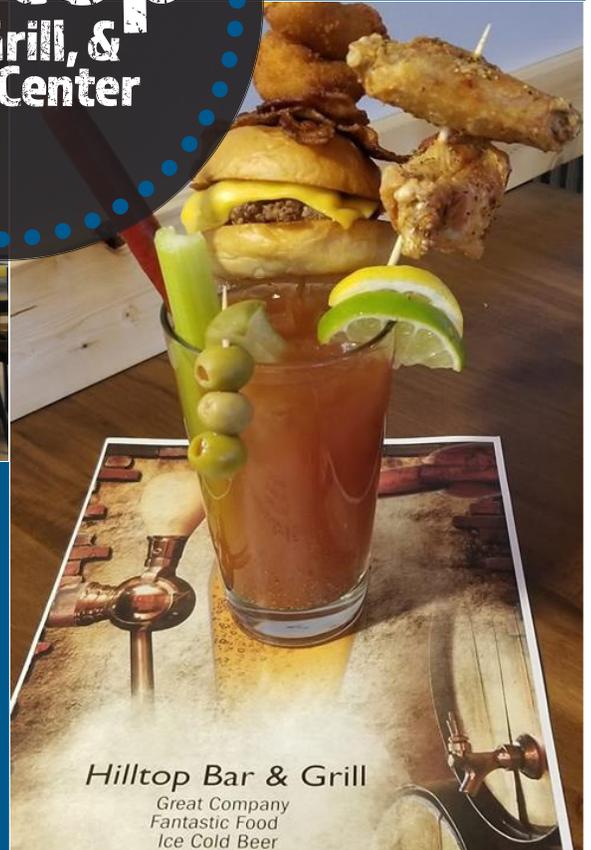




# Hilltop

Bar, Grill, & Event Center



Hilltop Bar, Grill, & Event Center  
712 Oak Street  
Dawson, MN  
320-769-4518

*“The community support is great, we have been very fortunate that way. Dawson people want to see Dawson people succeed.”*



Upper Minnesota Valley  
**REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

Helping Communities Prosper

Hilltop Bar & Grill  
Great Company  
Fantastic Food  
Ice Cold Beer

For owners, Keith Knutson and Colin Bergeson, the dream of owning a business all started out with some friendly joking while on an ice fishing outing and quickly turned into a serious idea. When the VFW in Dawson went up for sale, they decided to go for it and created Hilltop Bar, Grill, and Event Center. Their initial goal was to provide quality food at a good price to draw new customers into the area as well as give the people of Dawson another option for food and an event space.

Being in business for just over a year, they have exceeded that goal and continue to be a quality establishment in the community. They currently employ 14 people and always have others willing to help out if need be, which makes hosting large events or having a full house on a Friday night go so smooth. **The support from the community is what makes owning a business in their home town so enjoyable for Keith and Colin.**

Their biggest pieces of advice to others looking to start a business is (1) understand it will take a lot of dedication, hours, and behind the scenes work, (2) resources and connecting with others in the industry is crucial, and (3) listen to people’s advice because they will be your future customers.

The funding from the Revolving Loan Fund helped Keith and Colin with various start up costs including the remodel of the building. **They said without the funds, Hilltop would not have the great atmosphere it does today.**

# with Kieth & Colin

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## **What motivated you to start Hilltop?**

*It was just kind of a dream for a while. Close to a year ago, we thought there might be a chance we could do this. We were ice fishing and just talking about it and then it actually happened.*

## **What are your goals for your business?**

*Our main goal was to get some new customers in. We wanted to draw new customers in the area because we knew a lot of people would go to Montevideo, Willmar, or Marshall just to go eat. We were hoping that if we provided good food at a good price and have friendly staff, we could draw in customers and we have been fortunate to do that up to this point.*

## **What is your favorite part about owning a business?**

*The interaction with people and how much this place means to the community- having a nice, new establishment. We take a lot of pride in having a nice, presentable place. Our community needed a place to go for big events, and now we have the staff to do it.*

## **What kind of events do you host?**

*Christmas parties, big meetings, the Chamber Extravaganza has been up here. We just had the Cattlemens meeting- we did 95 steaks. We have had calls for class reunions, benefits.*

## **Where do you hope to see your business five years from now?**

*We would be happy if we could keep things going how it is. If we could keep the staff that we have and extend a few things on the menu. We knew the town would be excited to try out a new establishment- new menu, new food in town. If we could just keep things going how they are and keep changing things up every so often, we would be happy.*

## **What do you like about owning a business in Dawson?**

*The community support is amazing, not only to patronize the place, but they offer help. We are both from here. The community support is great, we have been very fortunate that way. Dawson people want to see Dawson people succeed.*

## **What advice would you give someone else just starting up a business?**

*It takes a lot of dedication and a lot of hours to start up. When people tell you it is going to be a lot of work, that is an understatement, there are so many behind the scene things. Find good resources, people to talk to that have been in the business. And listen to people's feedback, because they will be your customers.*

## **How has the RLF helped you become the business that you are today?**

*We would not have been able to create the quality atmosphere that we wanted to. We probably would have been able to open the doors, but we wouldn't have been able to do near as much, as far as the remodel goes. We were able to move the bar over, redo the plumbing, the floor is new. Without having those funds, we would have had to put off the remodeling.*