North Side business, American Chemical is celebrating its 25th year of operation.

The adhesive distributer and manufacturer's founder Dennis Werneke credits the success of the company with their ability to listen to their customers and problem solve through their challenges.

Pictured: Dennis Werneke and STEP-UP intern Faduma Ali

"We listen to what the customer wants and needs, and work to identify how to solve the problem and find solutions to their adhesive or production needs," said Werneke.

American Chemical's staff are trained adhesive experts and provide assistance and sales to a variety of industries, including packaging and paper converting, printing and graphic arts, foam fabrication, fulfillment and product assembly.

Like many entrepreneurs, Werneke started his business out of his home.

"The garage was my warehouse and the front porch was my shipping and receiving," said Werneke.

Eventually American Chemical received marketing and growth acceleration assistance from Small Business Association (SBA) and SCORE, a program of SBA, designed to match trained volunteer business counselors with aspiring entrepreneurs and small businesses at no cost, and moved into an office space on Lake Street, where Werneke hired his first employee. Soon after, they needed more space and decided to move to another location in South Minneapolis. In 2001, American Chemical made North Minneapolis its home. Werneke took a vacant and abandoned 17,000 sq. ft. building and created a thriving business setting.

Currently, Werneke has ten employees.

Since relocating American Chemical to the North Side, Werneke has become active in the North Minneapolis business community and Hawthorne Neighborhood. Giving back to the community is a priority for American Chemical, who gives a percent of its profits, time and talent back to the community. For the past seven years, Werneke has hired and trained youth from the community as part of the STEP-UP Achieve Program. STEP-UP Achieve trains and provides youth from Minneapolis in paid summer jobs with public agencies, local companies, and nonprofits. Faduma Ali, a high school senior, is currently working at American Chemical this summer through the STEP-UP Achieve Program. Faduma has found the STEP-UP Program and her work experience this summer very useful, and thankful for the opportunity to build her resume.

"I learned a lot," explained Faduma, "It will look good on my resume and it will help me to get a job in the future."

In addition to mentoring youth, Werneke is also interested in helping start-up businesses.

"There are a lot of businesses that have significant growth potential in North Minneapolis," said Werneke.

This is one of the reasons Werneke created the North Minneapolis Business Center, a business incubator space located at 2201 2nd Ave N. Werneke leases out approximately 30-40 percent of the space to start-up companies with office space and/or warehouse needs. A diverse mix of tenants include Net Anchor, Dessco Imports, Boom Island Brewing, Flair Mannequin, Wrecking Day Band studio, and Billy Ray's BBQ Sauce.