

Igna Young's 8-koi marks 15th year in business, its headquarters building in Suntree leasing 7,000 square feet; health-care division earns ISO certification

By Ken Datzman

Fifteen years ago, Igna Young launched 8-koi Inc. in Melbourne and the company has made big strides in the government contracting arena.

The woman-owned small business has grown to support millions of dollars in government contracts and employ hundreds of people over the years. Her business operates four divisions: construction, design engineering, technical services, and health care.

She credits her success to the encouragement she received from her parents who migrated from Asia and pursued advanced degrees in science and technology, with her mother fulfilling a lifelong dream as a senior scientist at NASA's Kennedy Space Center.

The number "8" in the company name "represents the cyclic nature of systems. The koi fish represents embracing adversity through the persistent focus on positive outcomes," said Young, a University of Florida accounting graduate.

One of Young's goals was for her company to have its own facility. And in 2021, 8-koi purchased a 20,000-square-foot facility at 2725 Center Place in the Wickham Road Business Center. The building sits on 2 acres.

Young invested in a renovation of the two-story building, with plans to lease some of the space. Her company moved into the new headquarters last year.

Now, it is looking to bring aboard a tenant or tenants to fill the 7,000 square feet of space 8-koi has available for lease. The space is currently set up with offices. The Wickham Road Business Center is zoned light industrial.

"We can divide the space for a couple of clients or have one business take all 7,000 square feet," said Young, president of 8-koi. "There are a lot of options for the lessee."

"We have a construction division so we can modify the space as needed for the client. Also, if a potential client needs SCIF space, we can make the adjustments and build out the space. SCIF space is for businesses or organizations doing classified work for the government," she added.

SCIF stands for sensitive compartmented information facility. This type of space features an enclosed area.

Young said the tenant amenities include use of all the common areas of the building, such as the lobby, conference room, breakroom, and restrooms, as well as the services of the on-site receptionist. "The tenant or tenants will also have their business name or names on our marquee sign in front of the building."

The wooded Wickham Road Business Center is close to Interstate 95, U.S. 1, Viera, and Patrick Space Force Base.

In addition to purchasing its own building, 8-koi reached another milestone this year when it was awarded ISO 9001:2015 certification for its health-care division. The company received the certification July 4 which includes processes for human resources and personnel credentialing.

"That was a six-month process," said 8-koi Chief Operating Officer Dean Rosenquist. "Our health-care division has been growing to serve our federal customers over the years and this was the logical next step to ensure that our operations were consistent and competitive for our next stage of growth."

"The investment in ISO for a small business is significant, and we anticipate seeing returns in the way of more satisfied customers, management, and employees, which results in greater cost-savings overall," he added.

By following the ISO 9001 Standard, businesses of all sizes can formalize key processes and develop a "quality manual" that outlines procedures to continually improve their processes within the "Quality Management System." According to American Society for Quality.org, "ISO 9001 is based on the 'Plan-Do-Check-Act' methodology and provides a process-oriented approach to documenting and reviewing the structure, responsibilities, and procedures required to documenting and reviewing management in an organization."

The initial certification is valid for a period of three years, until July 3, 2026. There are more than 1 million companies and organizations in over 170 countries certified to ISO 9001, according to ISO.org.

Young said 8-koi "will continue to build on our ISO certification. We plan to have the entire company certified, one division at a time."

Her company currently supports health-care-related programs at Patrick Space Force Base, Fort Detrick in Maryland, and Walter Reed National Medical Center, among others.

8-koi employees are currently working within the division across the nation. The company's capabilities and technical support services include medical simulation and training, medical administration, professional and ancillary medical staffing, and medical records, coding, and credential support.

Young said 8-koi's health-care division was recently awarded a government contract for more than \$500,000.

And Krista Dupell, 8-koi's health-care program manager, has secured two new



BBN photo — Adrienne B. Roth

Businesswoman Igna Young is president and founder of '8-koi Inc.' She started her business from her home. In 2021, her company purchased a 20,000-square-foot building at Wickham Road Business Center in Melbourne. After renovating the facility, 8-koi moved its headquarters there, with the intent to lease some of the space. It is now seeking a tenant or tenants for 7,000 square feet. The space includes a host of amenities, including access to all common areas of the building. Young is president of the Women in Defense Space Coast Chapter and will be attending the national conference.

prime vendor relationships with InSource and AndaMEDS. With access to dedicated account representatives and nearby distribution centers in Jacksonville and South Florida, 8-koi anticipates "greater efficiency and cost-savings" when provisioning supplies for their health-care division customers.

"In order to follow through on 8-koi's promise to do business with a 'human

touch,' I pursued a relationship with these companies for medical supplies and some medications because they operate with the same values as we do," Dupell said.

"These agreements greatly enhance our customer service when working with government and institutional health-care clinics and providers so we can offer a

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larger catalog and deliver with a faster response.”

During the COVID-19 pandemic, 8-koi expanded its health-care division to fill purchase orders for scarce and critical medical supplies to organizations in need.

The company provided pharmaceuticals and personal protective equipment including custom masks, Tyvex suits, Nitrile gloves, shoe covers and surface disinfectants to support COVID-19 alternative care sites across the United States.

8-koi's construction division has been awarded about \$10 million in contracts by the Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command in Jacksonville.

“We have been doing work at that naval base and we will continue to do so with these new contracts,” said Young, who is president of the Women in Defense Space Coast Chapter, which is aligned with the National Defense Industry Association based in Arlington, Virginia.

The NDIA is comprised of affiliates, chapters, and divisions. It is a nonpartisan, nonprofit association that was funded to educate constituents on all aspects of national security. The Space Coast Chapter was founded 10 years ago.

The chapter provides networking and professional development opportunities to promote the role of women and men in national defense and security, supports military service members, and encourages partnerships within the local contractor community, defense industry, and among military personnel.

“We just hosted our retreat and got together with the Women in Defense Central Florida Chapter and the Women in Defense Greater Tampa Bay Chapter,” Young said. “We did some planning and some socializing. It was a great experience for all involved.”

The retreat was held at the Courtyard by Marriott in Cocoa Beach.

She said the Space Coast Chapter recently awarded \$16,000 in STEM scholarships to 21 Brevard County students. “The last two years we have seen record funding for our chapter's scholarships,” said Young. “As a nonprofit, we are proud of the work that we do to raise money for scholarships for area students. We host various fundraisers throughout the year, including the annual Sandbagger Invitational Golf Tournament, which was held May 19 at Baytree National Golf Links in Melbourne.”

The scholarship awards are based on academic achievement, field of study, work experience, statements of interests, and recommendations.

“We had an overwhelming response for scholarships this year,” said Leslie Tibbetts of Community Credit Union, the Women in Defense Space Coast Chapter STEM chair. “It's an honor to lend support to students in the community and help to build a more diverse and stable workforce on the Space Coast.”

Area companies are invited to make a tax-free donation in any amount to the Women in Defense Space Coast Chapter STEM Scholarship Fund. To learn more about the scholarship program, visit <http://scwid.org/homepage/space-coast-wid-stem-scholarship>.

“Today's students are the future of the defense industry in this nation,” said Young. “And the Women in Defense Space Coast Chapter is thrilled to fund STEM scholarships for students in our region. This is one of our chapter's missions.”

The chapter established the scholarships to encourage women to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Since its inception in 2013, the chapter has awarded more than \$90,000 in scholarships and has contributed to various STEM-related events in

partnership with area businesses, nonprofits, and federal agencies.

Young said she will be attending the 2023 Women in Defense National Conference Sept. 26 at the Renaissance Capital View Hotel in Arlington, Virginia.

This year's theme is “Tools and Ideas for Asymmetric Advantage.” The nation's leading women and men in defense will gather to share ideas on “how to maximize professional opportunities and collaborate to give U.S. warfighters a decisive competitive advantage across the

spectrum of conflict in all domains.”

Senior leaders and young professionals from industry and government will participate in panels offering suggestions, advice and sharing experiences. And attendees will network and hone their knowledge, skills, and abilities during small breakout sessions.

“I am looking forward to the national conference,” said Young. “It's always an outstanding event filled with timely information and it is a great networking opportunity as well.”

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