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**Contact:**

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**TRAVERSE CITY, MICHIGAN** – Protecting bodies, eyes and ears with state-of-the-art technology and equipment is the aim of a new Traverse City business – the [WarBird Protection Group](#) – led by an experienced, talented team of professionals.

“Beginning in February, we will offer direct to consumer and institutional sales of soft and hard body armor,” said WarBird Chief Financial Officer Ed Kiessel. “Our clientele ranges from families to individuals and agencies involved with enforcement, military service, tactical training and related hobbies and occupations.” WarBird products initially encompass body protection, expanding to earmuffs and protective eyewear in the near future. Shipping of WarBird products to customers will be managed through [eFulfillment Service](#), based in Traverse City.



Kiessel said their body armor is designed and cut sized to fit featuring bullet-proof protection, whether worn over or under clothing. Earmuffs will be offered providing both comfort and full protection. Their soon-to-be released eyewear features UV protection, polarization, high clarity and impact resistance. “Our earmuffs and eyewear can be worn together in comfort unlike other eye and ear protection products on the market,” Kiessel said. More information about the company and its products is available by contacting [info@warbirdpro.com](mailto:info@warbirdpro.com) or you can now order directly from their website: [warbirdpro.com](http://warbirdpro.com).



Kiessel said all products are designed and assembled using the most progressive standards in the industry, guided by a team of experts, including WarBird Founder and CEO Matt Davis and WarBird Product Development Director Justin Sheehan.

Kiessel’s corporate background includes overseeing business operations and finance, including years in the body armor industry. Davis has decades of experience in a family-owned business centered on the manufacture and sale of body armor. Matt’s father, Richard Davis, started Second Chance Body Armor

company in Central Lake in the 1970’s which grew to become a national source for body protection. Sheehan is a former U.S. Navy SEAL and member of America’s Premier Hostage Rescue Unit5, SEAL Team SIX where he focused on the development and use of protective gear and small unit tactics for special operations.

Startup of the business was supported in part by a capital loan of \$175,000 to the WarBird Protection Group from [Venture North Funding and Development](#), a nonprofit organization that provides affordable loans and other services to small businesses in northwest Michigan. Funding for the loan was provided by a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) to Grand Traverse County. On November 1, 2023, the Grand Traverse County Board of Commissioners approved the loan by Venture North which will help create five new jobs – at least 51% of these positions to benefit low- and moderate-income individuals – with more planned in the future.

“Thanks to our colleagues with Grand Traverse County, we were able to provide the capital needed to help move the business forward as well as the jobs they will create,” said Laura Galbraith, President of Venture North. “By using eFulfillment Service as their distributor, we are fortunate to be leveraging local sources to support the success of the WarBird business.”

“WarBird has experienced leaders in the industry with outstanding reputations in customer service and product design,” said Steve Brower, Business Development Manager for Venture North who helped arrange the financing. “We look forward to helping them grow in Michigan and throughout the nation.”

Venture North has disbursed over \$10 million in more than 170 loans to small businesses, creating 518 new jobs and retaining 559 jobs in their region that includes Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee and Wexford counties. Loans vary from \$5,000 to \$350,000. Venture North also provides no-cost, small business support and consulting. As a certified Community Development Financial Institution, priority is given to helping underserved communities and populations. More information is available at [info@venturenorthfunding.org](mailto:info@venturenorthfunding.org) or 231-995-7115. Small businesses can go online at [www.venturenorthfunding.org](http://www.venturenorthfunding.org) and complete a brief intake form to see how Venture North can support their growth.

