

**Michael A. Mooney**  
**Owner and Entrepreneur; Mooney's Ben Franklin**  
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Mike Mooney is the third generation of Mooney's to own and operate the Ben Franklin in East Tawas, Michigan. His grandfather, Lyle Mooney, purchased the business in 1944 for \$16,000, initiating a family legacy that lasts to this day.

In the 1940s, Variety Stores were popping up all over the United States, so Lyle and Peg like to claim that their decision was based on fortunate timing. Maybe so, but the business took off due to their skills as business managers and their willingness to put in the hours that brought early success.

In 1973 Lyle sold the business to his son Don, who managed and grew it until turning over the reins to his son Mike in 1996. The evolution of the business after this was not without challenges. Nationally, the Ben Franklin franchise fell on hard times and eventually filed bankruptcy at just about the same time Mike purchased the store.

With failure not an option, Mike and his father Don reinvented Mooney's Ben Franklin to meet the needs of the greater Tawas community as well as the growing tourism business that had such a substantial impact on the Tawas economy. When Don retired from the business, Mike and his wife Laura continued the family legacy of fantastic customer service while focusing on providing goods that the local market was seeking.

In the same fashion as his grandparents, Mike and Laura worked side-by-side just as Lyle and Peg had done almost 50 years earlier, making Mooney's Ben Franklin one of the most successful independent family businesses in Northeast Michigan. Their two daughters, and many nieces and nephews, have worked in the store over the years. Mike frequently refers to his employees as his extended family.

Mike's focus on the community found him running for, and achieving, a seat on the East Tawas City Council in November of 2016 after previously serving on the Tax Increment Finance Authority. He guides the City of East Tawas with the same business acumen that he runs the Ben Franklin.

So what have been the results of his hard work? Since Grandpa Lyle first started the business, Mike has successfully doubled the store in size, quadrupled the sales, and weathered numerous internal and external setbacks to make this highly successful venture the Tawas Area legacy that it is today.