

## Risa McMahon, SouthPort FUNDamentals



### 09 Risa McMahon, SouthPort FUNDamentals

Jun  By [Katie Smith](#)  [Uncategorized](#)  [Comments Off](#)

*(Photo by Brittany Welch Photography)*

#### Website

Class and Event Space, Chicago

**Organizations:** [Uptown Business Center](#), [Uptown Chamber of Commerce](#)

**Services Utilized:** [Secure licenses](#), [Buy or rent space](#), [Improve marketing](#), [Update business plan](#)

Risa McMahon had the idea to start Southport FUNDamentals in March of 2023 while she was juggling a busy work schedule with her children's school schedule. "This past spring, I was in a small car accident racing to pick up my kids," she said. "And it just occurred to me that the universe was trying to tell me something, like there has to be a better way." Risa wanted to create after-school programs for kids like hers who needed somewhere to go between the end of school and when their parents could pick them up after work. Risa started her business in a former event space that she used to pass by on walks with her family, just a few doors down from where she lives.

From toddlers to adults, Southport FUNDamentals offers a diverse array of classes, camps, and open play hours designed to ignite curiosity and creativity in learners of all ages. "We do sign language classes, music classes, and a program called 'Little Book Club,' which is pre-literacy



programming," she said. "It's the most adorable thing to see the tiny babies having a book club."

Risa's commitment to accessibility and inclusivity is core to the mission of Southport FUNdamentals. Her vision includes making space for neurodiverse individuals, a commitment to LGBTQ inclusion, and creating a space for private parties that are priced in such a way that families from a range of incomes can enjoy hosting parties there.

Risa credits Kylie Ruscheinski, Director of Uptown Business Center, with providing her help on the journey to start her business. "I share her contact information probably twice a week because she was so incredibly knowledgeable about a huge range of issues that I would have spent many months tracking down the answers to," Risa said. Risa shares that Kylie and Uptown Business Center were also a great help in navigating City of Chicago licensing.

Risa is on a mission to redefine education as a fun adventure. When asked what one of the highlights of her business is, Risa says, "I really enjoy the kids that come here. They just ask such hilarious questions, and I really enjoy their moments of growth. When I share something with them, and they learn something they didn't think they could do, it's really powerful."

## **Develop Your Idea – Southport FUNdamentals**

### **1. Identify the Problem**

#### **What problem am I trying to solve?**

"I was asking myself, 'Draw a Venn Diagram of 1) What skills do you have? 2) What needs do you have as a working parent that other parents might have? 3) What brings you joy? 4) And what will a person pay for?'"

#### **What is my product?**

"My product is fun, and I sell fun through a variety of programs. I think what I offer is the joy of sharing something new, regardless of what the subject matter is."

#### **How will I price it?**

"I am a number cruncher. Last summer I planned the whole summer of camps, and I made a spreadsheet that I sent to every mom that I knew. Basically, all of my pricing for my products is from my own 'spreadsheet nerding' that I have done over the years as a parent."

### **2. Define Your Ideal Customer**

#### **How would I describe my customer?**

"Families who live in and around Lakeview. But my adult programs are open to anyone, and you don't need kids to be welcome here."

### **3. Prepare to Sell Your Product**

#### **How will I market my new idea?**

"It was word of mouth with my friends. It's helpful to have your friends as your handful of first customers because you can take pictures of situations that look fun and amazing and put them on social media."

#### **How will I make my first sale?**

"My first sale was a friend of mine. She had her daughter's birthday here. I gave her a bunch of ideas for what she could do for her daughter based on her age and what I knew about her, and it was really special that it was a good friend."

## **Share this post**



## **Author**



**Katie Smith**