

# SBDC NEWS

## *Life in the Fast Lane:*

### **An Entrepreneur's View of Owning a Small Business**

*Sandy Showalter, Director BRCC office of the SV SBDC*

"Life changes fast. If you are going to do something, act on it – tomorrow it could all be different." Well-spoken words of experience from a local entrepreneur whose landscaping business has seen tremendous growth in the past eight years.

Benjamin Gee opened his landscaping business in March 1998 because he "wanted to be his own boss". He purchased land on Rt. 250 just east of Churchville last year to expand his nursery stock. Before he knew it, the opportunity to open a retail hardware store and expand his landscaping business presented itself. He acted on it and celebrated the grand opening of the Lone Fountain Landscape Center in July 2006. Benjamin noted he had the idea for a retail store long before he had the land, but everything fell in place for it to happen now.

"I strongly believe that without the help of the Blue Ridge Community College Small Business Development Center (BRCC SBDC) the construction and opening of this store would not have happened,"

says Benjamin. He explains, "I approached Planters Bank for a loan to build the store because I wanted to do it now...I didn't want the momentum to slow."

The bank referred Benjamin to the SBDC for assistance in completing his business plan. "Ms. Sandra Showalter, the Director of the Center, showed me how

to put ideas on paper and complete the cash flow analysis. Thanks to the SBDC, the loan process proceeded smoothly and quickly," says Benjamin. Benjamin said he would encourage anyone thinking of starting a small business to contact the SBDC, as well as anyone already in business who might need

help with growth issues, marketing, strategic planning or any other activities of running a business.

Benjamin greatly credits his partner and fiancé, Michelle Hanger, for her assistance and encouragement. "She does everything; she runs the store,

takes care of the bookwork, handles the ordering and takes care of customer relations," says Benjamin. "I couldn't do it without her," he explains.

The Lone Fountain Landscape Center offers a complete array of trees, flowers, shrubbery and other nursery stock, as well as a variety of gardening supplies, such as lawn furniture

and gardening tools. "I want the business to grow and meet the community needs – as well as help pay a few bills," smiled Benjamin. The Center employs nine full-time employees. Just two years ago, the business employed three to four full-time employees. Lone Fountain Landscape Center completes projects for both commercial and residential customers. "It is about 50/50," says Benjamin.

Lone Fountain Landscape Center is the only hardware store located in the western end of Augusta County. Michelle encourages "people to visit us for their landscaping and hardware needs, instead of running into Staunton." They can be reached by telephone at 540-886-7605.



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# SV SBDC Increases Client Counseling, Staff Training

*Henry A. Reeves, Director, JMU office of the SV SBDC*

Since our last newsletter the SV SBDC has been involved in a number of activities, several of which I would like to tell you about.

Since last fall, the SV SBDC has been participating, along with the United Way of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County, Harrisonburg-Rockingham Chamber of Commerce, and JMU, as a co-sponsor in the planning of the first Non-Profit Institute to be held in our area. The two-week long Institute consisted of a number of classes for leaders and managers of non-profit organizations.

Joyce Krech, our Training and Operations Coordinator, participated as both a planner and a student. Joyce commented that "the NPI, overall, was very informative and should help most non-profits." I participated as both a planner and an instructor, leading a session on Strategic Planning. The NPI will be offered again, starting in the fall.

The SBDC staff, including Joyce, Charlotte Scandlen, our office administrator, and myself, spent several days at Wintergreen, VA, participating in our annual professional

development conference. Joyce co-led a session on producing special reports from IC2, our client management system, and I led sessions on QuickBooks and Balanced Scorecard Strategic Planning. All centers spent time working on the state organization's own Strategic Plan and Balanced Scorecard. Perhaps one of the nicest benefits of our annual meeting is the chance to hear from other SBDC's around the state about their successes and challenges.

In terms of counseling, we have seen a substantial increase in the overall number of clients that we have counseled. As of June 30<sup>th</sup>, half way through the year, we have achieved more than 60% of our goal. While we cannot be certain why we are seeing this increase, it may be due to the continuing out-sourcing by business and the uncertainties about one's job security.

In terms of new training, be sure to read the article below on our new Path to Small Success series that will be offered for the first time in the fall.

## *New Training Offered!*

**Path to Small Business Success** is a series of four classes that were specially created for the start-up entrepreneur or an existing business that wants to examine a new business idea or its existing processes as it moves forward to success. Participants may sign up for the entire series (at a nice savings) or select whichever combination of classes meets their specific needs.

The classes will meet once each month from September through December and follow the path from idea analysis to financial reports, with stops at all the important business elements in between:

**Thurs, Sept 21: Business Idea Analysis** – Do you have an idea for a new business, product, or service, but wonder whether it will really work? This class will help you decide: Analyzing the idea and potential; Assessing the market and competition; Starting your research; Testing for profit potential.

**Thurs, Nov 16: Legal Do's and Don'ts** – Do you worry about what you may not even know? Choosing a legal entity; Dealing with leases & contracts; Reducing risks; Handling employee issues; Reducing tax exposure.

**Thurs, Oct 19: Marketing & Sales** – How to get the phone to ring and the register to "ca-ching"! Who is your customer? Researching your market and industry; Creating a marketing strategy; Exploring advertising options, including the internet; Getting the order, the contract, the cash.

**Thurs, Dec 14: Managing Your Money** – Without a profit, you've got an expensive hobby. What do the numbers on those reports really mean? Cash projections and budgets; Internal controls; Getting the loan; The truth about grants.

## **Call for Nominations: 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Small Business Veteran of the Year Award**

The Shenandoah Valley SBDC is actively soliciting nominations for the Small Business Veteran of the Year Award for 2006. This award was initiated by the Virginia SBDC Network in 2000 to recognize our deep sense of indebtedness to all veterans in Virginia and in our communities. We are seeking veterans who have an excellent record in business and have made a contribution to their community. Please visit our website to download a nomination packet or call our office for more information. **Complete Nomination Packets due to SV SBDC by October 13, 2006**, and winner will be announced on or about November 11, 2006.

### *Congratulating...*

Virginia SBDC Director Jody Keenan announced that our very own Training & Operations Coordinator, **Joyce Krech**, has been named the **2006 State Star of the Virginia SBDC**. The award will be presented at the Annual Conference of the Association of Small Business Development Centers in Houston, Texas in September. Congratulations Joyce!

[www.jmu.edu/sbdccenter](http://www.jmu.edu/sbdccenter)

## Upcoming Training & Events

### How to Start a Small Business

Times and locations vary, see below

A 2-hour seminar providing guidance and resources for new business ventures. We'll talk about all the start-up considerations to assure sound planning and success. Fee: \$20.00

Sept 7, 6:30 - 8:30 pm, BRCC Plecker Center  
 Sept 26, 10:00 am - 12:00 noon, Bath County  
 Oct 5, 6:30 - 8:30 pm, JMU SBDC

Nov 2, 6:30 - 8:30 pm, BRCC Plecker Center  
 Nov 28, 10:00 am - 12:00 noon, Bath County  
 Dec 7, 6:30 - 8:30 pm, JMU SBDC

### Writing Your Business Plan

Times and locations vary, see below

A 2-hour review of the components of a good plan, including financial projections. Learn to find answers to the many questions the plan must answer. Leave class with an Outline and Spreadsheet started for your Business Plan. Fee: \$20.00

Aug 10, 6:30-8:30 p.m., BRCC Plecker Center  
 Sept 14, 6:30-8:30 p.m., JMU SBDC

Oct 12, 6:30-8:30 p.m., BRCC Plecker Center  
 Nov 9, 6:30-8:30 p.m., JMU SBDC

### The Non-Profit Institute

Monthly sessions, October—March.

A professional development program designed to equip today's nonprofit manager with practical skills for effective leadership. Co-sponsored by the United Way, Chamber of Commerce, JMU Dept of Social Work, and the SV SBDC. Contact United Way office at 434-6639 or [www.uwhr.org](http://www.uwhr.org) for all the details.

### SBA "Entrepreneur Express" Workshop

Wed. Aug 9; 10:00 a.m. – Noon

Learn about the variety of programs and services available for business financing, federal government contracting, counseling and training within the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA).

FREE, but registration is required. Location: BRCC Augusta Center, Fishersville

### Balanced Scorecard Strategic Planning

Wed. Sept 20, 2:00-5:00 pm

A Balanced Scorecard translates vision and strategies into a comprehensive set of measurements for your organization. Case studies and examples will be presented for both for-profit and non-profit entities and you will leave with materials to get started on your own scorecard. SBDC staff members are also available for follow-up consultation.

Fee: \$45.00 Location: JMU SBDC offices

### Navigating Government Contracts

Thurs. Sept 21, 9:00 am – 12:00 noon

Did you know that federal, state and local governments spend more than \$500 billion annually on various products and services? Thousands of contracts bypass small firms that do not know about or understand government procurement procedures. An experienced Government Procurement Director will help you navigate through the contracting maze to identify and access the contracts right for your firm.

Fee: \$35.00 Location: JMU SBDC offices

### Path to Small Business Success Series—see Page 2 for the details of this new program!

#### QuickBooks for Contractors

Saturdays, Oct 21 & 28, 8:30 am – 12:30 pm

Learn the basics for all-in-one financial management for contractors, including advanced job-costing tools in this 8-hour, hands-on course. Boost your profits; organize all your job details in one place; and run your contracting business more effectively. Recommended for builders, general contractors, re-modelers, subcontractors, and specialty trades.

Fee: \$149.00 includes text. Location: Plecker Workforce Center, Weyers Cave

#### QuickBooks for Non-Profits

Tuesdays, Oct 24 & 31, 12:30 – 4:30 pm

Streamline donation processing and fundraising; automatically track your organization's finances; and get the reports you need to be accountable to your Board and your donors. This 8-hour, hands-on class is recommended for charitable, religious, human service, arts, education, or other tax-exempt groups.

Fee: \$149.00 includes text. Location: Blue Ridge Community College Harrisonburg Center

#### IRS Tax Workshop

Friday, Nov 3, 2:00-4:30 pm

This workshop is designed for the small business owner, manager, or the self-employed. We will explore business use of home, independent contractors vs. employees, employment taxes, tax forms and electronic filing methods. Registrants will have an opportunity to suggest additional topics ahead of class.

Fee: \$25.00 Location: JMU SBDC offices

Details and On-Line Registrations available at [www.jmu.edu/sbdcenter](http://www.jmu.edu/sbdcenter)



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**The Mission of the SV SBDC:** To advise, train, and inform small businesses to help them achieve success.

The Shenandoah Valley Small Business Development Center (SV SBDC), with offices at James Madison University and Blue Ridge Community College, offers free counseling services, assists with feasibility studies and business planning, sponsors seminars and training events, and provides information and other services to the small and medium-sized business community.

Virginia's Small Business Development Center network consists of 29 centers representing the most extensive business development program in the state.

The SV SBDC receives program and financial support from the U.S. Small Business Administration, George Mason University, James Madison University, Blue Ridge Community College, and our local partners on the Advisory Council.

### Our Advisory Council

The Advisory Council was formed in 1996 to increase the effectiveness of the Shenandoah Valley Small Business Development Center by utilizing the knowledge and experience of leading business, educational, and economic development organizations in the communities served by the Center.

- Randy Andes, Do It Best Hardware
- Carolyn Beam, Rockingham Heritage Bank
- Kathy Brown, Planters Bank
- J. Don Clark, CPA, S.B. Hoover & Company, LLP
- Peter Denbigh, WildWires
- Ralph Denick, Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE)
- George Erdman, EREN Corporation
- Joshua Hale, Farmers & Merchants Bank
- Gary Keener, Dabney S. Lancaster Community College
- David Knically, First Citizens Bank
- Allon Lefever, Eastern Mennonite University
- W. Neal Menefee, The Rockingham Group
- Brian Shull, Shenandoah Valley Partnership
- Ryan Waid, Wharton, Aldhizer & Weaver, PLC
- Janice "Bonnie" S. Moyers & Sandra Showalter, Blue Ridge Community College
- Robert Reid, Brad Roof, & Henry Reeves, James Madison University

### SV SBDC Staff:

#### JMU Staff

Henry Reeves, CPA  
*Director*

Joyce Krech  
*Training/Operations Coordinator*

Charlotte Scandlen  
*Administrative Assistant*

Sarah Reeve  
*Student Intern*

#### BRCC Staff

Sandra Showalter, MBA  
*Director*

