

Stronger Economies Together

Session Five



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IMPLICATIONS:

- ◆ The pace of small business development is picking up, but their survivability is a concern.
- ◆ We need new businesses sooner and quicker.

SBDC surveyed a focus group of small business owners in the VGA region to get feedback on small business development and the perception of resources available. Outcome:

- ◆ Capital Access was the top concern
- ◆ There is a need for workforce training
- ◆ There is a need for wireless broadband service in our region
- ◆ There is a need for counseling, mentoring and training for small businesses

CHALLENGE: VGA is such a diverse region, how can one model or plan fit every kind of business?

Solutions:

1. Encourage business cooperation among each other
2. Develop VGA "entrepreneurial pipeline", a streamlined portal on the VGA website to "start here, grow here" and for consistent widespread marketing
3. Identify stage 1 and 2 businesses and support their growth
4. Work with community banks as advisory groups, possibly creating a loan pool among them and shared education programs
5. Research angel investor networks
6. Initiate workforce development skills in school systems
7. Test and implement wireless broadband

DISCUSSION:

- ◆ Kim Callis: what level does SBDC suggest training in schools?
- ◆ Sherri Smith: spoke about a program we could try to implement called Career Technical Education. Here is a helpful link: http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/career_technical/career_clusters/index.shtml
- ◆ Sheri McGuire: answered that the desire is to educate “as young as possible.”
- ◆ Jerri Morton, who taught middle school English: saw a great need for workforce skills education with her students. If we don’t start with middle school, we may miss out on a skilled workforce that simply isn’t equipped to apply for a job.
- ◆ Sandra Tanner: informed the group that Career Pathways starts with 7th grade.
- ◆ Vellie Dietrich Hall: commented that her employees aren’t equipped with basic math skills to successfully complete sales transactions.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE REGION**Part II**

Led by Cassandra Smith of United Virginia

United Virginia is a non-profit organization based out of Richmond that provides support, funding, and in-depth training for entrepreneurs. After clients have graduated from the program, UV partners with SBDC as the “next step” and Cassandra Smith continues to provide business counseling for the first year.

United Virginia Graduate Presentations:

- ◆ Diane Gibbs: “Diane & Ja’Kayla Handbags”
demont94@hotmail.com
Tried several business ideas on her own, but none of them ever succeeded. The UV workshops gave her information she needed. “The business plan was the biggest thing.”
- Diane had a drawing for one of her handbags, which was won by Heather Suseel!
- ◆ Robert Lewis: “Greentree Toner/Ink”
robert.lewis3@att.net
Mr. Lewis described that when he started the United Virginia program he was “practically unbankable”; he had sunk most of his finances into treatments to combat a severe illness. Cassandra helped him with obtaining the finances he needs to start his Printer and cartridge business.
- ◆ Carol Wilson: “CEW Publishing”
cw24060@aol.com
Shared that she was inspired by her love for a neighbor’s dog who needed a critical surgery. From that experience she wrote a true doggy story called, “When Jady Met Grady’s Lady”. Amazon will be publishing her book, which will soon be followed by a sequel. The United Virginia program helped her focus her ideas one at a time.
- ◆ Vitorria Williams: “Bluebird Coffee Shop”
vitorriaw@yahoo.com
Vitorria shared that she has a background in business school, but that her prior training was theory based and she needed a breakdown for her own personal business plan. United Virginia helped her do just that and her plan keeps changing depending on where she will locate her restaurant—but she has the tools to change it to any situation! She particularly highlighted the support system that she found among the UV participants.



Break provided by entrepreneur, Vitorria Williams’ Bluebird Coffee Shop.

DEBRIEF FROM ENTREPRENEURSHIP PRESENTATIONS

Led by Martha Walker of VCE

What are the “Bright Spots” in our community?

- ◆ Professional support groups, growing awareness, network of entrepreneurs, a culture of entrepreneurs, South Hill farmers’ market, available storefronts, festivals

Attendees:

Name
1. Arnold, Tommy
2. Bagley, Michael
3. Barber, Neal
4. Burnette, Scott
5. Calhoun, Brian
6. Callis, Kim
7. Canada, Star
8. Clarke, Christopher
9. Clary, Lisa
10. Coleman, Beverley
11. Creedle, Steve
12. De Stefano, Frank
13. Dickens, Lafayette
14. Dietrich Hall, Vellie
15. Dodd-Slippy, Martha
16. Feggins, Patricia
17. Foster, Megan
18. Gibbs, Diane
19. Harrell, Jan
20. Hasbrouck, Christine
21. Hawthorne, Beverly
22. Herring, Anne
23. Jackson, Doug
24. Jones, Michelle
25. Jordan, Lisa
26. Kellett, Angie
27. Kimball, Alton
28. Layne, Sharon
29. Lewis, Robert
30. McGuire, Sheri
31. Moody, Gail
32. Moody, Mike
33. Morton, Jerri
34. Pack, Catherine
35. Papierniak, Almira
36. Pennington, Edward
37. Peerman, Joanne
38. Ramsey, Diana
39. Robertson, Beth
40. Ruff, Frank
41. Rutledge, Braxton
42. Shanaberger, Gary
43. Sheldon, Josh
44. Slate, Natalie
45. Smith, Cassandra
46. Smith, Dennis
47. Smith, Sherri
48. Somerville, Kristy
49. Susee, Heather
50. Swinson, Sherry
51. Tanner, Sandra
52. Tate, Scott
53. Walker, Martha
54. Williams, Vittoria
55. Wilson, Carol
56. Woolridge, Charlette

INTRODUCTION TO ASSETS

Led by Michelle Jones of DHCD

Who are the people in our region who can get stuff done? We may discover untapped talents.

COMMUNITY CAPITALS AND BARRIERS

Participants chose one of four categories and gathered into groups to discuss.

GROUP BRAINSTORM

1. Workforce Development
 - the main need is to raise the skill level of our workforce
 - educate the educators and families
 - utilize CRC to boost resumes
 - highlight business success stories
2. Entrepreneurship Training & Development

We need a one source go-to place:

 - United Virginia, SBDC, festival leaders, local businesses to serve as mentors
 - Voluntary association: chambers, South Hill Revitalization Committee, LCYP
 - Formal institutions: community banks, local colleges
 - Local institutions: SPDC, Lake Country
 - Physical resources: available real estate options, possible business incubators
 - Barriers: lack of knowledge/awareness
3. Industry Attraction/Retention
 - We need to be open to diversity as we focus on clusters
 - Our community should need/want/support industries as they come in
 - We need to train our workforce
 - Build relationships with existing businesses and welcome new ones by talking with them
 - Our localities should cooperate instead of fighting for new businesses
4. Tourism
 - We need to define "tourism"
 - Identify what exists in the region
 - Locals should welcome all out of towners
 - Need to ensure elected officials and anyone involved in the tourism industry is informed

FINAL REFLECTIONS

Led by Sandra Tanner of VTC

LOOKING AHEAD—Next SET Meeting

- ◆ Help finalize our regional goals
- ◆ Introduce the ABC's of success
- ◆ Guide the final selection of strategies to achieve our goals
- ◆ Show us how to build a sound action plan

See you at Sheldon's Restaurant in Keysville April 23 from 1:00pm-4:00pm. RSVP with hsusee@southsidepdc.org.