

**Small Business Centers of Excellence Awards
Presentation to the State Board of Community Colleges
Dr. George Millsaps, Director of Small Business Center Network
Friday, February 20, 2009**



Left to right: Anne Shaw, Coastal Carolina Community College, Bee Strain, Cleveland Community College and Ken Dillo, Wake Technical Community College

Economic developers often state that major industries are the engines of commerce in that they drive local, state and national economies. If so, then today, we are here to honor where the rubber meets the road...small business.

For it is small business that creates the culture and personality of an area that attracts large industries. More importantly, it is small business that creates the largest number of jobs year after year, and it small business that will provide the creativity and entrepreneurial spirit needed to rebuild and transform our economy.

The Small Business Center Network is the NC Community Colleges' sole program dedicated specifically to increasing the number and success rate of small businesses throughout our state. For the past eight years, we have annually honored a small business center (SBC) from each of our three regions as a token of our appreciation for what our 58 small business centers accomplish.

They compete by providing examples of a success story, an innovative program or assistance process; how they meet a special need within their community, and of course, economic impact.

Regional Winner – East:
Coastal Carolina Community College
SBC Director Anne Shaw
President Dr. Ronald K. Lingle

Our first honoree's submission reflects the diversity and changing face of our state. North Carolina is home to hundreds of thousands of active and retired military. The success story of this SBC is Fast & Clean, owner Mr. Jim Roddy, a 20-year military veteran, who completed the NC Real entrepreneurship program, and continued on to graduate from the college's Master Entrepreneur program.

This new entrepreneur immediately started to give back by becoming an active and valued member of the local chamber of commerce and now leads the chamber's Minority Business Roundtable. Speaking of Master Entrepreneurs, the SBC was pivotal in initiating the Master Entrepreneur Program at the college. One participant in this program was a new mom, and a new business owner of "By His Design," Ms. Cindy Edwards.

Cindy used this unique program to analyze her entire business to increase its chance of success. She learned that she needed help with her business and help at home. So, she enlisted HER mom into the Master Entrepreneur program. Now, the mother-daughter team works together towards business and family success.

This SBC was also a partner in a collaborative effort to assist all small businesses in the Jacksonville-Onslow area. A partnership of the SBC, the community college, the Jacksonville-Onslow Chamber of Commerce, and the Onslow County Tourism Office yielded a week-long event full of fun activities, seminars and the highly anticipated Small Business Person of the Year. In this case, small business and tourism seemed to be a natural fit. Congratulations to the small business Center at Coastal Carolina Community College – Eastern Regional Small Business Center of Excellence.

Regional Winner – Central
Wake Technical Community College
SBC Director Ken Dillo
Dr. Stephen Scott, President

If you want success numbers, well, this SBC can provide those. A sampling of this SBC's success stories includes Richard hart of Hart's Resumes who has written two books and was recently featured on WRAL for assisting displaced workers. The numbers: 30% increase in gross sales and 50% increase in profits. Another example – Ernie Beauregard, Reefco Logistics, a participant of the SBC's international program which resulted in a 12% increase in sales and a 7% increase in gross profit.

Bone Suckin' Sauce anyone? Yes, that's right. Ford's Gourmet Foods, winner of the NC Department of Agriculture's 2008 Exporter of the Year, learned how to export through the Small Business Center at Wake Tech.

Innovation? Wake Tech's SBC used a micro-grant from the SBC Network to then provide SBCs throughout the state with what is probably the national model of business financial analysis, ProfitCents. I should note that the developer of ProfitCents and owner of SAGeworks Company is a prior SBC workshop presenter.

Using this program, SBCs across North Carolina can perform in-depth financial analysis on any type of business then provide those businesses with practical advice in English rather than jargon. To round out their efforts, this SBC offered bilingual small business seminars to assist this growing market with the goals of increased success rates and increased compliance with North Carolina laws.

Congratulations to the Small Business Center at Wake Technical Community College – the Central Regional Small Business Center of Excellence.

Regional Winner – West and Statewide
Cleveland Community College
SBC Director Bee Strain
Dr. L. Steve Thornburg, President

This SBC shows that you don't have to be the beige to be the best. This SBC's success story is a realtor, Ms. Gaye DeVoe, DeVoe Realty. This entrepreneur has won a number of awards and recognitions including Small Business Entrepreneur of the year, various multimillion dollar producer awards, and can boast being the only female African-American realtor in Cleveland County.

Again, reflecting the energy of many of our SBC clients, Ms. DeVoe take leadership roles in a large number of local civic organizations. This SBC's innovative programs show that you don't have to be in a big city to be multi-national. The SBC used a micro-grant from the SBC Network to assist the senior leadership of a Japanese company that had just located to the area learn English. This not only reaped positive business results but also helped weave that company into the fabric of the community.

Another part of the same grant assisted a small precision welder of military equipment to gain needed training on quality inspections, allowing them to bid on additional government contracts.

As you know child care in rural North Carolina is a pressing need. This SBC partnered with SmartStart and offered seminars, workshops, and other professional education to increase the quality of child care in the service area. The results? Over 1,800 children were served by better educated child-care providers.

Congratulations to the Small Business Center at Cleveland Community College Western Regional and Statewide Small Business Center of Excellence.

These are but an indication of the great work that all 58 Small Business Centers provide each year.

Hope. Opportunity. Jobs.

Hope • If you are a displaced worker in rural North Carolina and can't get another job, go to your nearest SBC where we can help you grow your own job through our GATE program.

Opportunity • Slightly more than 50% of SBC participants and clients are women. Our client base is more diverse than North Carolina. Many do not have college degrees. Some have never graduated high school.

Jobs • If you leave with one fact today leave with this. Last year our BSCs helped start 385 businesses, created or retained 3, 119 jobs, all at a cost of less than \$2,000 per job.

The Small Business Center Network is efficient. The Small Business Center Network is effective. I congratulate our Small Business Center of Excellence award winners who create success one business at a time.