



PRESS RELEASE

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James Sprunt Community College Celebrates 30 Years of Small Business Support

Kenansville, NC – The Small Business Center Network (SBCN) of the NC Community College System is celebrating 30 years of providing support and assistance to small businesses and start-ups across North Carolina. Small Business Centers (SBCs) are located at each of the state’s 58 community colleges, providing confidential business counseling and seminars to small business owners and entrepreneurs.

Created in 1984 when the North Carolina General Assembly funded 14 SBCs, the SBCN had expanded to include at least one SBC at each community college by 1995. Each year, the centers assist in starting an average of 650 businesses and help create and retain more than 3,000 jobs. Today, with more than 60 sites, the SBCN is known as the most expansive state-funded technical small business assistance program in the United States with locations within a 30-minute drive of almost every North Carolinian.

The mission of the SBCs is to increase the success rate and number of viable small businesses in North Carolina by providing high quality, readily accessible assistance to prospective and existing small business owners, with the goal of job creation and retention.

As the fifth President of James Sprunt Community College (JSCC), Dr. Lawrence L. Rouse stated, “I am delighted to join the North Carolina Community College System in recognizing the critical resources our SBC provides to potential, existing and emerging entrepreneurs.”

Ms. Unita Knight, Vice President Continuing Education at JSCC thinks the SBC is extremely important to the success of James Sprunt, especially from a Continuing Education perspective. Ms. Knight said “The SBC is a vital part of JSCC’s Continuing Education initiatives. We are a division that assists citizens in making their dreams come true, becoming their own boss. The Center provides guidance to new entrepreneurs and existing entrepreneurs, giving each client a personal one-on-one assessment and access to other departments within Continuing Education, as needed, that will help entrepreneurs become successful.”

Small businesses that are getting started or are dealing with changes in the marketplace are constantly faced with “how-to” questions. “Nobody does ‘How-To’ better than the SBC at the local community college,” states John Caron, Past Director of the JSCC SBC from 1990 – 2000. “Experienced business men and women who want to see other businesses succeed are available to share their knowledge with new and existing business owners in the community. Knowledge is power, and getting that knowledge is the key to success in the business world. Whether it is through seminars, one-on-one counseling, or making a wide variety of resources available through the statewide SBCN, your SBC is responsive to the needs of the business community.”

Lee Woodard, current Director of the SBC at JSCC indicated that “we typically offer 38 workshops and seminars throughout the year. Topics range from developing a business web page, using social media to market your business, using QuickBooks to manage your business, how to prepare for a bank loan, effective time management and many others. We choose our workshop and seminar topics based on feedback we receive from existing students as well as small business owners throughout the County. All of our seminars are targeted for the prospective as well as existing business owner.”

Mr. Woodard continued “We offer our Entrepreneurial Academy at least twice a year as part of the workshops and seminars we provide. The Academy consists of five seminars tailored for the prospective new business owner. The Academy provides the new business owner with the “must-know” information to start a business and gives the new owner the best possible chance to grow their business and be prosperous. The workshops in the Academy cover how to pick a small business, how to fund it, how to increase sales and profits with targeted marketing, necessary record keeping and tax reporting, and how to write a business plan to get results. In addition to the knowledge they gain, participants who complete the Academy have a solid plan for their new business.”

In regards to working directly with clients, Mr. Woodard said “we also provide confidential, one-on-one counseling for our clients. Again, these services are for both the existing as well as prospective business owner. We typically serve three or more clients per week, and our numbers are continuing to grow. In fact, we’ve grown pretty substantially this year alone. We are really seeing renewed interest throughout Duplin County in starting a variety of small businesses as well as not-for-profit organizations. These new businesses typically create 1.5 to 2 or more jobs each. And while these may not seem like huge numbers when you consider each business individually, cumulatively they do have a significant impact on the overall employment opportunities in our County.”

James Wolfe, Executive Director of the Duplin County Economic Development Commission (EDC), sees the impact and benefit of the SBC as a critical component for the County to meet its economic

plan. Mr. Wolfe said "Duplin County's economic growth is dependent on the success of small businesses and entrepreneurs. The SBC at JSCC is a key component in helping entrepreneurs turn their ideas into a business as well as helping small businesses thrive. The services offered are invaluable and really help the EDC reach its goal of growing business in the County. The Center is an integral part of the EDC, the County's Chambers, and the businesses it serves.

Curt Simpson, President and Broker in Charge of Simpson Real Estate Group Inc. in Wallace, NC, is a current client of the SBC at JSCC. When asked about the value and impact of the Center, Curt said "In a rural county like Duplin, most new businesses are going to be small out of necessity. We just don't have that large population center to feed a new enterprise, so we have to be more creative and more flexible. The expertise offered at the SBC is vital to the early survival and ultimate success of a new small business. The SBC has been a tremendous help to my wife and I in getting our business off the ground, and I've already sent several of my friends to talk with Lee as well."

For more information about the SBC at JSCC, contact:

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