

FSBDC Awarded DCA-EM Grant to Help Businesses Prepare for Disasters

Small businesses in a seven county area in Florida can now improve their ability to survive a disaster through the Business Continuity Pilot (BCP) project that was recently awarded to the Florida Small Business Development Center (FSBDC) Network by the Department of Community Affairs, Division of Emergency Management. The goal of the project is to help businesses reduce personal and economic costs of disasters by preparing them to protect against natural and man-made disasters.

Mitigation Counselors are very enthusiastic about the project and encourage small business owners to take advantage of the free services available through the BCP. The pilot focuses on conducting on-site facility audits of small businesses to assist them in developing disaster preparedness plans and implementing mitigation measures into business operations.

"This project will enable Florida's small businesses to play an essential role in building disaster resistant communities," said Craig Fugate, Director, Florida Division of Emergency Management. "The FSBDC Network is an excellent example of how public-private resources can be integrated to benefit Florida's citizens."

The BCP is administered by the FSBDC Network's State Director's Office in Pensacola and operates through the University of North Florida SBDC in Jacksonville to provide targeted services to Duval, St. John's and Clay counties and the University of West Florida SBDC in Ft. Walton Beach to provide services in Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa and Walton counties. The pilot is a one-year project that began June 30, 2002.

"It is critical that small businesses have access to the information and tools they need prepare for, respond to and recover from a major emergency or disaster situation," says FSBDC Network State Director Jerry Cartwright. "We are very pleased that the Department of Community Affairs, Division of Emergency Management, selected us to participate in this project and are committed to ensuring that Florida's businesses are prepared and ready to respond in the event of a disaster."

For additional information about the BCP project or to schedule an appointment with a Mitigation Counselor, contact Charles Parry or Harris Barker, UWF SBDC, at (850) 863-6546 or Greg Hardee, UNF SBDC, at (904) 620-1026.



Florida's Business DIVIDEND\$ Newsletter

Editor: Kelly McLeod

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"The Small Business Development Center was instrumental in creating and executing the right game plan so that I was able to hit the ground running with confidence in starting my business," says Dr. Eric Janowitz, Oviedo Family Chiropractic.



Dr. Eric Janowitz

Choosing the Right Location is Essential for Business Success

contributed by the University of Central Florida SBDC, Orlando

Dr. Eric Janowitz, a chiropractor, wanted to run his own business. He came to the University of Central Florida Small Business Development Center in Orlando in June of 2001 for help in determining whether it would be better to purchase an existing business or start his own. Pauline Davis, a Certified Business Analyst and Assistant Director with the UCF Small Business Development Center, conducted a business evaluation for him to

determine the business potential. After reviewing the evaluation and the purchase price for the existing business, Dr. Eric decided he could start and grow his own practice more economically. Knowing that the right location is essential to the success of a business, Dr. Eric considered several sites. Each site was reviewed for demographics, competition, and the opportunity for future growth. Finally, he decided on the Oviedo area, one of the fastest growing areas in Central Florida. Dr. Eric proceeded to write his business plan, which Pauline reviewed. He then took the business plan to Banco Popular, which subsequently granted him a loan.

Oviedo Family Chiropractic Practice opened on January 18, 2002. The business is doing very well, and has exceeded all projections to date. Dr. Eric's success can be attributed to his professionalism, customer care and amazing marketing efforts, as well as the assistance he received at the SBDC. He has immersed himself in the community and can be seen attending Chamber meetings, giving lectures at the YMCA, providing screenings at a kiosk in the Oviedo MarketPlace Mall and attending community functions.



Dr. Eric Janowitz and Staff

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"We had the chiropractic office for ten years," Amalia said. "We saw that it would have been so much better if we had the SBDC from the beginning."



L-R: Eileen Rodriguez and Amalia Bracho-Inaty

Wind, Water and Foresight

contributed by the University of South Florida SBDC, Tampa

It took a Feng Shui master and the SBDC to help Amalia Bracho-Inaty live her passion.

Speaking to Amalia Bracho-Inaty is like speaking to a spiritual guru. Harmony, emotions, and letting positive energy flow freely are themes that creep into her conversation. When translated, Feng Shui means "the way of wind and water".

As Americans become more receptive to Eastern philosophy, including yoga and meditation, the art of Feng Shui has become attractive. Feng Shui

(pronounced Fung Shway) is the ancient Chinese art of adjusting and decorating to allow energy flow and help people feel comfortable in their work and home environments. "You go to a place and you feel uncomfortable and you don't know why. Or you go to a place and you feel like you've been there forever, and you feel so good," Amalia said. "And that's that energy. We all tend to feel it, but we ignore it."

Amalia was exposed to the practice of Feng Shui by a Chinese doctor who worked for her husband's chiropractic clinic. Fascinated by the concept, she called a Feng Shui master. Following a year of guided study by phone, she was able to start her own practice. Amalia knew from past experience that starting a business takes more than buying office space. After her husband sold his clinic, Amalia realized the business could have thrived if they'd had a solid plan.

She turned to the USF Small Business Development Center after a friend mentioned Eileen Rodriguez, Assistant Director of the SBDC. Sharing the bond of Hispanic heritage, the two discussed business planning. Eileen helped Amalia develop a business plan and a portfolio. She now uses that portfolio at lectures to illustrate her work and its potential. Eileen suggested Amalia develop a database of potential clients. "We had a strategic plan, which helped me identify where I wanted to be and who my clients are," Amalia said. "Then she helped me with the papers and my presentation to clients." Amalia said she benefitted from the *Steps to Starting a Small Business* seminar, which taught her business plan and marketing basics. "She had owned businesses before and was highly motivated," Eileen said. "Together we were able to enhance her skills and fine-tune her plans."

Looking back, Feng Shui was a natural match for Amalia. She studied civil engineering at a university in Tennessee and used that degree to run an engineering company back in Venezuela. Engineering, Amalia said, helped her with the physical part of altering environments. Amalia also has a deep appreciation of art, dating back to her childhood. Her father was an artist, instilling her passion for beauty at an early age.

In addition to home consultations and complete office makeovers, Amalia consults with individual employees to help enhance their work areas. Adding mirrors to deflect negative energy and posting pictures of nature and family members around work cubicles helps energize employees, Amalia said. "When you start changing offices and putting people in the right places, everyone starts feeling better," she said.

Other local Feng Shui businesses exist, but Amalia is quick to point she has a competitive edge. "I'm the only bilingual practitioner in the area," she says. Amalia is already certified to teach Feng Shui but also hopes to hire a team of Feng Shui experts, enabling her to serve a more lengthy client list.

"In Feng Shui, we say that every problem has a solution," Amalia says. "That recipe for success puts her above the crowd," says Eileen.

Holiday Tradition Turns Into Profitable Business

contributed by Florida Atlantic University SBDC, Boca Raton



In the Fosmire family, it has long been traditional to celebrate the holidays by exchanging baskets filled with cookies and even cookie bouquets. When cabinetmaker Chris Fosmire began thinking about changing careers, it occurred to him that others might find cookie presents appealing, too. Chris was right. His new business, The Cookie Nook, is up and running, supplying cookie freaks with a wide array of hand-baked cookies on lollipop sticks, wrapped and assembled in all sorts of different containers, from pails to mugs to boxes to pots.

The money Chris needed to get the business going was provided by a \$31,000 SBA loan guarantee, funded by Wachovia Bank. The business plan that convinced the SBA and the bank that cookie bouquets were a viable product was created with the detailed assistance of Martin Zients, CBA at the FAU SBDC.

"Marty was incredibly helpful," remembers Chris. "He reviewed all the drafts of my business plan and made suggestions. Then I'd make changes and he'd edit it again. Now, a month into the business, I'm right on target to achieve my sales targets." Chris is also branching out into lunches at the Delray Beach location. "That's where most of the profits are at the moment," Chris says. And a second store is a distinct possibility.

Chris' odyssey from dream to reality is not unique. He first took his idea to SCORE, where retired business experts counseled him with the initial stages of his business plan. He eventually turned to the SBDC for marketing assistance and then sought financing help through revision of his business plan and an SBA loan. *Says Chris, "I spent a year planning, working, and researching... Then my work with the SBDC brought it all together. What the center does is wonderful and absolutely free. Anybody I talk to who is at all interested in getting started in business, I give them Martin's number."*

Reaching the Finish Line

contributed by the FAMU SBDC, Tallahassee



Willie Bennett

"I can only say without the help of Mrs. McGowan, I don't see how I could have made it. Her encouragement during the times when things seemed hopeless, or when the tasks seemed too big for me meant so much to me. She just kept showing me how and cheering me on until I reached the finish line....," says Willie Bennett.

Willie Bennett had operated a grocery store in the Springfield Community of Tallahassee for more than 40 years, when the onset of diabetes caused him to suffer kidney and liver failure. After receiving both liver and kidney transplants, he spent 1-1/2 years in the hospital, and turned the operation of the grocery store over to his son. When he returned to Tallahassee he found that, like himself, his passion for the business world had also refused to die. It was at this time that he decided he wanted to, once again, enter the small business arena.

Willie began experimenting with selling peanuts and, eventually, became well-known around the Tallahassee area for his peanuts. As a result of his success and the potential to supplement his income, he decided he could offer the peanuts and other concession items in his son's arcade game room and develop a delivery route for the surrounding community. Realizing that he would need assistance in obtaining the equipment and inventory required to launch this operation, Willie contacted the FAMU SBDC and spoke with the Executive Director Patricia McGowan. Patricia referred him to The Able Trust, a public-private foundation which awards grants to disabled persons to start a business venture.

After contacting The Able Trust, he returned to the SBDC for assistance in preparing a grant proposal and business plan. Patricia assisted Willie in obtaining all of the documentation required by The Able Trust, prepared necessary correspondence, and provided assistance in the preparation of his business plan. Upon review of his proposal and business plan, The Able Trust's Board voted to award Willie a \$7,000 grant to purchase concession equipment and inventory.

Ensuring Projections are a Reality, Not Just a Fabrication!

contributed by the University of North Florida SBDC, Jacksonville

"We couldn't have done it without you. We know our business, but we knew nothing about putting together a business plan. Cathy helped make it happen," says Jason Hostetter.



L-R: Cathy Hagan, Jason and Trayc Hostetter

In 1993, Jason Hostetter founded Marker Tile, a tile contracting company. In 1998, his brother, Trayc, joined the company and together they worked to increase sales to the construction industry. In 2000, the brothers sought to expand their vision for the company. They saw an opportunity to use their experience in the stone and tile industry to refine the labor intensive process of hand fabricating stone medallions and inlays, and improve the quality at the same time.

Jason and Trayc began collecting research on abrasive water jet fabrication machinery and found that the market for this innovative fabrication process extended well beyond the tile contracting industry. As they researched the possibility of purchasing an abrasive water jet machine, Jason and Trayc realized the potential such a machine had in servicing other industries. They conducted a market survey and found a wide variety of companies--from small machine shops and metal fabricators, to aerospace design and aircraft manufacturers--that expressed an interest in a local water jet fabrication source. During one of these market studies, several respondents gave verbal commitments of future contracts. These companies needed fabrication services immediately.

Convinced that there was a lucrative market for water jet fabrication in North Florida and South Georgia, Jason and Trayc began planning to start a new company specializing in water jet design and fabrication--Marker Technologies, Inc.

In March 2000, the Hostettlers were referred to Cathy Hagan, Area Director and Certified Business Analyst at the University of North Florida Small Business Development Center in Jacksonville. The referral came from a customer of Marker Tile, who happened to be a banker. The brothers needed help in developing a business plan to present to potential lenders to finance their new venture. Trayc and Jason worked with Cathy to find market research information, develop financial projections, and get their plan on paper. Once the plan was complete, which was no small feat, they presented it to several banks that declined to finance the deal. Using feedback from these lenders, the brothers worked to improve their loan package and their odds of finding financing.

Persistence paid off! In October 2001, they went back to the banker who originally referred them to the UNF SBDC. CenterBank, a new community bank in Jacksonville, was aggressively targeting small business clients. The bank submitted the loan package to the U.S. Small Business Administration, and the brothers were approved for an \$85,000 SBA working capital loan. In addition, the Hostettlers were able to finance the water jet fabrication machine through the manufacturer.

Marker Technologies, Inc. opened its doors in January 2002. This abrasive water jet fabrication company aims to provide high quality products, priced competitively and delivered on schedule. The brothers bring extensive experience in the stone/tile industry and in CAD design to the company. They have a solid network of contacts in the construction industry. They are also targeting new markets, like architects and interior designers.

Marker Technologies, Inc. strives to become a "marker" in their industry by which other similar facilities will be judged. The brothers plan to continue working with Cathy Hagan and the UNF SBDC to develop and pursue an aggressive marketing campaign. The Hostettlers have carved a niche in the marketplace that will help ensure their projections for the future become a reality, not just a fabrication!

"The assistance with our marketing strategies and marketing materials provided by the SBDC and Doris Bolliger were instrumental in helping Bit-Wizards develop a strategy to endure during a declining market. They provided guidance that allowed us to not only survive during the fallout of the market decline but to grow. I highly recommend the SBDC for anyone looking to start, grow or improve their business," says Louis Erickson.



Louis Erickson and Vincent Mayfield

Strategy Helps Bit-Wizards Survive and Grow During Market Decline

contributed by the University of West Florida SBDC, Fort Walton Beach

Bit-Wizards Information Technology Solutions Inc. is a cutting-edge technology company that provides professional software engineering, e-commerce, wireless, Web, and information technology solutions to its clients. This full-service software engineering company is located in Shalimar, Florida, and focuses on solving IT problems and implementing real world business solutions.

In February of 2000, Bit-Wizards was incorporated in Austin, Texas where it landed its first big contract. After a year of growth and success in Texas, the founders, Louis Erickson and Vincent Mayfield, who spent their formative years in Fort Walton Beach, Florida, decided to move the company's operations to the Emerald Coast. In January 2001, they returned to Northwest Florida, incorporated as a Florida firm and opened Bit-Wizards in Shalimar.

Bit-Wizards is a Microsoft Certified Partner (MCP) and, as such, members of its development staff and executive management team hold and maintain Microsoft Certifications in the latest technologies, innovations and products. The company is a member of the Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce, Okaloosa Economic Development Council's TecMEN Organization and IT Gulf Coast. Vincent holds a Bachelors Degree in Mathematics with Minors in Computer Science and Aerospace Science from Troy State University (TSU). He also was awarded a Masters Degree in International Relations by TSU and has authored four computer technology books. Louis holds a Bachelor Degree in Computer and Information Sciences with Minors in Mathematics and Physics from TSU. Both Vincent and Louis are Microsoft Certified Professional Solution Developers (MCSD) and have an extensive background in software engineering. They are currently pursuing Masters Degrees in Computer Science with the Software Engineering option at the University of West Florida.

Prior to launching the company in Texas, Vincent sought out the SBDC in Fort Walton Beach in the Spring of 1999 to learn about forming a business. He attended two SBDC seminars: *Forming a Business* and *Corporate Record Keeping*. With the knowledge he gained at the seminars, Vincent and Louis were able to successfully apply that knowledge and start Bit-Wizards. In the fall of 2001, Louis, again, contacted the SBDC for assistance with marketing and sources of funding. The company, as so many others, experienced a decline in business activities due to the events which occurred on September 11, 2001. The executive team has taken advantage of the SBDC's free counseling and the government procurement program. Doris Bolliger, Certified Business Analyst at the UWF SBDC, assisted the company by reviewing print-based marketing materials, the web site and making recommendations for revisions. The company was also approved for an SBA Economic Injury Loan.

Bit-Wizards has a 1,500 square foot facility, outfitted with the latest software and hardware. Currently, the company has 10 full- and part-time employees and a large client base in five states, including Florida, Texas, Pennsylvania, Indiana and Alabama. Bit-Wizards is concentrating on increasing its client numbers and helping grow the commercial technology sector in Northwest Florida. In the near future Bit-Wizards is seeking to market and sell a new commercial software package nationwide.

Says Vincent, "The SBDC was a one-stop source for information on starting a business. Their seminars are extremely informative and well worth the time to attend. Starting and growing a small business is a real challenge. The staff at the SBDC was extremely courteous and helpful in helping a business like ours find the resources and information needed to succeed."

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

for the

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Mr. William D. Elmore

Associate Administrator for
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- Economic Development Commission of Florida's Space Coast
- Federal and State Representatives
- Florida Small Business Development Center Network
- NASA Industry Assistance Office
- SCORE
- Small Business Administration
- Veterans' Business Outreach Center

Thursday, November 14, 2002

8 a.m. - 12 p.m.

King Center for Performing Arts
BCC Melbourne Campus

Registration fee: \$25 to include buffet
breakfast, breakout sessions and materials.

Individual or small group counseling sessions
will be available in the afternoon by
appointment. Inquire when registering.

For more information or to register, please
contact Barbara Butler at:

tel: 632-1111, ext. 32760

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Stephen Dring

SBDC Incubator Provides Invaluable Starting Point for Sign Company

contributed by the GCCC SBDC, Lynn Haven

Making signs is part of Stephen Dring's history. His father was a sign maker in Sarasota, and Stephen has followed in his father's footsteps.

Dring moved to Panama City in 1995 and, after working two years as an account executive for a local sign company, he decided to go into business on his own. He saw a niche in the interior sign market and sought help from the Gulf Coast Community College Small Business Development Center for assistance with his endeavor. Dring originally met with SBDC Certified Business Analyst Andre Brewton and was counseled on how to develop a business plan and cash flow pro forma statements.

Soon Dring opened his business, Advanced Sign Solutions, at the GCCC Small Business Development Center Incubator in Lynn Haven. According to Dring, the support the Small Business Development Center offered was critical during those first few years. Dring says

the resources, classes, computers and networking, as well as the convenience of being co-located with the incubator, were invaluable. The first big job Advanced Sign Solutions obtained was the *Welcome to Bay County* signage project in 1998. From there, his business has flourished.

In 2000, Dring had outgrown his space at the incubator and was ready to open his own facility. Some of his big successes since then include all interior signs for Bay Medical's new facility and interior signs for all forty of Bay County's Public Schools. He recently was awarded the contract for creating all exterior signs for the Wild Heron Community which is being developed around Greg Norman's Shark's Tooth Golf Course in Panama City--quite an accomplishment for a company that's been in business for only five years! Advanced Sign Solutions has grown to over \$540,000 per year in sales and is still growing.

Stephen Dring says, "The support I received at Gulf Coast Community College Small Business Development Center and the funding I needed to buy my initial equipment allowed me to realize my dream."

Overcoming the Challenges of Starting a Business

contributed by the University of North Florida SBDC, Gainesville

"Without the help of Lalla Sheehy and the Small Business Development Center, our company would not be where it is today," says Skip Marshall.



Skip Marshall

During the summer of 1996, Skip Marshall was volunteering and working as a contract instructor for the American Red Cross. He began talking with the Director of Health and Safety about the need for expanding the Red Cross Learn-to-Swim program in the Alachua County area. During their discussions, the possibility of offering the program in a backyard setting was considered. Although they had heard about lessons being offered by individual instructors in private homes, they couldn't find any examples of businesses that provided coordinated services delivered directly to the customer.

The following summer Swim-2-U was founded and, in June of 1997, the company was incorporated as an S-Corporation. In the beginning, Skip was a little apprehensive about starting his own business. At the time, he had been a swimming instructor-trainer for the Red Cross for four years. He had also just completed his Masters Degree in Education from the University of Florida. Skip was well-prepared to be a teacher, but had no prior experience in running a business, so he sought out books on running a business in the State of Florida to aid in the set up process.

Shortly after forming the business, Skip began working with the University of North Florida Small Business Development Center in Gainesville. The SBDC has worked as a behind-the-scenes business advisor to Skip ever since. Finding a liability insurance provider was the first of many challenges Skip faced in getting Swim-2-U, Inc. off the ground. With the SBDC's assistance, Skip was able to locate an insurance agent who provided Swim-2-U with liability insurance. In addition to connecting Skip with local resources, the SBDC provided him with training on accounting, business management, employment issues and tax considerations. The SBDC continues to help Skip modify the business model to follow the trends of the consumer.

Thanks to assistance from the Small Business Development Center, Swim-2-U has grown from under 50 students the first summer to nearly 200 students last summer. In addition, Skip now works with area apartment complexes, housing developments and daycare facilities to provide swimming instruction for their residents and children. Skip is currently working to expand his services to other cities throughout Florida in the form of an Internet-based instructor, referral service hosted on the company web site at www.swim2u.com.

Taking Care of the Details Prior to Opening Business

contributed by the Florida Atlantic University SBDC, Miami

"Although we had knowledge and experience in the freight forwarding industry we did not know how or where to start building our business," claim Luz and Gloria. "Some friends...suggested we approach the FAU SBDC in Miami for guidance. After doing so we now know it has been our best decision because it is an excellent source of help for all those who want to start a business."



L-R: Luz Moreno and Gloria Echegaray

After several years of work in the freight forwarding industry, Luz Moreno and Gloria Echegaray saw they had the chance of opening their own company. They identified an opportunity and a demand in the service of the transportation of goods to and from the Dominican Republic, so they decided to embark on the project of creating Nova Logistics. The first time Luz and Gloria came in for counseling at the Florida Atlantic University SBDC in Miami was in February 2002, yet three months prior to the meeting, they had attended the

Export, Import and Freight Forwarding seminar offered by SBDC Certified Business Analyst Jimmy Pinto. At the seminar, many of their questions regarding their industry were answered.

They knew they had a very challenging task ahead which did not discourage them but rather made them more determined to open their own freight forwarding company. "We knew there were all these steps that had to be taken care of in order to operate properly and efficiently, and we wanted to make sure every detail was taken care of," said Luz and Gloria. "This particular seminar gave us the confidence we were looking for, and we knew we were on the correct path."

At the beginning, the meetings at the SBDC were to go over different areas and aspects of the cargo transportation industry to identify what they needed to improve to be competitive upon opening their business. One of the points stressed upon was the location. Since they were in the business of moving bulk cargo, they were told they should be in an area accessible to transportation, such as trucks and containers of all sizes. The location also had to be easily accessible to the airport and the seaport. After covering most of the aspects involved in international trade, the next step was to complete a business checklist and a business plan that would help the partners avoid overlooking any business aspect. "Mr. Pinto helped us clearly define what we wanted to do with the resources we had," stated Luz and Gloria.

Nova Logistics began operations in March. Their offices and warehouse are strategically located. During their first three months, they moved more than 38 shipments, using both air and ocean transportation.

One of the reasons for their success is the aggressive and competitive spirit of the owners, but mainly because of their desire to be guided and their discipline to complete the tasks required from them. "Through Mr. Pinto's counseling, we have been able to start our company, sort out unexpected situations and begin operations. We will continue to work hard with the help and counseling of the SBDC to achieve our goals," says Luz and Gloria.



group in the Central Florida area. Burt hopes the "younger generation" will keep the long-time minority contractor tradition flourishing in Polk County and see the Association as the ideal vehicle for making this happen. His dream is to see the Association branch out to provide financing, bonding and mentoring programs to help disadvantaged businesses (like his company was at one time) that, otherwise, would have a difficult time working "outside the box". Even though he was forced to struggle at times during his career, Mr. Burt views himself as a good example that a small and minority business can succeed, "even when the odds are sometimes against you." Mr. Burt has been involved with the Polk County SMBDC since 1996. "Ever since the beginning of my relationship with the SMBDC and Marcela Stanislaus, I have been able to keep my business afloat with her many tireless efforts. She has helped me gain financing when there seemed to be no hope in sight. Her total commitment to the SMBDC and her clients has helped me to realize that it is all about giving back to your community. Also, with the contacts she has made with the Minority Business Office of Polk County and the Florence Villa Community Development Corporation, Inc., she has also helped my company become better prepared to do procurement with the Board of County Commissioners."

Tireless Efforts Keep Business Afloat

contributed by the University of South Florida SBDC, Bartow



Jimmie Burt

Jimmie Burt says, "The SMBDC, under the direction of Marcela Stanislaus, has helped my company find outside resources. All of my current milestones can be traced back to the leadership and guidance that has been given by Mrs. Stanislaus and her staff. One thing I have grown to count on is, if I need assistance, the SMBDC will make accommodations to help me in any way they can."

In a business career spanning more than 50 years, Jimmie Burt, owner and president of Jimmie Burt Construction, has emerged as an inspiration in the Florida minority contractor circle. Self-described as "the old man", Burt established his firm in the tiny city of Bartow after migrating to Polk County from Harris County, Georgia in 1947. He decided to go into business for himself after working odd jobs to "make a living".

Jimmie Burt Construction is a general contracting firm specializing in residential and light commercial projects. The company does most of its work in Polk County, but has worked on various projects in the Tampa and Orlando markets. One of the company's largest projects include the Lakewood Apartments in Lakeland, completed in 1970.

With the help of the Polk County Small & Minority Business Development Center, a Minority Contractors' Association was formed to bring together minority contractors and help them establish themselves as a collective

SBA Enhances SBAExpress Pilot Program--The Facts

The SBAExpress program is designed to make loans of \$250,000 and under more widely available to small businesses by making it easier and faster for lenders to process these loans. A package of recent changes to the pilot program makes it even more attractive for lenders and small businesses by shifting greater approval authority and processing responsibility to lenders and encouraging more use of technology to expedite the loan process. The changes will allow SBA to broaden the availability of SBAExpress loans to more small businesses, by making the process simpler and by significantly expanding the number of lenders participating in the program.

The changes include incentives to reduce the cost to lenders of processing small loans, such as using technology to reduce the cost and speed up processing of smaller loans; permitting slightly higher interest rates, particularly for loans of \$50,000 or less; immediate purchase of many defaulted loans; and the delegation to qualified lenders of the authority to make eligibility determinations.

- The program allows lenders to use their own forms and processes to approve loans guaranteed by the SBA. Minimal paperwork is required for the SBA. The lender takes most servicing actions without prior SBA approval.
- The maximum loan amount is \$250,000, recently increased from \$150,000. SBA provides a 50-percent guarantee on the loans.
- The SBA generally provides an immediate response on most SBAExpress applications. Occasionally, the process can take, at the most, 24 hours.
- The program will soon allow lenders to transmit loan applications electronically to the SBA.
- The program recently has been expanded to include as many as 2,400 low-volume SBA lenders that previously did not meet the agency's minimum SBA loan volume requirements.
- Lenders that do not currently participate in SBA loan programs may be eligible, providing they have small business experience.
- The SBA's general policy requires guaranteed loans to be fully secured; with SBAExpress, lenders may approve unsecured lines of credit up to \$150,000, if that is the lender's policy for non-SBA guaranteed loans.
- Loan maturity generally is five to 10 years, and up to 25 years for fixed-asset loans. Length of time for repayment depends on the borrower's ability to repay and the use of the loan proceeds.
- SBA will immediately purchase all SBAExpress defaults with balances of \$50,000 or less and all defaults expected to have extended liquidation activity.
- Interest rates are negotiated between lenders and borrowers and may be fixed or variable, but they may not exceed SBA maximums. To offset some of the lender's additional cost for booking small loans, the revised SBAExpress program allows lenders to charge up to 6.5 percent over the prime rate for loans of \$50,000 or less and up to 4.5 percent over the prime rate for loans over \$50,000.
- To qualify for the program, a business must meet the SBA's size standards. These standards are based on the average number of employees over the preceding 12 months or the average sales over the previous three years.
- The SBAExpress program has been extended as a pilot to Sept. 30, 2005, to allow the SBA time to assess fully the impact of these changes.

Learning How to Start and Grow a Business in the U.S.

contributed by the Florida Gulf Coast University SBDC, Bonita Springs



Left: Cristof Danzi

Cristof Danzi was a European chef, manager and owner of a restaurant in France, but he wanted to come to the Southwest Florida area to start his own restaurant. He had over 24 years of experience in the restaurant industry, but needed guidance on starting and running a business in the United States. He came to the Florida Gulf Coast University Small Business Development Center, in Bonita Springs, in February of 2000, with an abundance of startup questions. He also needed someone to review his

loan documents for a U.S. Small Business Administration loan to start the business. SBDC Certified Business Analyst Suzanne Specht counseled him on the requirements of the county and state. Subsequently, Cristof was approved for a \$275,000 SBA loan. With the loan, Cristof was able to remodel the establishment before opening. McGregor Café is now open, serving breakfast, lunch and dinner. Since the opening, the restaurant has established a great reputation and has been profitable, so much so that Cristof has hopes of expanding his restaurant. Cristof has 15 employees and huge dreams for a luxury resort down the road. "SBDC is a huge help and a great service," says Cristof Danzi.

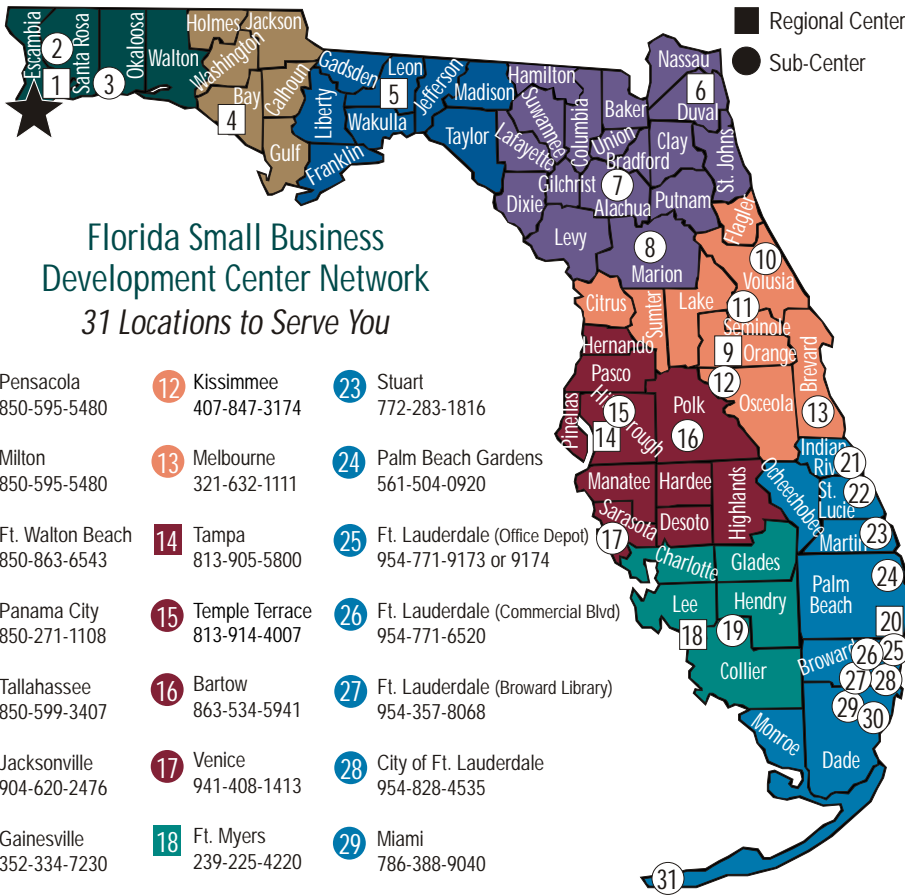
SBA To Bring More Export Financing To Small Businesses

New enhancements to the U.S. SBA's ExportExpress loan program will simplify export financing opportunities for small businesses and attract more lenders to participate in the program. The recent changes to ExportExpress include the availability of the program through an additional 2,400 small and rural lenders, increased maximum loan amount from \$150,000 to \$250,000, and interest rate incentives that encourage lenders to make smaller loans more readily available to small businesses.

The program opens up to lenders that previously did not participate with SBA but that have experience in small business lending. ExportExpress offers a streamlined application process. SBA's guaranty for ExportExpress loans of \$150,000 or less is 85-percent while the guaranty on loans above that amount, up to \$250,000, is 75-percent.

"The changes to ExportExpress could not be better timed with President Bush's signing of the Trade Act of 2002 just last month," SBA Administrator Hector V. Barreto said. "The program will now be delivered through more lenders across the country and that means more small businesses will have access to export financing... The enhanced ExportExpress program will encourage exporting on the part of more small business and will represent a boost to international trade," the administrator emphasized.

The ExportExpress program is designed to finance a variety of needs of small business exporters, including participating in a foreign trade show; translating product brochures or catalogues for use in overseas markets; opening general lines of credit for export purposes; servicing contracts from buyers located outside the United States; financing transaction-specific requirements associated with completing actual export orders; and purchasing real estate and equipment for the production of goods or services to be exported. For more information about all of the SBA's programs for small businesses, call 1-800 U ASK SBA or TDD 704-344-6640, or visit the SBA's extensive web site at <http://www.sba.gov>.



Florida Small Business Development Center Network

31 Locations to Serve You

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| 1 Pensacola
850-595-5480 | 12 Kissimmee
407-847-3174 | 23 Stuart
772-283-1816 |
| 2 Milton
850-595-5480 | 13 Melbourne
321-632-1111 | 24 Palm Beach Gardens
561-504-0920 |
| 3 Ft. Walton Beach
850-863-6543 | 14 Tampa
813-905-5800 | 25 Ft. Lauderdale (Office Depot)
954-771-9173 or 9174 |
| 4 Panama City
850-271-1108 | 15 Temple Terrace
813-914-4007 | 26 Ft. Lauderdale (Commercial Blvd)
954-771-6520 |
| 5 Tallahassee
850-599-3407 | 16 Bartow
863-534-5941 | 27 Ft. Lauderdale (Broward Library)
954-357-8068 |
| 6 Jacksonville
904-620-2476 | 17 Venice
941-408-1413 | 28 City of Ft. Lauderdale
954-828-4535 |
| 7 Gainesville
352-334-7230 | 18 Ft. Myers
239-225-4220 | 29 Miami
786-388-9040 |
| 8 Ocala
352-622-8763 | 19 Immokalee
239-658-3327 | 30 Miami (Office Depot)
Opens October 4, 2002 |
| 9 Orlando
407-823-5554 | 20 Boca Raton
561-297-1140 | 31 Key West
305-292-7113 |
| 10 Daytona Beach
386-947-5463 | 21 Vero Beach
772-978-6532 | |
| 11 Sanford
407-321-3495 | 22 Ft. Pierce
772-462-4756 | |

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Small Business in the Sunshine Conference

contributed by Laura Subel, PTAC State Program Manager

On Thursday, November 14, Congressman Jeff Miller, the University of West Florida Procurement Technical Assistance Center (UWF PTAC), Eglin Air Force Base Small Business Office, UWF Small Business Development Center, Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce, and UIDA Consulting Group, Inc. (American Indian PTAC) will co-sponsor *Small Business in the Sunshine*, a procurement opportunities conference, at the Hilton Sandestin Beach & Golf Resort, in Destin, Florida.

Twenty-one years ago, when the conference was first started, *Small Business in the Sunshine* was one of the few major procurement conferences held, particularly in the Southeast area. Although procurement conferences are offered frequently, *Small Business in the Sunshine* continues to be one of the major conferences drawing over 60 federal, state, and local government buying agencies and prime (large business) contractors, and over 450 attendees. The focus of the conference is for small businesses to communicate face-to-face with government and prime contractor representatives. A major difference in this procurement conference and others is that the government buying agencies and prime contractors are the exhibitors, not the small businesses. This arrangement frees the small business owner to concentrate on marketing his/her business.

The advantage of the conference is two-fold: a marketing opportunity and a training event. A small business can actually meet with each agency, discuss whether that particular agency has a need for their goods or services and learn how to do business with them. The prime contractors are large firms which have federal government contracts that require a sub-contracting plan to spend so many dollars with each type of business. This is an opportunity for businesses to see if they can sub-contract with these primes and how to apply to become a sub-contractor. The training provides a basic knowledge of the subject offered in each workshop for a business to understand what is required to do business with the government and some of the methods the government uses in buying goods and services.

Government/Prime Contractors to market, training events, beautiful location and a cost of \$10/person -- a truly great opportunity for small businesses!

The agenda and registration form for businesses are available on the Florida Procurement Technical Assistant Center web site at www.fptac.org. For additional information, call the UWF PTAC at 850-595-6066, ext. 1 or 2 -or- the Eglin AFB Small Business Office at 850-882-2843, ext. 1.