

## **Finding Resources for Small Business Success**

Let's face it, being an entrepreneur takes a special set of skills. Some people just seem to have the knack, while the rest of us need to work diligently to develop those skills and surround ourselves with the right resources if we hope to be successful in an entrepreneurial venture.

One of the great resources we have is our local Economic Development Groups. Our local directors and their advisory boards work diligently to stay in touch with the latest contacts and resources available to those operating an existing business, planning a business venture, or looking to develop a succession plan. If you fall into any of these categories, I want to tell you about a couple of great opportunities coming up in our area.

The Clay County Economic Development Group (CCEDG), in association with the Network Kansas E-Community Partnership, announces the Business Development Program being offered in Clay Center in August. Sessions will start at 6:00 p.m. every Thursday evening from August 29<sup>th</sup> through October 24<sup>th</sup>. The goal of the course is to teach participants to develop an entrepreneurial mindset and to explore business opportunities.

Taught by CCEDG's Director, Lori Huber, a certified facilitator, this interactive nine-week program provides practical entrepreneurial lessons through first-hand experiences of successful, real-life entrepreneurs. Based on the book, *Who Owns the Ice House*, this curriculum consists of video interviews and case studies along with individual assignments, assessments, and discussion topics.

I had the opportunity to hear a talk by the author of *Who Owns the Ice House*, Clifton Taulbert, last fall. He is an amazingly talented but humble individual, and this is a great opportunity for business owners and potential entrepreneurs to grow as they work to implement these concepts.

The second opportunity, also hosted by the CCEDG, is the Business Development Expo with more than 20 organizations who help people start and grow businesses. The Expo will be held on Thursday, October 17<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the United Methodist Church's Family Life Center at the corner of 5<sup>th</sup> and Clarke Streets in Clay Center. New this year are breakout educational sessions. The event is free to anyone who is interested in starting, growing, or transitioning any type of business and is open to anyone regardless of where they live or plan to start a business in Kansas.

Some of the assistance that can be found at the Expo include:

- financial assistance that is available, including grants, low-interest loans, down payment assistance, and cost savings programs, such as energy audits;
- marketing assistance, including branding, sales avenues, government contracting, exporting assistance, as well as general marketing, such as website development and social media marketing;
- food producers can receive product development, processing, packaging, and marketing assistance; and existing businesses can take advantage of opportunities to help plan for their growth or transition to new management or ownership; and
- other services include manufacturing product development and processing; workforce development and training; technology and automation; agri-tourism, and so much more.

For more information on these educational programs, contact Lori Huber at CCEDG 785-632-5974. For assistance from Republic County Economic Development Corporation, contact Luke Mahin at 785-374-3047. In Cloud County, contact Kim Reynolds at CloudCorp at 785-243-2010.

Being an entrepreneur is difficult, so reach out for all of the assistance and education you can get to increase your chances of success. Small businesses are vital to the success of our rural communities.

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