

LGBT business builder conference offers four steps to certification

By Jack Rubinger
The Southwest Portland Post

Many faces, one dream was how Camron Doss from the U.S. Small Business Administration described a networking event held on March 9 at the River's Edge Hotel (0455 SW Hamilton Court) in South Portland.

Billed as an LGBT [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender] Business Builder, the gathering brought together entrepreneurs, bankers, suppliers, and buyers and national and regional representatives from the SBA and the National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce.

Key attendees at the conference included Mark Gibson, national LGBT communications director, U.S. Small Business Administration; Brent Stewart, supplier diversity manager, NGL chamber; Calvin Goings, SBA, regional administrator; and Paul Finlay, vice president, Portland Area Business Association.

Ruth Miles, Oregon Secretary of State, Office of Small Business Assistance, delivered the keynote address. "Small businesses are the backbone of Oregon's economy," said Miles. "It's exciting when the

SBA, the State of Oregon, and local resources all come together to help 'grow our own' in an event like this. I was honored to be part of it."

Oregon's Office of Small Business Assistance serves as an independent voice for small businesses within state government. Small businesses account for 98 percent of Oregon firms, employ over half the state's workforce and play a vital role in our economy.

"There's been cultural shift in the United States," explained Eugene Cornelius, deputy associate administrator, Office of Field Operations, SBA. "The number one export in the world is small business. Large businesses keep costs down by contracting with small businesses. We're reaching an underserved and diverse audience that is dedicated to creating new jobs, too."

Through this national co-sponsorship, a series of LGBT Business Builder education and outreach events are being held around the country that focus on SBA programs and services, and the gay and lesbian chamber's business certification.

The SBA and the chamber have partnered to increase economic



Eugene Cornelius Jr., deputy associate administrator, Office of Field Operations, U.S. Small Business Administration. (Photo courtesy of National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce)

opportunity to LGBT entrepreneurs by highlighting SBA programs and services coupled with the chamber's business certification.

There are four steps involved in the certification process which begins by building a profile and submitting information to my.nglcc.org.

Completion of application (including supporting documents to verify that the business is 51 percent LGBT owned and operated).

Site visits verify the company's legitimacy and ownership. A third-party body, the National Certification Committee, reviews documents and makes ultimate decision on certification.

The business receives certification, access to resources and exposure to Fortune 500 companies including Northrop-Grumman and Apple.

"Certification is like many of the

tools available in business. Becoming certified doesn't guarantee success or more business," said Robyn Davis of Verbio.

"However, not being certified could mean missing out on business opportunities that are out there. It could also be the edge you need to move ahead of your competition and win the business."

So what do you get for being certified? According to Davis, "Nothing but a better chance to win business. That's what being an entrepreneur is all about, positioning your business so that when an opportunity presents itself you are ready."

Jill Nelson of Hot Diggity Dog, a dog walking service based in Seattle, said she has quadrupled her network and landed new clients all over the United States through the certification program.

Crossroads Community Garden opening April 22

You are invited to celebrate the opening of the Crossroads Community Garden on Friday, April 22, at 3 p.m. Located at 6948 SW Capitol Hwy near the Hillsdale Community Church, the new garden has three ADA-compliant raised beds and a

wheelchair accessible garden shed. Anyone interested in information about plot availability at community gardens should contact Laura Niemi, Portland Parks & Recreation Community Garden program coordinator, at 503-823-1612.

Multnomah Village Apartments

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visitors. The situation will only get worse for the local businesses after this project is built."

Neighborhood chair Carol McCarthy said at the March general meeting, "If we get a design review, we can look at the guidelines which include actual height, character, and an opportunity to testify and appeal most likely."

Projects need to meet the community design standards or else go through design review. The developers can revise their plans if the city planners find things in their design that do not comply with the standards.

Over 1,800 signatures were submitted to the city last year in opposition of the apartment.

Jessica Wade of Multnomah, a member of the citywide Public Involvement Advisory Council, put a motion on the floor at the March meeting.

Wade's motion requested the neighborhood send a letter requesting that O'Brien include approximately seven affordable housing units in his complex. *Note: An inclusionary zone requiring affordable housing recently passed by the Oregon Legislature would not be implemented until 2018.*

Members debated and wondered why O'Brien would do such a thing since it currently is not required.

"Possibly being a good gesture as a former neighbor giving back to the community?" Wade responded.

"We are not going to stop the development," vice chair Martie Sucec said during discussion of the motion. "We were going to get a design overlay but now we want to just push it to a design review."

"And although I don't want to vote against affordable housing," said Sucec, "we have [O'Brien] on tape that he won't do affordable housing."

The motion failed.

"Frankly, we expected a more imaginative, even 'funky' design for Multnomah," Peterson said in his letter.

Funky was the word fondly described by residents and visitors alike who regard it as part of its charm.

"There is no charm in this building. It will *not* enhance Multnomah Village," said Peterson. "It would be radically out-of-scale and would overpower all other buildings in the Village."

"If this building goes forward as proposed," Peterson said, "the guidelines will not be met and the purposes of the design overlay thwarted once again."

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