

Education brings in entrepreneur specialist

Potential small business owners can take courses to help them decide if it's the right move

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

Hard times bring out the entrepreneur in some people.

Add to that the attraction of being your own boss and a baby boomer generation looking for something to keep them busy in retirement, and it's all a perfect storm for Forrest Peck of the MERIT (Micro Enterprise Resources, Initiatives & Training) program at Chemeketa Community College's Small Business Development Center.

On June 10, at the request of the Tribal Education Division, Peck started a multi-month commitment to bring information to potential entrepreneurs in Grand Ronde with monthly meetings held at the Education Center.

MERIT also offers a seven-week business training class several times each year in Salem, Independence and McMinnville.

Of those who take these classes, Peck said, 40 percent to 45 percent

start a business within six months. Two years down the line, 40 percent are still in business.

There's a pretty steep drop-off rate among entrepreneurs everywhere, said Peck, noting Small Business Administration figures that put the success rate after two years at no more than 20 percent.

But Peck has self-assessment surveys to help would-be business people determine if they have the right stuff to get started.

"There tends to be a group of qualities that all successful entrepreneurs have," Peck said.

Entrepreneurial activities are "not structured," he said, "so you have to be disciplined. As an entrepreneur, you're both boss and employee. If you set goals for yourself naturally, that will be in your favor."

The big question, he said, is whether the business idea suits a person as an individual. "Is it a good idea for me?" people have to ask themselves. "It's a matter of knowing who you are."

Entrepreneurs tend to be risk takers, Peck said.

Timing is another issue. Since starting a business will likely begin without health care or other benefits and require a lot of time — time that otherwise could be spent with family — a person has to ask, "Is this the right time to start a business?"

The Tribe's Education Division had provided business classes on campus until 2007, said Tribal Education Manager April Campbell.

"It's a fantastic opportunity for individuals who are kicking around the idea of starting their own business," she said. "If you are thinking about a small business but don't really know how it would fit into your life, this program will help pull your ideas together and determine whether it's feasible."

The sessions come through Chemeketa's MERIT program, which has plenty of Web-based information to lean on and potential micro-funding sources.

Free one-on-one advice and technical assistance are available along with paid courses on many business subjects. Whether starting a business or seeking answers to questions about an existing or growing business, people can contact Peck at the center for answers over the phone or to set up an appointment.

Before trying out the MERIT program from Chemeketa, there was a period of a few years, said Campbell, when the Tribe didn't offer any business classes like this at all.

"I was getting between five and seven requests a month for classes or grants and loans for small businesses," she said.

The monthly class comes on the second Thursday (July 11 is next) from 10-11 a.m. on the main floor of the Education Division.

Meanwhile, people can check out some of the online resources that are available: www.bizcenter.org, www.sba.gov and merit.chemeketa.edu; or call the center at 503-399-5088. ■

JULY 2010

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1 EVENING SESSION: 6:30 PM	2 BINGO CLOSED	3 BINGO CLOSED
4 MATINEE SESSION: 2 PM	5 MATINEE SESSION: 2 PM EVENING SESSION: 6:30 PM	6 MATINEE SESSION: 2 PM EVENING SESSION: 6:30 PM	7 BIRTHDAY BINGO EVENING SESSION MATINEE SESSION: 2 PM EVENING SESSION: 6:30 PM	8 EVENING SESSION: 6:30 PM	9 BINGO CLOSED	10 BINGO CLOSED
11 MATINEE SESSION: 2 PM EVENING SESSION: 6:30 PM	12 BREAKFAST BINGO SPECIAL: 10 AM MATINEE SESSION: 2 PM EVENING SESSION: 6:30 PM	13 MATINEE SESSION: 2 PM EVENING SESSION: 6:30 PM	14 MATINEE SESSION: 2 PM EVENING SESSION: 6:30 PM	15 \$10 BINGO BASH EVENING SESSION: 6:30 PM	16 BINGO CLOSED	17 BINGO CLOSED
18 MATINEE SESSION: 2 PM EVENING SESSION: 6:30 PM	19 BIRTHDAY BINGO MATINEE SESSION MATINEE SESSION: 2 PM EVENING SESSION: 6:30 PM	20 MATINEE SESSION: 2 PM EVENING SESSION: 6:30 PM	21 MATINEE SESSION: 2 PM EVENING SESSION: 6:30 PM	22 EVENING SESSION: 6:30 PM	23 BINGO CLOSED	24 BINGO CLOSED
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