

SEPTEMBER, 2009

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Carolyn Davis, Administrative
Assistant

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Okanogan

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Arts Community Representative

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Kary Nichols
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Jerome Thiele
Daily Business, Twisp

Mary Watson, Wenatchee Valley
College

Rich Watson, Lending Administrator
NCW Business Loan Fund

Tom Gehring
New Dimensions Painting, Twisp

Pam Leslie,
LM Energy Systems, Tonasket

John Belcher
Omak High School Principle

Vacant
Nespelem/Coulee Dam Area Rep. #1

Vacant
Nespelem/Coulee Dam Area Rep. #2

The VISION

The Economic Alliance envisions the citizens and communities of Okanogan County working together to bring prosperity to all.

The MISSION

Form partnerships with Private, Government, and Tribal entities that will create an environment to nurture and support business and industry through:

- ** Gradual & controlled growth with proper planning, which protects the environment & rural atmosphere.
- ** Families & communities built on strong values & positive self-image of the individual.
- ** High quality public services provided at a reasonable cost.
- ** Respect for the diversity of cultural & recreational opportunities that abound in our regions.

From Our SBDC Advisor- Lew Blakeney

“Should I reduce prices in these tough times?”

Quoting from a recent Wall Street Journal article by Kelly Spors- “In today’s recession, many small businesses may think it’s wise to tie their marketing to money and value to appeal to cash-strapped consumers. But perhaps they should tie it to something else of considerable value-time... A new study by researchers at Stanford Business School, published in the Journal of Consumer Research, found that it’s generally far more lucrative for businesses to reference time and personal experiences in their marketing than focusing on monetary value....The experiment showed that the sign that stressed time brought in twice as many passersby who ultimately paid twice as much than when the signing stressing money was posted. Those customers who bought with the sign mentioning time also reported liking the lemonade more than the others.”

Our SBDC Advisor co-sponsored by the **Economic Alliance**, SBA, and WSU helps the needs of small businesses and strengthen the economic vitality of Okanogan County. The SBDC provides local small and medium-sized businesses with professional, **no-charge**, one-on-one advice plus research services that can help your company thrive and grow. Our advisor has assisted many businesses with a range of topics such as developing their business plan, preparing cashflow projections, preparing for loan applications, marketing strategies, improving profitability, analysis and understanding of financial statements, employees issues, and starting, buying, or selling a business.

If you would like to discuss this in more detail for their business, or any other business issue, please call 826-5107 for a no-charge appointment.

NCW Business Loan Fund Update-by Executive Director Rich Watson

Spencer Lince has recently joined the North Central Washington Business Loan Fund as a loan officer. According to Executive Director, Rich Watson, “Spencer adds additional depth to our organization because of his background in various aspects of small business and commercial real estate lending. We believe he will be a great asset not only to the Loan Fund but to the community as a whole”. Spencer’s’ background include lending assignments and experience in Okanogan County where he originated real estate and commercial loans for a local bank. He was born and raised in Twisp and has maintained close ties to that area.

In his new role, Spencer will be meeting with small businesses that are seeking start up or expansion capital but are unable to access traditional lending services. He can be reached at 509.885.4217.



Prioritization Process & Public Facility Fund

2009 Timeline

September 3, 2009-Press release and memo out to eligible communities informing them about proposal opportunities.

September 17, 2009-Prioritization workshop held at Omak City Hall from 9-11 a.m. Applications will be handed out and available on the Economic Alliance website www.economic-alliance.com. Applicants are strongly encouraged to attend.

October 30, 2009-Deadline for all .09 applicants. They must be turned into the Economic Alliance office no later than 5:00 pm. Absolutely no late applications accepted.

November 3, 2009-Submitted applications will be mailed to the Economic Alliance Infrastructure Committee members for their review. Applicants will be contacted to schedule a time for their presentation.

November 13, 2009-Presentations to the Economic Alliance Infrastructure committee will be held at the Omak City Hall. Notification for project selection will occur after approval from the Executive Committee of the Economic Alliance and the Okanogan County Commissioners.

Wenatchee Valley College update

By Mary Watson

Associate Dean of Workforce Development & Outreach

We were successful in getting a grant to develop a Center of Entrepreneurship at WVC. It will serve all of the college's district and work with existing small business support entities. The Center will begin the development process the first of September, Hugh Vibbert will be leading the efforts. He has considerable experience with small business, finance and agriculture.

The goals for the grant are three fold: entrepreneurial education, coordination of referrals services and outreaches and forums for regional entrepreneurs. In order to make these services accessible much of the emphasis of the Center will be devoted to creating virtual services on line.

It is a three year grant and the intent is to be self sustaining by the end of year three. It is a natural extension of WVC's continuing education opportunities, but could develop into credit classes or a certificate program.

If you have any questions or would like to learn more about this program, please contact Mary Watson at (509) 682-6614 or by email at mwatson@wvc.edu



From Apples to Zinnias:
Okanogan Grown is Growing!

The colorful new "Okanogan Grown" guide is now available! This guide can help you find Okanogan Country's freshest vegetables, fruits, herbs, and poultry, dairy, and meat products. If you're looking for something to do with the family, get a guide to find farm tours and activities, U-Pick produce or farm stands to visit. You'll discover local wineries and breweries, as well as restaurants and stores that offer locally grown and made items.

Agricultural Tourism is one of the fastest growing and highly publicized new industries in North Central Washington. Local orchardists, ranchers, and other small farm owners are launching a variety of enterprises to attract visitors, and selling them produce, crafts, fresh juices, hay rides, tours, value-added products, and a wide variety of other items and experiences. These enterprises generally just supplement other farm income, although in some cases they generate more revenue than the primary agricultural operation.

The "Okanogan Grown" guide is produced by the Okanogan County Tourism Council in an effort to help renew the connection between consumers and farmers, to encourage the support of local products and to celebrate the abundance of Okanogan Country. It was designed to be accessible to locals and tourists alike, with easy to access information, a map with locations, yellow pages for the vendor directory, and even a canning quantity guide. For more information or to request a copy of the guide, call 509 826-5107.



The 3/50 Project Goes Viral

Small business owners unite behind a simple concept, creating a nationwide wildfire

Minneapolis, MN, April 6, 2009 — What began as an off-the-cuff blog comment may well be one of the fastest spreading promotions in small business history. Three weeks ago, retail consultant and blogger, Cinda Baxter, tossed out a suggestion that consumers actively support three locally owned businesses, then asked that they commit \$50 per month to them. “Let’s call it the 3/50 Project,” she quipped, before hitting the send key and filing the idea away.

A few days later, the idea bubbled up again, this time in the form of a free flyer business owners could download, print, then hand their customer while thanking them for patronizing their establishments.

A week after that, a 2-page website went live, “to control the amount of email I was receiving, asking what the next step was,” according to Baxter. “There really wasn’t a lot of forward planning involved...yet.” In its first 24 hours, the miniscule site had attracted the attention of 350 visitors, according to Google Analytics.

Based on the interest, she spent two days creating a full-blown, multi-page site. One week after it went live, the number of “absolute unique visitors” hitting the350project.net had ballooned to more than 7,500. “8,600-plus if you count repeat visits,” reports the Project’s founder. “When Twitter and Facebook users found us, well...it was a done deal. We went viral.” The movement’s success is attributed to the simplicity of the message, and the form in which it’s delivered. While most Buy Local campaigns rely on terminology about “local living economies” and “sustainable micro-economics,” The 3/50 Project answers questions consumers are likely to ask in the language they speak at the dinner table: What’s it going to cost, and how will this help?

This plain English approach appears to have worked, given the passion with which both business owners and consumers have embraced it. Baxter explains “There’s no telling how many people out there are actively behind this. The fire began to spread early on when business owners started emailing the flyer to everyone they knew.” Thus far, several hundred supporters have registered with the Project, but she adds “It’s not inconceivable that for every supporter we know about there are ten or fifteen more.”

About The 3/50 Project:

Created to build loyalty and increased revenue for independent, locally owned businesses, The 3/50 project relies on a simple message: **“Pick 3. Spend 50. Save your local economy.”**

- Pick three locally owned businesses you’d hate to see disappear, then return to them.
- Spend \$50 per month in locally owned businesses. If half the employed U.S. population did so, it would generate more than \$42.6 billion in revenue.
- For every \$100 spent in locally owned businesses, \$68 returns to the local community. When spent in a big box, chain, or franchise, \$43 remains. Purchases made online return nothing.

Supporters have access to free materials that publicize the message, including a downloadable flyer that can be printed on any color printer, then handed to customers while thanking them for their patronage. Additional items include a window banner, a countertop sign, member badges for websites, graphics for newsletters and blogs, a movie screen panel for theaters, and window clings bearing The 3/50 Project logo, donated by The Chicago Market—one of the movement’s most proactive fans.

The 3/50 Project can be found online at <http://www.the350project.net>

Media contact:

Cinda Baxter, (612) 435-0423

press_inquiries@the350project.net



**Okanogan Recreation and Tourism Workforce Needs Survey Results:
Lindsey Woolsey, Senior Policy Associate
Corporation of a Skilled Workforce**

This is a brief sample of the survey results. For a full version go to the Economic Alliance website at www.economic-alliance.com

Biggest Challenges to Businesses Overall

Recruiting and retaining good employees is rated by 50% of respondents as the “biggest challenge” faced by businesses. The Down Economy also earns a 50% response.

Marketing to customers is a “big challenge,” according to 50% of respondents. A final comment at the end of the survey is: “We rely on small businesses to volunteer their time to promote our region.”

50% of respondents cite “other” as the “biggest” or a “big” challenge, however, descriptions of “other” mostly related to a skilled workforce, including repeated comments in the following categories:

- Hiring competent, dependable people is difficult when the tourism season is so short;
- Employees that are great at their job are the ones who leave for better offers;
- It is difficult to recruit and retain good workers when wages are relatively low in this industry;

Cannot afford to increase wages, pay overtime, or employ workers on a full-time basis, so the quality of workers we get is generally low.

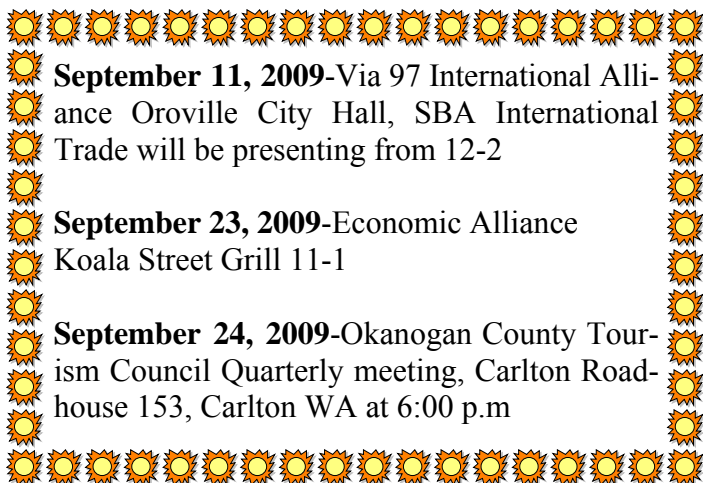
Analysis:

It is clear that hiring dependable workers is a challenge for the businesses in the industry for two main reasons: 1) the jobs are unattractive to workers because they may be seasonal and because they are not high quality (wage, benefits, advancement opportunities); and 2) in this rural area, businesses are generally small and therefore are unable to support full-time, long-term employees.

A valuable activity of the Skill Panel moving forward could be to uncover where good jobs do exist, where opportunities for advancement exist, and where “cross-walks” between sub-sectors may exist. It may also be useful to work with interested employers to identify where their workers come from and how to jointly build foundational skills so that the overall “dependable and competent” labor pool is larger.

The Skill Panel may want to consider narrowing its engagement of businesses to those that employ a certain number of employees, such as 10 employees. This may help narrow the scope of need, and therefore lead to workforce solutions most relevant to employers (vs. sole proprietors) in the industry. This survey captured both, and therefore might be skewed toward non-workforce related challenges.

Save the date!



September 11, 2009-Via 97 International Alliance Oroville City Hall, SBA International Trade will be presenting from 12-2

September 23, 2009-Economic Alliance Koala Street Grill 11-1

September 24, 2009-Okanogan County Tourism Council Quarterly meeting, Carlton Roadhouse 153, Carlton WA at 6:00 p.m

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