

Mission Statement

To enhance the region's economic development efforts, to spur growth of small business and industry, and to improve the lives of people in Abingdon and Washington County by offering an innovative economic development engine that will be devoted to creating jobs.

Board of Directors

President- Mark Graham
Vice President- Drew Hembree
Treasurer- Jack Phelps
Gary Lester
Mike Spiegler, CPA
Mary Bundy
Jason Price
Donna Bailey
Carolyn Mink Kelly

Immediate Past Board Members

Kyle Macione, CPA, JD (2006-2018)
Mike McCool (2011- 2018)
French Moore, Jr. (2005-2016)

Cathy Lowe, Executive Director
Jennifer Davidson, Deputy Director

VIRGINIA HIGHLANDS

SMALL BUSINESS INCUBATOR

Are you starting or expanding a small business? Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator offers the support, services, and education your business needs to be successful.

WHY LOCATE YOUR BUSINESS HERE?

- Networking opportunities with financing, business, accounting, and legal experts
- “Start-up businesses are far more likely to succeed in a business incubator,” according to VBI Association
- All tenants have access to conference/training rooms, copier, fax machine, kitchen, loading docks, mailbox, and a receptionist
- You’ll enjoy a professional office or manufacturing atmosphere
- Your cost savings at the incubator will offer an opportunity for your business to thrive
- FREE business classes
- 24-hour access to your office

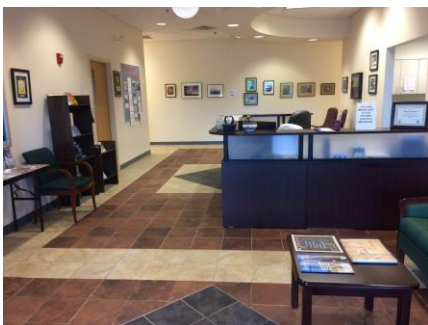
AFFILIATE PROGRAM

- Ten (10) hours of office space monthly
- Office access Monday-Friday (8:30 am to 4:30 pm)
- Three (3) hours of monthly uses of conference/training rooms
- Access to fax, printer, mailbox, and postage machine billed monthly
- FREE business classes

“We have enjoyed steady business growth since becoming tenants of the VHSBI due in no small part to the resources and support provided by the facility staff. The atmosphere is friendly, courteous, and professional making it very conducive for starting and growing a small business.”

~William A. Hatcher, MT (ASCP)

Laboratory Optical Service, Inc., Incubator Tenant



Lobby



Conference/Training Rooms



Office Suites

CO-WORKING SPACE

- Five (5) different levels of co-working space available to fit your needs
- Monthly, weekly, or daily rates to choose from
- FREE Wi-Fi
- Access to copier, fax, and postage machine
- FREE business classes

YOUR COST TO LOCATE HERE

- One-year lease with up to five (5) annual renewals
 - Office space at \$1.05 per square foot, per month for rental cost
 - Manufacturing space at \$.75 per square foot, per month for rental cost
- *Rates are subject to increase due to inflation with an average of 4.5%.

TENANT QUALIFICATIONS

- Expanding, transitioning, or manufacturing business
- An entrepreneurial start-up company (3-5 employees) that would benefit from VHSBI's services
- A high-tech business that is considering start-up, expansion, or relocation to Southwest Virginia with an emphasis on business related to information technology production and use or as an organization serving cultural, health, and social interests in the immediate region and beyond.

Potential tenants must provide a business plan and a three-year financial projection.

"A great resource if you are thinking of starting or expanding a business."

~ **David McLeish**, Dreamland Alpacas



***Access to the floor plan and more details can be found at vhsbi.com**

**The VHSBI is compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.*

VIRGINIA HIGHLANDS SMALL BUSINESS INCUBATOR

A business support facility, jointly sponsored by Washington County and the Town of Abingdon, VA

- Premier weekly professional business development training; for more info, go to <http://events.vastartup.org> or www.facebook.com/vhsbi
- Access to one-on-one business counseling services
- Acreage to build and expand into the Stone Mill Business and Technology Park
- Partnership opportunities with facility tenants
- New tenants receive one (1) year free membership to the Chamber of Commerce
- Referral program to business support and resource organizations
- Annual Business Challenge competition and cash awards.



"We cannot say enough about the value of the Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator for a new business. The tools and training we received were relevant to our business during its first year—we found the Noon Knowledge Lunch Series to be particularly useful. We consider the staff to be part of the Adventure Mendota "Posse"—they have our backs! Don't miss an opportunity to utilize this valuable resource."

**~ Mike and Eva Beale, Owners,
Adventure Mendota**

**Address:
851 French Moore
Jr. Blvd. Abingdon, VA 24210**

Email: info@vhsbi.com

Phone: [276-492-2062](tel:276-492-2062)

FAX: 276-698-3070

VHSBI DIRECTORY

Wize Solutions - 187

Mobile Images - 128

Nalco Water -164 & 165

Senator Bill Carrico - 178

Delegate Todd Pillion - 178

Hoot Books Publishing - 127

Laboratory Optical Services - 142

Josh Adkins, Modern Woodmen of America - 174

Southwest Virginia Alliance for Manufacturing - 109

SVAM Center of Excellence - 110

Virginia Highlands Community College - 162 & 165

AFFILIATE PROGRAM

Art Now LLC

Resume Right

Aero Vision UAV

Bruce Russell JD

Agnew & Rosenberger JD

Western Training Services

Virginia Community Capital

Business Training

FREE

NOON KNOWLEDGE LUNCH SERIES

VIRGINIA HIGHLANDS
SMALL BUSINESS INCUBATOR



Build your business skills for a better you!

Bring your lunch and join us as we offer practical
and inspiring interactive learning experiences.

The Noon Knowledge Series is a FREE weekly series presented by the Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator, Washington County Chamber of Commerce, Virginia Community Capital and VHCC Workforce Development & Continuing Education designed for all local entrepreneurs and professionals interested in building skills in a variety of topics. Sessions are designed for the 60 to 90 minute format and offer practical and inspiring interactive learning experiences for groups of up to 25 participants. Topics include:

- Bookkeeping, Finance, Credit
- Leadership, laws, policies & procedures development
- Marketing, social media, public and media relations
- Technology, website, email marketing, SEO
- 25 sessions available starting June 2018 thru May 2019

Register at:

www.vastartup.org

Contact the Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator at 492-2062 or Washington County Chamber of Commerce at 276-628-8141 for additional details.



Watch live from your computer, tablet or smartphone at
www.facebook.com/vhsbi or on achieved at www.youtube.com/noonknowledge

Events Listing

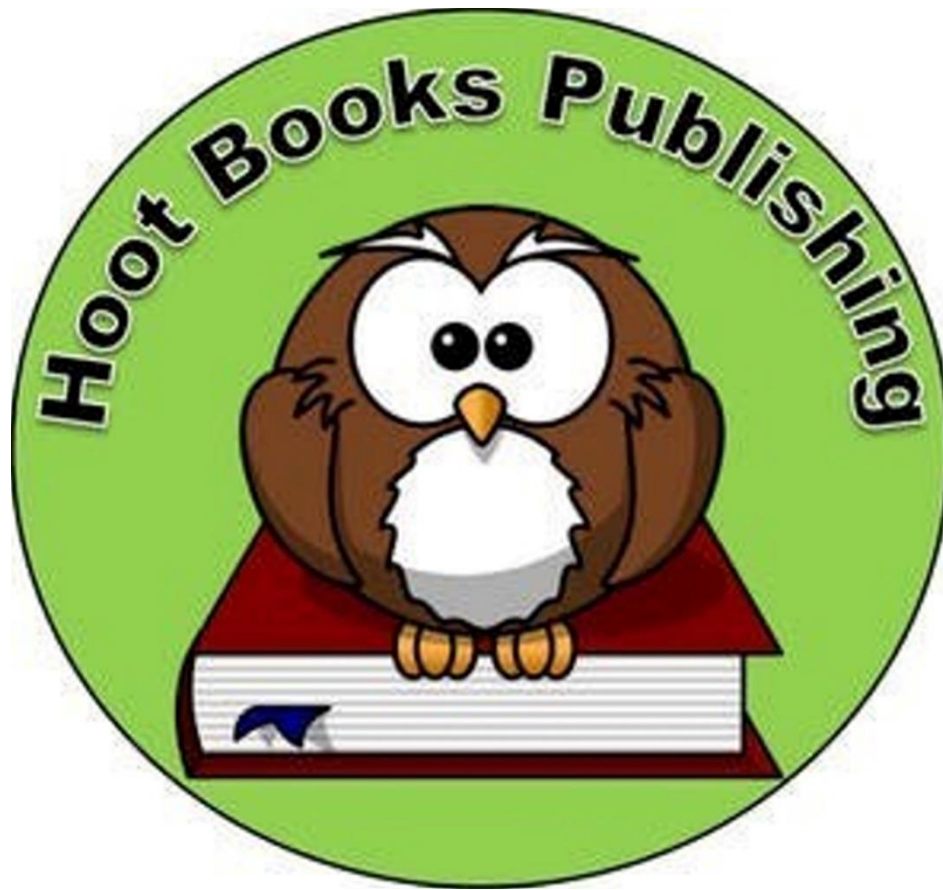
2018 - 2019

Workshop	Date
SalesForce	June 6
Digital Do's and Don'ts	June 20
Breakeven Analysis and Cash Flow	July 18
How to Use Video Effectively for Marketing	July 25
Media & Public Relations Crisis Mgmt. Plan	August 1
Should I Start a Business?	August 15
Media Relations	September 5
Social Media for Special Events	September 19
Virginia Tax Exemption Bill Review	October 3
The 5 Video's You Should Be Creating	October 17
Branding Yourself on LinkedIn	November 7
Your Business Plan	November 28
Facebook: Best Practices for Non Profits & Small Biz	December 5
Nuts & Bolts to Getting Started in Business	January 16
Finding a Job on LinkedIn	January 30
How Community Dev. & Tourism Promotes	February 6
Getting Back to the Basics - Digital Foundation	February 20
LinkedIn Tools You Didn't Know Existed	March 6
Internships and How They Benefit Business	March 20
How to Build Your Personal Brand	April 3
Employment and Legal Issues	April 17
Marketing to Millenials	May 1
Life Cycle of a Sale	May 15
Leadership/Motivations of Social Media	June 5
Customer Service	June 19

Contact the Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator at 492-2062 or Washington County Chamber of Commerce at 276-628-8141 for additional details.

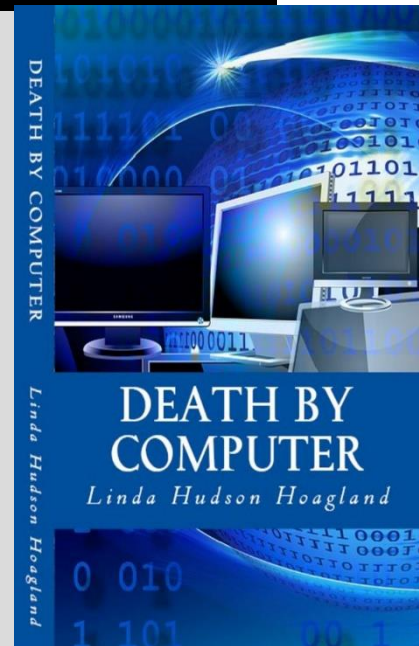
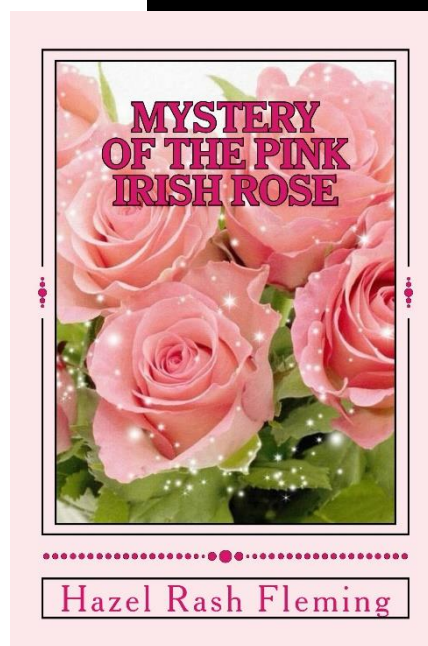
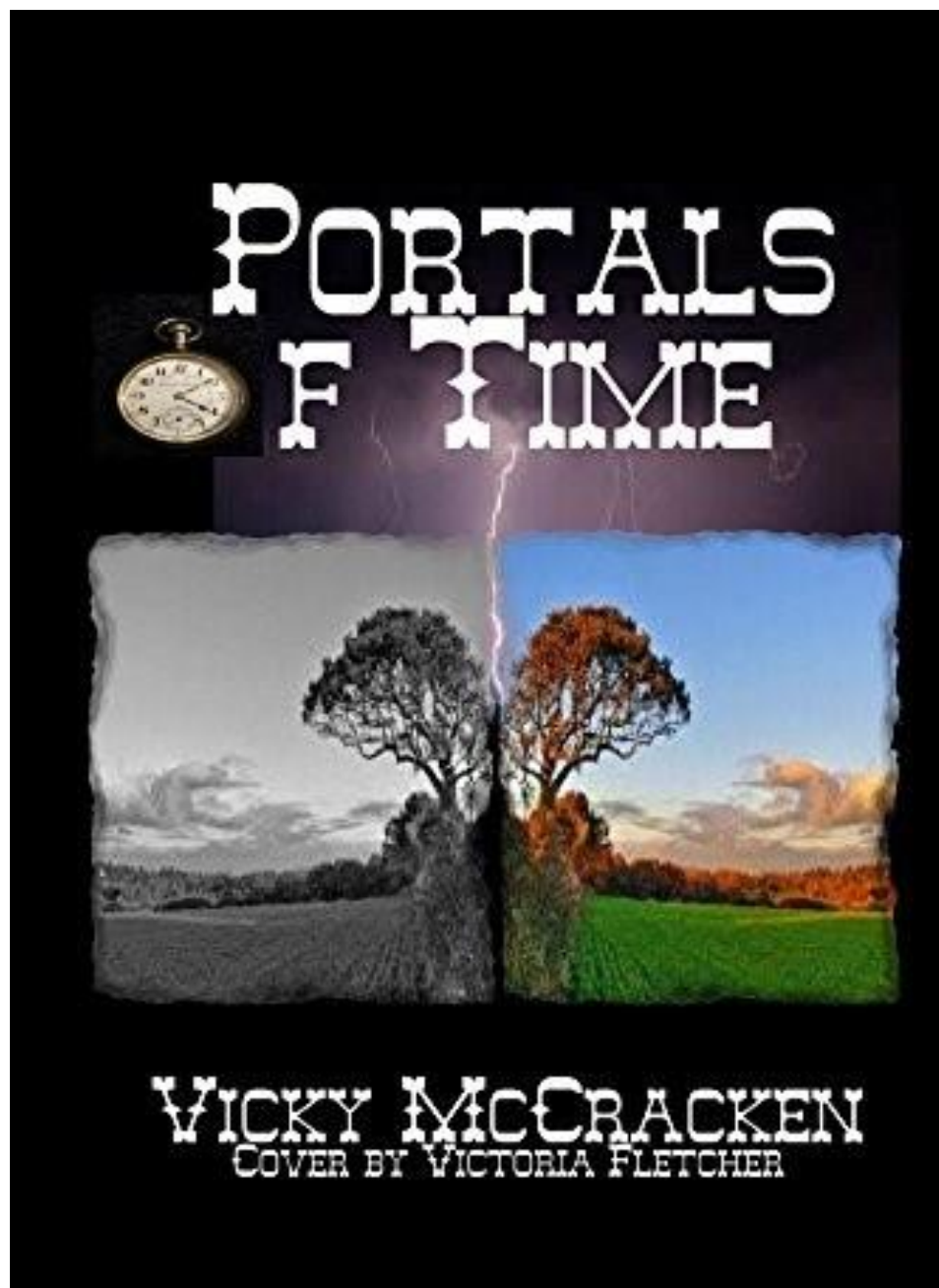
Advanced registration required at:

www.vastartup.org



Victoria Fletcher is no stranger to teaching others how to accomplish their goals. As an educator, she spent 30 years teaching in the classroom. As technology changed, Victoria learned about technological advances and kept up with the latest trends to provide the best education she could offer to her students. When she retired, her goal was to write and publish her own books. She took the position of secretary/ministry leader at First Baptist Church in Damascus, VA in 2010 and spent 8 years serving/working in this way. But she soon began to develop an idea that became her niche and new business idea-- Hoot Books Publishing LLC. After her retirement, Victoria had become a member of several literary groups through some encouragement from her friend and fellow author Joe Tennis. It was through those affiliations that she began her 3rd career and opened her business at Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator.

Victoria first heard about Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator from her father who had attended several Noon Knowledge classes and shared with her information about the upcoming classes and available free resources for small business start-up companies. Victoria attended several Noon Knowledge workshops and when the 2018 Business Challenge was announced, she entered the competition. Victoria attended several classes and had a one-on-one business plan consultation with team member Sandy Ratliff. Unfortunately, Victoria had a medical incident and had to drop out of the competition, but she said the information she received was an invaluable resource. Victoria was not to be deterred. She completed her business plan and applied to become a tenant at Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator. Victoria now represents 26 authors and business is booming at Hoot Books Publishing where she designs the covers of books for her fellow authors, formats for book size, and proof reads/edits the materials before she submits their books for publishing. Her favorite cover is one she did for author Vicky McCracken that depicts twin oak trees, lightning, and a pocket watch. Victoria credits the free classes and free business consulting offered through Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator for helping her begin her newfound career in a field that she is passionate about. Victoria is located in Suite # 127 at 851 French Moore Jr. Blvd. in Abingdon VA. She can be reached at (276) 492-8314 and her Hoot Books Publishing Facebook page. Her web address is hootbookspublishing.biz and her email address is vfletcher56@gmail.com.



2014 Business Plan Challenge

Angela Cvetkovski
Faye Elder
Jeremiah Heaton
Robert Johnson
Zachary Stovall
Amy Ball-Braswell*

Beverly Singleton
Jeff Fritz
Michael Shelton
Mark Luague
David McLeish*

Charles Smith
Jeffery Wilson
Nancy Keating-Harte
Terry Gill
John Cowan

2015 Business Plan Challenge

Marguerite Abril
Lee Coburn*
Katherine Hayton
Randall Mullins
William Gibson

Michael & Eva Beaule
Nicole Dyer
Lindsey Holderfield
Sonia Vanhook

Valerie Caudell
Marla Edwards
Jonathan Honaker
Angie Wilson*

2016 Business Plan Challenge

Eva Beaule*
Ronda Caudill
Marla Edwards
Kim Hedrick
Deanna L. Holmes
Raven Marin
Debby Scism Sauceman
Buddy Sheerer
Adam Woodson

Cindy Brewer
Stephen Curd*
Lindsey Felty
Britany Helton
Donna Howe
Eric McReynolds
Rod Senecal
Tracey P. Stanley

Tim Caudell
Nicole Dyer
Paul Gadola
Lindsey Holderfield
Katie Lamb*
Sherry Saleeby
Susan Seymore*
Mark P. Stewart

2017 Business Plan Challenge

Scott Paterson
Steven Harris*
Linda Bair
Denise Peterson*
Chuck & Ginny Flanary

Marla Edwards
Amy Looney
Mohsin Kasmi*
Crystal Smart
Frank Cardinale*

Lindsey Holderfield*
Brian Zier*
Andrew Gilmer
Carolyn Luckel
Keith & Sabrina Fleenor

2018 Business Plan Challenge

Alan Necessary*
Andrew Overton
David Adams*
Victoria Fletcher

Zac Stovall
Kathleen McMahon*
Ralph Wilson*
Joseph Willis

Katherine Lilley
Carrie Minogue*
Russell Justice

WASHINGTON COUNTY BUSINESS CHALLENGE 2019

Start a Business

Expand a Business

Learn New Business
Management Skills



Over
\$32,000
in Business
Investment
Awards

ATTENTION

ENTREPRENEURS & SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS
TURN THAT IDEA INTO A WINNING BUSINESS STRATEGY!

BUSINESS CHALLENGE CONTEST

January 22 – February 26, 2019

A weekly training and competition process that will award over \$20,000 in business investment grants for start-up and existing businesses looking to expand jobs within Washington County and Town of Abingdon.

Business Categories:

- Arts and Culture
- Outdoor Recreation
- Value Added Agriculture/Agritourism
- Restaurants and Hospitality
- Technology/Manufacturing/R&D
- Retail and Support Services
- Light Manufacturing

Applications due by: January 11, 2019

Contact For Details:

Washington County Chamber of Commerce
1 Government Center Place, Suite D
Abingdon, Virginia 24210
276-628-8141
washctybiz@gmail.com

Download rules and application at
www.washingtonvachamber.org/programs

**All workshops available to the public. Advanced registration required!*

Private sector awards of up to \$8,500 in services provided by: **Spiegler Blevins & Penn Stuart**

Promotional sponsors: **Bristol Herald Courier & Food City**

The 2019 Washington County Business Plan Challenge

Mike Spiegler, principal partner in Spiegler and Blevins, CPA's has announced that Spiegler and Blevins will again contribute one (1) year of CPA services that includes hosted software, monthly bookkeeping/CFO service, quarterly financial review, annual tax planning, and annual tax preparation to the overall winner of the 6th annual Business Plan Challenge in the start-up business category. The value of the package is over \$6,000. The Washington County Business Plan Challenge has assisted 18 start-up businesses and 17 expanding businesses in the past 5 years. Mike Spiegler and Rob Blevins have been volunteers for the Challenge since its inception. "As a member of the Board of Directors of Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator, I recognize the importance of entrepreneurship in any community," said Spiegler. The Business Plan Challenge has proven to be an important tool in fostering small business growth in Abingdon and Washington County. We are committed to contributing to the welfare of our community and look forward to our continued relationship with the Business Challenge group."

- ❖ John Martin, partner at Penn Stuart, will again contribute the business start-up formation, i.e. LLC, B Corp, partnership, C Corp etc. (winning contestant is responsible for filing fees) A value of \$2500.
- ❖ Highlands Union Bank, in addition to their corporate sponsorship, will award \$1500 for the Best Pitch.
- ❖ J. J.'s Restaurant will award \$1,000 for the Most Knowledgeable Business Idea.
- ❖ Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator will award half price rent for one (1) year.
- ❖ Washington County Chamber of Commerce will award free Chamber memberships to all first and second place winners.
- ❖ Food City provides food, gift cards, and printing. They have been an annual sponsor since 2014.
- ❖ The Bristol Herald Courier provides advertising for the Business Plan Challenge as well as the Noon Knowledge Series and as been an annual sponsor since 2014.

- ❖ A new award to the 2019 Challenge is the Emory & Henry Business Innovation Award . The Emory & Henry Business Innovation Award will provide \$5,000 to either a start-up or existing business expansion in either Meadowview or Glade Spring. Strongest preference is for a for-profit business that will pursue continuing certification as a B-Corporation and help foster economic and community development in the Glade Spring-Emory-Meadowview-Saltville (GEMS) corridor.
1. \$5,000, provided by Emory & Henry College and its Appalachian Center for Civic Life
 2. Either start-up business proposals or existing business expansion proposals are eligible
 3. Must be located in either Glade Spring or Meadowview
 4. Must create a minimum of 1 full-time job
 5. Preference will be for the proposal that either already has or will pursue ongoing certification as a B Corporation (committed to “creating a shared durable prosperity for all” in the Glade Spring-Emory-Meadowview-Saltville (GEMS) corridor.
 6. Winning business owner must become a participating member of the GEMS steering committee.

All past participants are eligible to attend the classes and receive free education or to participate as a contestant if they have not been a first place winner of either category. Anyone interested in expanding or starting a business in any of the towns in Washington County are encouraged to enter.

The 6th annual Business Plan Challenge deadline to register is January 11, 2019. The classes begin January 22, 2019. All classes will be held at Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator. To register go to www.washingtonvachamber.org/business_challenge . Interested participants can call 276-628-8141 to receive more information.





Neta Farmer

neta@bvu.net

Executive Vice President of
the Washington County
Chamber of Commerce



Sandy Ratliff

sratliff@vccva.org

Assistant Vice President of
Virginia Community
Capital



Cathy Lowe

clowe@vhsbi.com

Executive Director of the
Virginia Highlands
Small Business Incubator



Jennifer Davidson

jdavidson@vhsbi.com

Deputy Director of the
Virginia Highlands
Small Business Incubator

Results/Impact

48% Participants have started and/or grown their business over past 5 years!
2014-2018 = 92 Participants



These 6
businesses - 57
new jobs

Winners = Damascus Diner, Adventure Mendota, White Birch Juice
 Challenger Non Winner = Gibson's Service Center
 Attended Sessions Only = Advantage Supply

Washington County, Va



Challenge Results to Date of Winning Participants



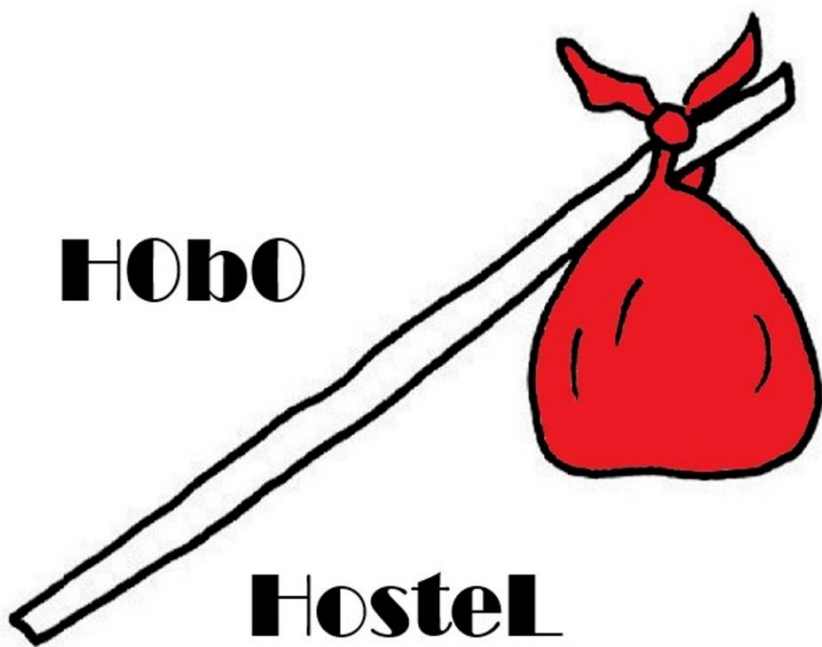
Start-up
Businesses

18

Business
Expansions

17





ABINGDON'S UNIQUE EXPERIENCE

Hostel Style Nightly Lodging

The Hobo Hostel offers dormitory style sleeping accommodations with shared bathroom and lounge areas. Hikers, Bicyclists, Event Attenders, and World Travelers welcome!

Affordable

Convenient to
Recreational,
Historical, and
Cultural sites

Dormitory Style
Lodging

Close To Virginia
Creeper Trail

Check Into The Hobo
Hostel

thehobohostel@gmail.com

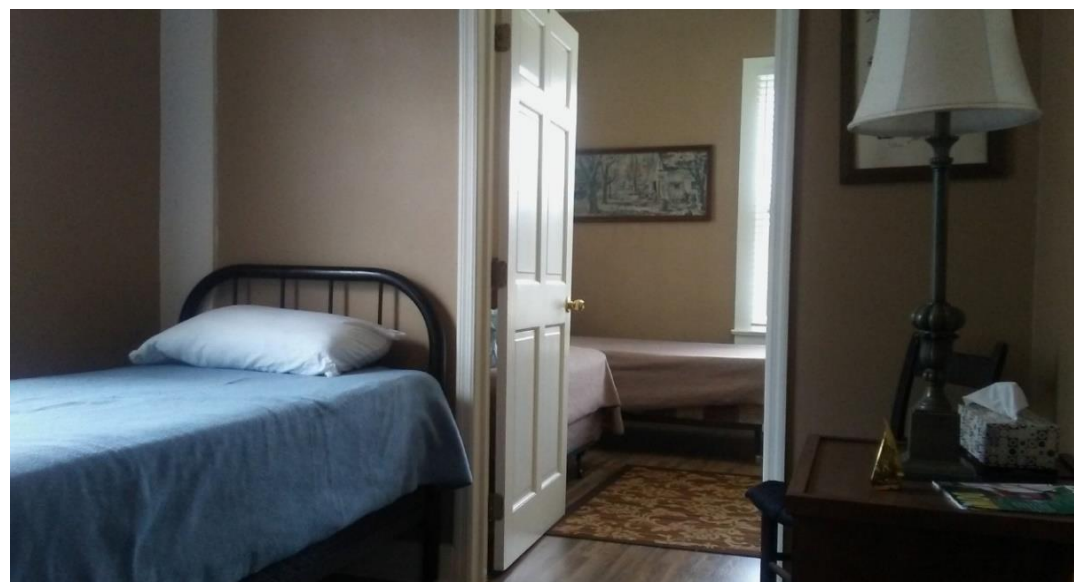
THE HOBO HOSTEL

430 Mink Place

Abingdon, VA

276.356.2855

www.thehobohostel.com







Ralph Wilson, owner of the Damascus Diner, was a contestant in the 2018 Washington County Business Plan Challenge where he was a first place winner in the start-up category with the awards totaling over \$5000.00; this does not include private sector awards from Spiegler & Blevins and PennStuart.

Ralph retired from Cracker Barrel in 2016 and purchased a Bed and Breakfast in Damascus. It was during the July 4th celebration of 2017 that he realized that with the 7,000 plus in attendance that there was not a restaurant open for them to eat. He thought there was a need to have a restaurant open with consistent hours. He purchased a recently closed restaurant building the following January. He spent three months remodeling the restaurant while at the same time participating in the business plan challenge. Ralph used his award to purchase a hood for the kitchen. He also received a grant to redo the outside of the building. He has 14 employees and is considering hiring 2 more. The Damascus Diner is located at 109 Shady Ave in Damascus, VA and can be reached at (276) 475-5454. The restaurant hours are 7:00 am to 9:00 p.m. Monday thru Saturday.

He states that his overall experience with the Business Plan Challenge was great. He has learned that you need to be flexible in your business, have an open mind, and roll with the punches. A few words of advice he can offer is to, "Make sure you have your ducks in a row when it comes to your payroll."



When Angie Wilson entered the Business Plan Challenge in 2015, she had no idea she would be a winning contestant. Her business just lost 2 key stylists and she was considering closing the salon and entering a new profession. The night before her appointment to meet with the Executive Director of Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator, Cathy Lowe, she said she thought she should just cancel the appointment. Angie kept her meeting appointment and as they say, the rest is history. Cathy introduced Angie to Anna, a salon owner who had a great location on Main Street. They agreed to merge their businesses into one and Angie enrolled in the Business Challenge. "I did not enter the challenge to win. I entered for the education," Angie said. "I went to the technical school for my cosmetology training and I did not go to college. I wanted to learn more about running a business." Angie attended all 6 training sessions and wrote her business plan to get the full experience of the training. On the morning of the announcement, she was shocked that her business expansion plan won! She worried that she would not be able to hire the one full-time person required to receive the grant, but she moved forward with her winning plan. Angie now has 3 new stylists and her daughter has just completed training to become an esthetician. She credits the Business Challenge training with her new-found success. She said the marketing class and the ask-a-professional night were the 2 classes that helped her the most. "The lawyer talking to us about contract law was a god-send. I rewrote all of the contracts and we renew them each year. Our salon has gained so much momentum and it has helped to change the mindset of all of the people working here. They are pursuing their dreams and continually adding services that they enjoy. Angie credits the publicity of winning for the momentum and for getting her name out into the community. "Our business has almost doubled, and we made so many connections with other business owners in the class, it is a BIG DEAL. Whether or not you win, you cannot lose. I tell your story every day. Thank you. I am finally making a living in a business I love."

Cuttin' Up Hair Salon is located at 500 E. Main St. Abingdon, VA. To book an appointment at Cuttin' Up, call (276) 628-2688, or visit their online scheduling at schedulingcity.com.



William Gibson was a contestant in the 2015 Business Plan Challenge. Although he was not a winning contestant, he credits the information he received through the six weeks of training as “enlightening and informative, especially the session when the contestants can ask questions of the panel of experts that include a CPA, a lawyer, a banker, and an insurance agent. That helped me with knowing the technicalities of running a business.” Gibson goes on to state, “If you are young and starting a business, the technicalities would be overwhelming.”

William opened his auto service and repair business in a vacant building on Main Street in Abingdon in the spring of 2015 after the Business Challenge classes were completed. He had 20 years of experience managing the service department of a Ford dealership before venturing out on his own. Starting a business, what you know and understand is one of the keys to success. Today he employs 8 full-time and 2 part-time people. He pays above average wages, the least being \$10.00 per hour and provides paid holiday, vacation, insurance, and bonus incentives. He says an important aspect of being a successful entrepreneur is valuing your employees and recognizing their dedication and good work. He credits his team with not only providing quality service but with a quick turnaround for his customers. He said they usually service 30 cars per day and do 10 to 20 state inspections. “Having enough space is a challenge for me but if we work smart and have good turnaround time, it helps keep things running.” Honesty, integrity, and providing great customer service is what he attributes as the elements of his success. To stay connected to the operation of his business, he does his own daily book work and pays a private company to do payroll and taxes.

I asked William what advice he would give to a beginning entrepreneur and he said, “You need to know and understand the business you want to start, have a lot of energy, be willing to work long hours, have a good work ethic, and continuously evaluate your business practices. I am always asking myself what I could have done better.

Gibson’s Service Center is located at 650 W. Main St. Abingdon, VA. To schedule a service, call (276) 525-4884 or visit his website at www.gibsonsautoservice.com, or Gibson’s Service Center Facebook page.



The 2016 Washington County Business Plan Challenge winner, Katie Lamb, is no stranger to making a business out of art. Katie's mother, potter and artist Nancy Lamb, was the creator of Iron Mountain Stoneware. Although the factory in Laurel Bloomery is now closed, the famous pottery is still selling through Katie's new venture and downtown Damascus, VA shop, Me and Little Tree. Katie was teaching when she began to develop her plan for what became the winning entry of the Washington County Business Plan Challenge. Katie used the \$5,000 prize money towards the purchase of supplies, equipment, a point of sale system, and preparing her Laurel Avenue store front for opening. The free professional CPA services from Spiegler and Blevins as well as the business formation documents she received from Penn Stuart helped her to implement her winning strategy and start on the right path. Me and Little Tree is a studio, an art gallery, and a retail space that sells one of a kind handmade pieces of art: fused glass, sinks and bowls, handles and knobs, fused glass jewelry, fiber art, furniture, paintings and other original crafts. When Katie opened Me & Little Tree, she displayed the work of 5 artisans, that number has grown to include the work of 55 artisans who were attracted to her unique shop and style. Me and Little Tree has become the chosen location for community artists to sell their creations. In two short years, Me and Little Tree has grown from a one owner store front to an active and intriguing business in Damascus, VA, also known as Trail Town USA. Katie has one full-time employee and 2 part-time employees and business is good!

When asked about her experience with the Business Plan Challenge, Katie said she was extremely impressed. She said she gained a lot of knowledge and is very grateful for the opportunity to attend the classes. "The Challenge is what propelled me to move forward in my business." She recommends the Business Plan Challenge to every entrepreneur that she meets. Katie uses her website, Facebook, and word of mouth as her marketing strategy. So far, her strategy is working well. You can visit Me and Little Tree at 100 W. Laurel Ave in Damascus, VA, or by visiting either her website or Facebook www.meandlittletree.com or Me and Little Tree, LLC.

When asked if she had any advice to give other entrepreneurs, Katie says, "If you have a dream, go for it!"



Eva and Mike Beale, owners of Adventure Mendota, located at 4457 Swinging Bridge Rd Mendota, VA were contestants in the 2015 Washington County Business Plan Challenge. While they did not win in 2015, they returned the next year as contestants in the 2016 Washington County Business Plan Challenge and won first place in the existing business category with the award of \$5000.00. Eva believes that the Washington County Business Plan Challenge is valuable to any small business owner, as it provides an opportunity to build a network of resources.

Adventure Mendota is rooted in a conversation Mike and Eva had in 2014 as they noticed the large number of kayaks traveling down the North Fork of the Holston in front of their riverfront property. At that time, Eva was searching for a way to work from home vs. the daily drive out of Mendota. She was also thinking of how a business centered in outdoor recreation might bring attention to the beauty of Mendota and act as a catalyst for revitalization. Finally, with a favorite nephew looking for work and headed toward college the following year, there was a desire to offer employment to local, college bound youth.

Utilizing their riverfront property and Mike's existing "hobby" woodshop (now called basecamp) combined with the increased popularity of kayaking, it seemed that offering recreational kayaking might be a means to achieve all three of the above. In January 2015, Mike and Eva began using the services of the VHSBI concurrent with the Washington County Business Challenge. They continue to use and value these services today.

Since opening in 2015, between 9-10 thousand guests have kayaked with Adventure Mendota – that number would be higher had the summer of 2018 not been so rainy. “Owning Adventure Mendota has been a true joy,” says Eva Beale. To take a float down the river call (276) 645-1020, visit their website www.adventuremendota.com, or on their Adventure Mendota Facebook page.

When asked if she had any advice for other entrepreneurs, she said, “Do not try to do it alone. Seek all of the resources that you can; and the Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator is the place to start that journey.”





LAVELLE MANUFACTURING
GARIC STEPHENS

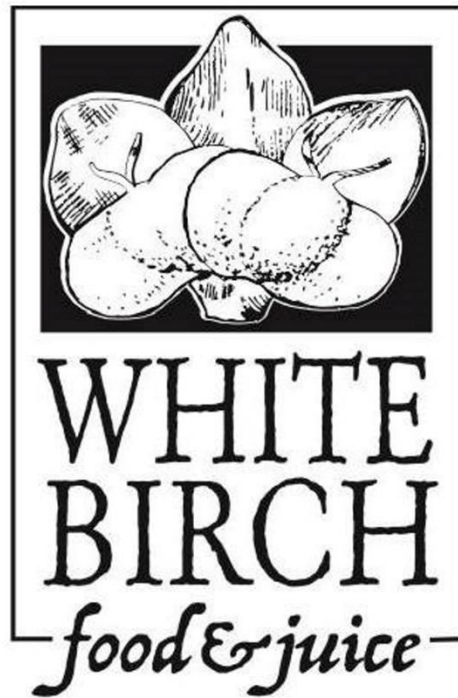
Stephen Curd heard about Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator through the staff at Emory & Henry College and made an appointment to meet with Cathy Lowe in the fall of 2014. His business idea was to design custom-made lady's denim jeans. He was looking for a manufacturer and for start-up capital. Cathy encouraged Stephen to participate in the Washington County Small Business Challenge. Stephen attended the 2015 Challenge classes but was unable to compete for the \$5,000 award because he had committed to be the designer for a wedding in Chicago which required him to miss more than one class. Stephen believed he had a winning business strategy so when the 2016 Challenge was announced, Stephen entered again. The 2016 Challenge had a specific award for Glade Spring that year and Stephen already had a downtown location in mind. He knew he had one outside commitment and the rules allowed a partner to attend one class on the participant's behalf. Stephen worked out the details of the substitute with the executive committee and entered the Challenge. His original idea was to design jeans and to contract an outside manufacturer to produce his product. He wrote his business plan and prepared for "Pitch Night".

Stephen won the Glade Spring award and used the \$5,000 toward opening in a space previously occupied by a small specialty grocer. The winnings also allowed Stephen to buy some of the equipment he needed to manufacture his custom-made jeans instead of contracting the work to outside resources. He implemented a “Kick Starter” campaign and held a fashion show at William King Art Center and the rest is history. Between April 2016 and December 2016, LaVelle Manufacturing had 85 clients. LaVelle Manufacturing now customizes and manufactures fashion clothing or accessory suits, jackets, handbags, belts, shoes, and jewelry and he is booked through December of 2018 and will begin taking new clients in February of 2019. Stephen employs a full-time marketing specialist and hopes to hire 2 part-time people in March.

Stephen is an advocate for Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator and the Business plan Challenge. He often shares his experience with other entrepreneurs. “I came from Chicago and I can tell you there is nothing like the education and free business opportunities out there anywhere. The accessibility to other businesses and ability to network is priceless. I would not be where I am without the Business Challenge.” Stephen has hosted fashion shows at William King and the Bristol Train Station. His next show will be held at the Barns at Chip Ridge and plans to attend trade shows in Asheville N.C., Washington D.C., and of course Mistletoe Market.

“Cathy’s belief in me and participating in the Business Plan Challenge is such a wonderful experience that it is worth every moment that you share,” said Stephen. LaVelle Manufacturing has been named one of the 40 businesses under 40 in the Southwest Virginia and Northeast Tennessee by The Business Journal. They are located at 201 Town Square Street, Glade Spring, VA. Stephen Curd can be reached at garicstephens@gmail.com, phone (276) 608-5594, on his website at www.garicstephens.com, and on his LaVelle Manufacturing Facebook page.





As I walked into White Birch Juice, I was struck by how bright and welcoming the atmosphere was. Nicole Dyer and Kyle King, co-owners of White Birch Juice, were happy to sit down with me and talk about their experiences since their participation in the Business Challenge.

Kyle King was a 2014 participant along with two partners and their business plan was a wholesome Farm Food business. They won second place and used their \$2500 to buy a smoker for their meat.

In 2015, Nicole Dyer entered the Washington County Business Plan Challenge with her juice business idea. She was already selling her juices at the Health Food Store on Pecan Street in Abingdon and at the Farmers' Market. But she wanted her own business, so Nicole attended the 6 weeks of classes and pitched her business plan idea. When she did not win the 2015 Challenge, she entered the Challenge again in 2016. By this time, she had temporarily relocated her business to the Wild Flower Bakery at Exit 19 while she was waiting for her permanent location on Main Street in Abingdon. Again, she was not a first place winner but she did win \$2500 in the second place category and used her winnings to purchase the juicer she needed to keep her fresh juices available for the growing number of clients who loved her healthy juice selections.

She and Kyle decided they were stronger together and merged his farm food and her fresh and nutritional juices into one model. As luck would have it, Governor McAuliffe and the Gilliam Foundation had implemented a small business start-up initiative; the Virginia Velocity Tour, that was implemented through Village Capital. One of the principals contacted Cathy Lowe and through a series of meetings, it was decided that they would invite past participants of the regional business challenges who had completed the six weeks of training. The event was hosted at Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator and Nicole spent the day in the training and interviews. The Velocity tour was different because the pitch was made at each contestant's table and the judges did one-on-one interviews with each contestant reviewing their business plan and getting an understanding of their knowledge about their perspective business ideas. This style of presentation was more comfortable for Nicole who has a very gentle and quiet demeanor. The class lasted all day and Nicole gave it everything she had and SUCCESS! Nicole was judged by the Velocity team to have the best business idea and won \$10,000 for her efforts. She used the proceeds to buy equipment for her new business location and she opened White Birch Juice shortly thereafter in her current location at 170 East Main Street in Abingdon.

In 2017, Nicole qualified to participate in the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses at Babson College, an independent, not-for-profit entrepreneurial institution, after the Challenge team members encouraged her to submit an application. She was accepted. The first three weeks (Orientation and Blocks 1-2) of the program, scholars spent 10-12 hours per week from home completing online coursework and engaging in group learning sessions • Participants attended two four-day sessions (Blocks 3-6) at Babson College • Participants then spent around 10-12 hours per week from home completing online coursework and engaging in group learning sessions • The second, and final, face-to-face session (Blocks 11-14) at Babson College was four days and included presentation of growth plans/graduation. In addition to the classroom experience, the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses program: Provides one-on-one advisory services to help develop and individually tailor a plan for growth and provide networks through outside volunteers participating as panelists, pitch advisors, and legal experts.

Their small business learning opportunities started with The Business Plan Challenge and she and Kyle both agree that the Challenge was a great learning and networking opportunity that has opened many doors. Their future goals include growing a larger online presence and teaching dietary classes. When asked if they had advice for other entrepreneurs, they both agreed that participating in the Business Plan Challenge was key to learning about deadlines, writing a business plan, and pitching their plan to a group of their peers. Networking with other entrepreneurs and learning from the team of professionals who volunteer their time gave them insight. Kyle and Nicole now employ 24 people, all of whom make better than minimum wage and their full-time baker, Kristi Bischoff, who started as their in-house baker, has now opened her own bakery, Logan Creek Bakery. Kristi still makes all of White Birch's bread and baked goods from scratch and it seems that Nicole and Kyle's success has enabled another entrepreneur to pursue her dreams. Their juicing is now done offsite because they have run out of space to house their equipment. Their business model has also grown and in addition to the healthy and nutritional juices and smoothies, they serve 3 meals a day using only local meat and produce. They have added beer, wine, and cold-pressed cocktails to complement their dinner menu and they host music on Saturday nights. "It's about growing and setting goals, taking a step back to review what you are doing with your business, and understanding why you are doing it. The Business Challenge taught us to do that and to be accountable for our decisions."

Stop in and enjoy the good food and a cold pressed juice at 170 E. Main St., Abingdon, VA. They can be reached by phone at (276) 608-0541, www.whitebirchjuice.com, or visit the White Birch Food & Juice Facebook page.



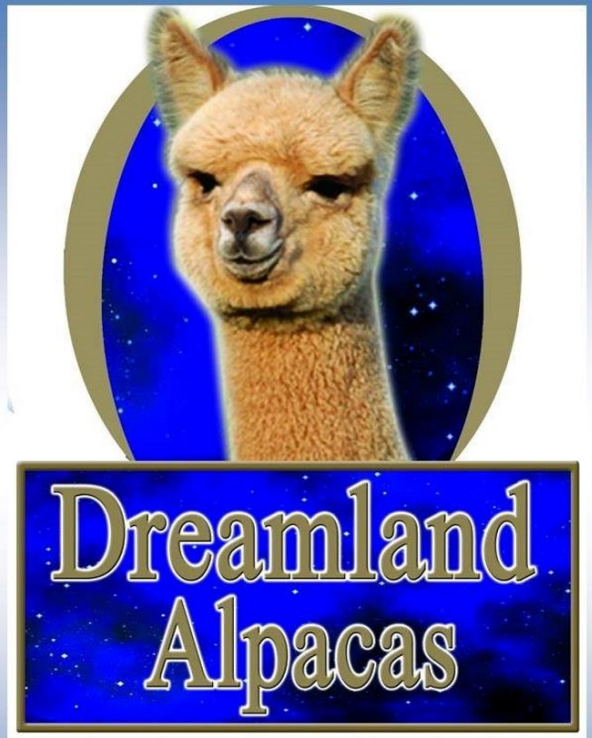


Mojo's Trailside Café & Coffee House has become an icon in the small, beautiful town of Damascus, Virginia. A 2016 Business Challenge winner, Mojo's has grown from a small coffee house open from 7:00 am – 5:00 pm to a full-scale restaurant open seven days a week with dinner hours three nights a week. The quaint and highly-touted restaurant is owned by Chef John Seymore, a 20-year culinary veteran who brings an up-scale flavor to food connoisseurs. Mojo's opened in April 2015 with four employees. Today they employ twelve. The \$5,000 award from the Business Challenge was used to build a website and market the restaurant. The benefits from the award continue to enhance the business two years later. The benefits don't stop with the financial award, however. Susan Seymore represented Mojo's in the Challenge. Chef John states, "We were made aware of amazing small business resources, received valuable advice on good business practices, and learned the not-so-impossible task of creating cash projections. Furthermore, the required business plan helped create a solid infrastructure, helped us set realistic goals, and provided a firm foundation on which to build." And he continues to build! With a lot of hard work, by serving amazing food, by providing great service, and by being open during hours that meet our customers' needs, Mojo's continues to flourish. "The Washington County Business Challenge is a win-win for everyone," Seymore commented. "As Mojo's grows, more individuals are employed and more money goes into the tax coffers which promotes economic growth. It is so amazing that a small business in the small town of Damascus, Virginia can enjoy not only the rewards of hard work but also the incredible support of the Small Business Incubator, the Washington County Chamber of Commerce, and Virginia Community Capital.

"It has been two years since we won the Business Challenge and we are still getting small business exposure. The Washington County Business Challenge helped my business tremendously and helped us to develop the overall structure of operating our business," said John Seymore.



**Alpaca is
Soft, Durable,
Luxurious and
Hypoallergenic.**



Meadowview, VA

David McLeish, owner of Dreamland Alpacas, was a contestant in the 2014 Washington County Business Plan Challenge. 2014 was the first challenge hosted by Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator, the Chamber of Commerce, and Sandy Ratliff. The team had \$10,000 in cash awards to distribute that year and all businesses, start-up and existing, competed for three awards: \$5,000 for first place, \$3,000 for second place, and \$2,000 for third place. David won the third place award. When David was recently contacted, he stated, "The Washington County Business Plan Challenge was wonderful! The team is a good group of people with great knowledge and I made some lasting contacts." David says he is still expanding and his sales are growing at twenty percent a year.

Dreamland Alpacas has now been in business for 11 years. The first six alpacas were bought in 2007, with a current herd of 35 alpacas. "One year of alpaca clippings are good for a year and a half of product production. Surprisingly, Dreamland Alpacas only uses Facebook for the advertising and they receive most of their business through the websites, Trip Advisor and Road Trippers. He stated that his biggest advertising is word of mouth. "Just the other day we had a family from Germany visit the farm. The traveling family had stayed at a hotel in Roanoke and asked, when checking out, if there was anything for kids to do between Roanoke and their destination. Someone at the hotel told them about Dreamland Alpacas and they decided to stop in Meadowview for a tour." Dreamland Alpacas offer alpaca boarding, alpaca breeding, and alpaca mentoring services. They also teach lessons on crocheting, weaving, needle felting, rugmaking, knitting, and dying the sheered alpaca wool.

Dreamland Alpacas can be found at 13050 Bell Lane Meadowview, VA. Their hours are daily from 12:00 p.m. to 7 p.m. and they are closed on Tuesdays. They can also be found at the Abingdon Farmers' Market on Saturday's and Tuesday's and they participate annually in Mistletoe Market, Country Christmas in Bristol, Chilhowie Apple Festival, and Damascus Trail Days. Dreamland Alpacas can also be reached at (276) 494-6798, www.dreamlandalpacas.com, and on their Facebook page, Dreamland Alpacas LLC.

The one piece of advice David has for entrepreneurs is, "Do your homework. You could be thinking too small or too big and plan on working 7 days a week."





The Balkan Bakery, located inside Zazzy'Z Coffee House at 380 E. Main St Abingdon VA, specializes in desserts and pastries from eastern Europe and has been an Abingdon business since 2014. "We are a family-owned business; and since we wish to keep all operational aspects of the business run by the members of our family, we have knowingly opted to remain small," said Angela Cvetkovski.

Angela believes the greatest benefit from participating in the Small Business Challenge was the valuable connections they were able to make. Many of the relationships she established with the Small Business Challenge remain in place today and in most cases have only grown stronger. The Business Plan Challenge also ensured that should we need to seek further assistance in managing or expanding our business, we would be comfortable in doing so. The Small Business Challenge helped us understand the resources available and how to go about obtaining them. The Balkan Bakery can be reached at (276) 608-8650, www.thebalkanbakery.com and on The Balkan Bakery Facebook page.

"I would highly recommend the Small Business challenge to any entrepreneur," said Angela Cvetkovski.





Love and Local Business

Hope you're doing well! I did open Love and Local Business (online) in June 2016 and have been working in the business full-time since then offering business strategy, tech assistance, and social media management for online business owners. ☺ To learn more about Love and Local Business, give Raven a call at (276) 266-8011 or go to www.loveandlocal.biz or on the Love and Local Business Facebook page.

Delightfully,
Raven Marin
Love and Local Business



In the fall of 2017, Keith and Sabrina Fleenor opened "The Corn Maze & Punkin Patch at Fleenor Farms." We surpassed our expectations our first year and are almost ready to open for year number TWO! The Corn Maze can be found at 8006 Reedy Creek Road, Bristol, VA. You can contact them by calling (276) 608-3555, go to www.fleenorfarms.com, or go to their Facebook page, The Corn Maze & Punkin Patch at Fleenor Farms.



Tool and Supply LLC



J&N Tool and Supply is going strong in Bristol, Virginia. Jack Vanhook travels to construction sites in the Tri-Cities area and sells power tools, safety equipment, and other building supplies. When not on the road, he is bidding jobs for the Commonwealth of Virginia. Jack Vanhook, owner, can be reached at (423) 914-0095.





Alan Necessary, owner of Sarge's Pay Lake was a 2018 Business Plan Challenge contestant. Although Alan did not win the grand prize, he was the winner of the \$1,000 Wal-Mart Best Pitch award. He used that money to help build a mini cabin for his campground rental. Sarge's Pay Lake and Campground is located in Damascus, VA. When we interviewed Alan, he stated that the structure of the classes and the knowledge he gained from the six-weeks of business training classes was very helpful. "Having the past business plan challenge winners at the classes was great." Alan was referring to the networking opportunities he had to meet and talk with other Challenge participants who like him, were making every effort to establish and grow their idea into a successful business.

Alan Necessary opened Sarge's Pay Lake and Campground in April 2017. Sarge's is a seasonal campground and trout fishing pay lake. Alan said his first year wasn't a great financial success and his advice to other contestants is "don't expect to make a profit in your first year of business." Marketing is a very important part of your business and he feels he could have done more that first year. Sarge's Pay Lake also offers camping for the fishermen and women who come to the Lake. If his customer wants a good mess of fish for dinner, Alan will catch them, clean them, and have them ready when the client arrives, or he will deliver them to your doorstep. The only decision the client makes is how many fish you want him to catch and clean. If someone owns a pond on their private land, he will stock it. Alan attributes his success to reasonable prices: trout are \$5.00 each and \$1.00 to have them cleaned. He charges \$20.00 for tent camping. There are no spaces for RV's in the campground. Part of starting and running your own business is trial and error and learning from your successes as well as your failures.

Alan's advice to entrepreneurs, "Do everything in small steps, research as much as you can, and concentrate on marketing in your first year of business."

When asked how his business is progressing, Alan stated, "I'm still doing it. Business is good!"

If you would like to experience this adventure, you can find Sarge's Pay Lake at 24135 Buckeye Hollow Road in Damascus, VA . Or by calling (276) 274-2326, sargespayscaleandcampground.com, or visit Sarge's Pay Lake and Camp Ground on their Facebook page.



With no college education and having worked as a second-shift welder, Steven Harris likely considered himself a country boy from Southwest Virginia. Then he became a winner last year of the Washington County Business Challenge.

“When I left to go out on my own, I didn’t know if I would sink or swim,” said the 41-year-old Abingdon businessman, who, in 2016, started Appalachian Drafting, a structural steel and miscellaneous steel-detailing firm. The one thing Harris did have when he started working at age 16 — as a dishwasher in a Richlands restaurant — was a strong work ethic that he learned from his coal-mining father and grandfather and a faith in God that he will tell you directs his life.

“I believe the Lord has been with me from the beginning. He has placed people in my life to guide me and help me along the way even when I didn’t even know where I was going,” Harris said. “I am very thankful for the opportunities the Lord’s given me.”

As a result of being named one of the top existing business winners in the challenge, Harris received \$5,000 to implement his business strategy and half-priced rent at the Southwest Virginia Small Business Incubator in Abingdon. Just two weeks ago, the business owner moved his drafting business from the incubator to an office on Main Street in Abingdon. He used the money to buy work tools that have allowed him to hire two additional staff members. Harris said nothing is drawn with pencil and paper as it was when he started out 20 years ago. He and his staff members work on computers with 3D Building Information Modeling [BIM] software that gives professionals in the architecture, engineering, and construction fields the tools to plan, design, and construct buildings and infrastructure.

“The license for 3D software isn’t cheap,” he said. “The software for us is much like a hammer to a carpenter.” He is able to provide the staff members a better-than-average benefits package with paid vacations, holidays, and health insurance for them and their families.

“As a business challenge winner, I have gotten to meet so many great people who had no idea what I do,” said Harris, whose business has taken off in the last year, reaching milestones he never could have imagined. Most of their work comes from outside the region.

“We have customers from New Jersey to Alabama and North Carolina to Oklahoma,” said Harris, who has accepted subcontracting jobs from some of the giants in the steel industry, such as Banker Steel in Lynchburg, Virginia, and Schuff Steel in Arizona.

“Two weeks ago, I got a call from a fabricator in Canada. We’ve also been contacted from businesses as far away as California wanting to know if we could do the work.” His drafting company is currently working on designing the stairs and railings on the new Orlando International Airport, a job that’s catching the attention of others in the profession.

“I’m thrilled that we’re part of this airport project that will cost \$1.8 billion to complete.”

“Last week, we bid on a building renovation project on 1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, just four blocks from the White House. We also were asked to build a 10-story project in Washington, D.C., next door to the Washington Nationals ballpark, but we had to turn it down because we’re too busy.”

During his career, he has also detailed steel in structures for Virginia Tech, Disney World’s Animal Kingdom, Dollywood, and the Army, and his company has provided drawings on local projects, like the D.P. Culp Center at East Tennessee State University and Boones Creek Elementary and even the detail work at the Bristol Herald Courier press facility’s sign.

“Every job is different,” said Jason Taylor, of Mount Carmel, Tennessee, who was the first employee to come on board. Taylor works on detailing stairs and railings for structures.

Jason Teague works on structures.

“It’s ever-changing,” he said. “You think it’s always going to be the same beams and columns, but it’s never the same. It’s always different. You have to study what you’re working on and pay close attention. This business is detail-oriented,” said Teague, who drives to work from Jonesborough, Tennessee.

Carroll Cox, of Kingsport, and Gordon Lewis, of Erwin, Tennessee, also work on structural designs at the business. Lewis said he started working in the field 34 years ago, later running a crane before moving to the shop as a fabricator.

Harris wants to share his story of success with young people who are enrolled in local technical schools, just as he was more than 20 years ago. Last school year, he visited students at the Washington County Career and Technical School in Abingdon.

“I want to tell young people in Southwest Virginia that just because you don’t have a four-year degree, that doesn’t mean it’s the end of the world. We can do anything we want to do right here in Southwest Virginia, and I want young people to know they have those same opportunities,” said Harris.

The entrepreneur credits a technical education for setting him on a path to success.

Harris had been working on his grandparents’ farm in Abingdon as a child when he got a summer job laying brick at age 16. During the school year, he would return to his home in Richlands, where he worked in a restaurant as a dishwasher.

As a high school student, he was taking classes for an advanced diploma when he told his guidance counselor he wanted to go to technical school to learn masonry.

“She tried to discourage me, but I went anyway,” he said with a laugh.

The opportunities that followed eventually led Harris to excelling in the drafting field.

After graduating from Richlands High School, Harris got a job at a steel shop installing ceramic tiles in steel chutes used in coal mines.

He fell in love with the steel industry, later becoming a certified welder, lead fitter, and foreman. Years later, he was given the chance to work in a drawing room, which eventually led to his career as a draftsman.

Harris said he never forgets his humble beginnings as a business owner. Fond reminders are the wooden footrests for each employee in his office handmade by his father, who used wood from his grandfather’s Buchanan County barn.

“Most of our work is outside the region, but there’s no doubt about it,” he said, “this place is home.”

Appalachian Drafting, LLC is located at 432 East Main Street, Abingdon VA. They can be reached at (276) 525-4117 or visit their website at www.appadrafting.com.



The idea for The Pakalachian began with the blending of two cultures in marriage. Katlin and Mohsin met while in college at Virginia Tech. They married and moved to the golden rod and lightning bugs of Abingdon in 2014. Making similar meals for family and friends in their kitchen, the idea to start a food truck began to emerge. After establishing how to share the food with the rest of the region, the Kazmi's started with an empty 1996 step van and built the food truck from the ground up. Mohsin is ethnically Pakistani; his parents immigrated to New York City in the 1980s. He is a conservation photographer and co-owner of Tamandua Expeditions, with a Master's in Environmental Science and Policy. Katlin's roots are from a community of tomato vines and Sunday dinners in the heart of Southwest Virginia in Castlewood. Katlin is an educator at Wallace Middle School in Washington County with an EDS in Educational Policy and Administration. Their combined passion of education and the environment, coupled with their love for the Appalachian Mountains, has motivated them to give back to the area. Mohsin and Katlin aim to direct a portion of their profits to Southwest Virginia in the form of meaningful, local projects related to their fields. The food truck fully started operation in April of 2018. The community events they have set up at have been very supportive. The Pakalachian uses all forms of social media, as well as their website. Please check out their Facebook page, The Pakalachian Food Truck or their website www.pakalachian.com for a listing of where you can try their great food!

Mohsin and Katlin Kazmi were contestants in the 2017 Washington County Business Plan Challenge in which they were second place winners in the start-up category which was \$1500.00 and the winner of the Walmart Best Pitch Award for \$1000.00. The award monies went to the purchase of their food truck. Kaitlin and Mohsin said "They really enjoyed the business plan challenge and the panel of speakers."

When asked what advice she would give other entrepreneurs, Katlin says, "Do your homework, know what is required. Allow time for your business to grow."





Kathleen McMahon, owner of Mountain Laurel Inn, was a contestant and winner in the 2018 Washington County Business Plan Challenge. She was awarded the prize of \$5000 in the existing business category. The award money was spent on the renovation of the kitchen at Mountain Laurel to be able for Kathleen to serve a five-star meal to their guests at the bed and breakfast. Kathleen states that she got so much out of the Business Plan Challenge, but the most impressive was the networking that she got out of it, and the expert panels were great!

Innkeepers, Kathleen McMahon and Nathalie Graham, welcome guests to the Mountain Laurel Inn. The Bed and Breakfast can be found in Damascus, Virginia nestled in the mountains of Southwest Virginia. The Inn is a 117-year-old Queen Anne Victorian lavishly decorated with antiques from the original family as well as from heirlooms handed down from Kathleen's grandmother, (Nathalie's mother), and from world travels of this former military family. The bed and breakfast is conveniently located, allowing guests easy access to recreation locations such as the Virginia Creeper Trail, Appalachian Trail, Snake Road, golf courses, horseback riding, fishing, Bristol Motor Speedway, hiking, the Barter theatre, dining, and art galleries. The Mountain Laurel Inn is the perfect balance of elegant and cozy. With this Victorian B&B, set on 3.5 acres of lush green grounds, nestled in trees and mountain tops, you'll have the best of both worlds.

Only minutes from downtown Damascus, it's a quiet spot to get away from it all. Sit on one of two porches, front and back facing, take a swim, or just relax by the pool after a day of hiking or biking on the Creeper Trail or the Appalachian Trail. Take a break from a day of touring the local art galleries, shopping, and of course, the historic Barter Theatre. This is the sort of place where you can truly feel at home and among friends - only they'll do all the work! Although the Mountain Laurel Inn was built in the early 1900's (with extensive, beautiful, and rare American Chestnut paneling throughout), you will be comfortable no matter the weather with central heating and A/C, free WiFi, a TV in every room and off-street parking. Kathleen says, "We continue to build the business thru guest reviews and have recently been awarded the Certificate of Excellence from TripAdvisor, which is given to only about 10% of businesses listed. We are about 60% through with the kitchen renovation and are working to generate enough revenue to complete the rest of the project in the next 12-18 months. To book a few days of relaxation at Mountain Laurel Inn contact them (276) 475-8822, www.mountainlaurelinn.com, or on The Mountain Laurel Inn Facebook Page. Mountain Laurel Inn is located at 22750 Jeb Stuart Hwy, Damascus, VA.

When asked what advice she could give other entrepreneurs, Kathleen says, "Plan ahead with your business: planning your marketing, social media, and a website are a must."





"First, I want to say THANK YOU for all you have done to put the Business Challenges into our community. I know several past winners who I also speak for. I finally became brave enough to leave my "day job" so that my "night job" could support me. So far, it's been a wonderful transition." Deni and Tom Peterson are growing and selling flowers and their new business The Blue Door Garden is doing well. They are looking forward to the fall season and the many, many brides who pick fall colors for their wedding celebrations. In addition to their farm florist they are actively selling at the Abingdon Farmer's Market usually selling out by noon. Their dried flowers are hanging, the garlic is braided, and they are getting ready for the dried flower décor and holiday wreath season.

Blue Door is also active at Emory & Henry College. Deni teaches a class called Organic Food Production and together she and Tom manage a 1/2-acre garden on campus. They built a new fence this summer and installed a walk-in cooler to keep produce fresh and provide adequate storage. Produce is being sold to White Birch Juice Company, the Emory Cafe, Blue Hills Market, and this fall they'll be selling fresh produce to Head Start programs around the region.

Blue Door is also collaborating with the Bristol, TN hospital to build their first "healing garden" to help heart patients learn what fresh produce looks and tastes like as they heal from surgery. There will be more information about this endeavor as they build the new raised beds on campus and plant them to fall crops of lettuce, spinach, brassicas, and garlic. "Never a dull moment," said Deni "Thanks again for your continued business support." Deni and Tom can be reached at (276)628-3213, by email at bluedoor444@gmail.com, on their website www.bluedoorgarden.net and on their Blue Door Garden Facebook page.

Never a dull moment!

Sponsors



Washington County, Va



Business Connecting to Business



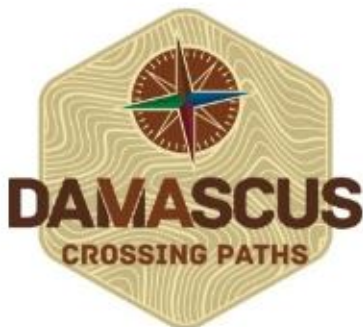
VIRGINIA HIGHLANDS
SMALL BUSINESS INCUBATOR



Appalachian Center for Civic Life
EMORY & HENRY
COLLEGE



PENN STUART
125
YEARS





Whitney Bonham

wbonham@washcova.com
Washington County VA
Economic Development



Tonya Triplett

ttriplett@abingdon-va.gov
Town of Abingdon VA
Community Development



Appalachian Center for Civic Life
EMORY & HENRY
COLLEGE

