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Big ideas from new class of entrepreneurs

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Photos by Ginny Kropf: Graduates of the spring class for Microenterprise Assistance Program posed outside Tillman's Village Inn Tuesday night with their advisers/mentors. From left, front, are Sam Campanella, business adviser with the Small Business Development Corporation of New York; Diane Blanchard, director of MAP: Marcell Taylor, quest speaker and former graduate; Maurice Taylor; Jenelle Boyd; and Adam Papaj. Back row: Jake Olles; Kelly Furness, Michelle Hampton; Richard Gallo; Kin Chesher-Nguyen; Julie Hess; Richard Petitte, business adviser for the Buffalo District of Small Business Development Centers of New York State; and Jon Costello with SCORE.

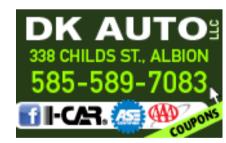
Posted 13 June 2018 at 12:05 pm

Nearly 500 have now completed microenterprise training program











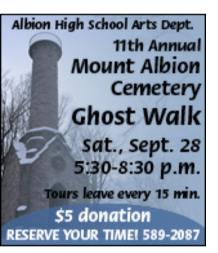


















Kim Chester-Nguyen of North Chili explains the nursery/furniture wedge she designed to fellow graduates of the Microenterprise Assistance Program during a graduation program Tuesday night at Tillman's Village Inn.

By Ginny Kropf, correspondent

ALBION – The latest class of graduates in Orleans Economic Development Agency's Microenterprise Assistance Program brings the total of aspiring entrepreneurs to 485 individuals since the program started about two decades ago.

Ten of the spring class's 11 participants shared their business plans and received diplomas Tuesday night at the Village Inn.

Diane Blanchard, director of the MAP, introduced guests, advisers and graduates.

Those lending support to the program were Jon Costello, a business mentor with SCORE; Richard Petitte with the Buffalo District of the Small Business Development Centers of NYS; Sam Campanella with the Small Business Development Corporation of New York; Karen Sawicz, board member and owner of Lake Country Pennysaver/Orleans Hub; Kathy Blackburn, president of the Orleans County Chamber of Commerce and owner of Meggie Moo's in Medina; and Ken DeRoller, an Orleans County legislator.

Graduates and their proposed businesses were Jenelle Boyd of Lyndonville, whose tentative plan is to open a coffee house/café in the block which her uncle Robert Smith is renovating in Lyndonville; Richard Gallo and Michelle Hampton of Holley, expansion of a towing business; Kim Chester-Nguyen of North Chili, production of a nursery/furniture wedge; Kelly Furness of Waterport, flipping homes; Julie Hess of Lyndonville, the Wed Shed; Jake Olles of Albion, house inspection/property management for cottagers and snowbirds; Robert Owens of Albion, a hydroponics supply store; Adam Papaj of Medina, a multi-purpose sports training facility; Maurice Taylor, a consultant in workplace diversity; and John Brabon, nutrition meals.

































Michelle Hampton and Richard Gallo of Holley took the class to further their plans of expanding a towing business in Orleans County.

Each graduate explained their business plan to the audience, what they expected their start-up costs to be, what they would need for operating revenue and what their projected profits would be.

Graduates of the class not only learn how to develop a business plan, but are eligible for low-interest loans.

Several were looking for assistance in expanding a current business, while others are first-time entrepreneurs.

An ambitious plan was unveiled by Adam Papaj of Medina, who wants to open a multipurpose sports training facility. He would provide sports-specific training in a facility which would have bounce houses, an area for toddlers, a small restaurant with pizza and fast food, a cage for hitting training for baseball and training spaces for soccer and lacrosse. He would coordinate activities with special events happening in the area, such as Thomas the Train, Ale in Autumn and the Steampunk Festival. He is looking for financing to build or renovate an existing building.

Jake Olles of Albion saw a need for the business he hopes to establish – monitoring and managing property for cottage owners and snowbirds.

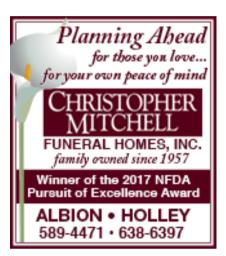
His plan is to offer his services to open and close cottages for the season and inspect those properties and homes of snowbirds who go south for the winter.

With cell phone technology, he says he can inspect a property every two weeks, take pictures and send them to owners who can then determine if everything is in place. This would also be a check for broken pipes or power outages which could cause extensive damage if not discovered in a timely manner. He has a snowmobile to give him access to lake property when driveways are full of snow. He would also look for footprints in the snow, which might indicate someone had been trespassing on the property.



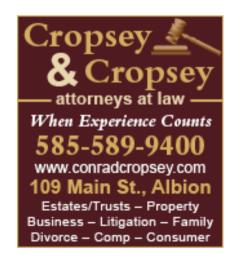


















Jenelle Boyd of Lyndonville explains her business plan to fellow graduates of the Microenterprise Assistance Program. Her tentative plans are to open a coffee house/café in the block her uncle Robert Smith is renovating on Main Street in Lyndonville.

Kim Chesher-Nguyen's business is the production of a wedge she designed to prevent items from falling down between the wall and a piece of furniture, especially in the nursery.

Julie Hess of Lyndonville hit on her business quite by accident after spending a lot of money buying items for her son's wedding.

"I had so much stuff left I decided to rent it out," Hess said. "It became clear there needed to be a resource for couples planning a wedding or special event where they could rent items at a reasonable price and not have to go out and buy them."

Her Wed Shed offers tables, decorating, lighting and backdrops, among other things. She plans to keep up on trends in wedding planning and has opened a showroom in a chicken coop on their property.

She will set up decorations and tear them down, or the customer can do it themselves.

Her goal is to provide low-cost decorations to create the WOW factor.

Marcell Taylor, a former MAP graduate, told the class how much the program helped him get established. He now owns barber shops in Albion and Batavia.

"Every week I was excited about what I was going to learn at the next class," Taylor said. "When you are in business for yourself, you speak a different language than the person who goes to work 9 to 5. People don't understand the passion and drive an entrepreneur has. In this class, I met people I could relate to."

He said was exited to hear all the ideas this latest class wants to get into.

"You are here with people who share your goals," he said.

Ken DeRoller has been on the board of directors for the Orleans EDA since 2001 and has been an avid supporter of the microenterprise program. He was amazed at the ideas presented by graduates.

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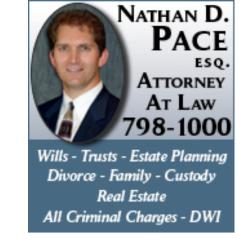
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