



LISA
HILDEBRAND
Commentary
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Group helps businesses start up

History tells us the paper

industry is the backbone of Northeastern Wisconsin. Yet, local entrepreneurs continue to feel comfortable testing the waters with their new ideas.

Just ask members of the Green Bay chapter of SCORE, who had to close registrations for their February workshops on how to start your own business.

Some of those seeking assistance from SCORE have been downsized or laid off due to the downturn in the economy, but that doesn't matter to the organization's volunteers.

"Many times we're the first ones to see these people," said Dewey Schroeder, past chairman of the local nonprofit organization, which helps "people get focused ... get their thinking straight" about starting their own business.

Based out of the Business Assistance Center on Potts Avenue, the volunteers work closely with the Advance Business Development Center, the Small Business Development Center and Great Lakes Asset Corp. Together, they created the 36-page "Planning Your New Business" guide:

The handbook includes numerous tools to help prospective business owners determine the viability of their idea. "We want to make it readable," said Schroeder, who retired from Associated Bank in 1997. "We don't want to inundate people with copy."

Success stories

Since 1981, local SCORE members have provided free and confidential small business counseling. Last year, they advised 320 people through counseling and workshops.

Over the years, Sweet Occasions LLC, Sue Ann's Bagels, Looks Unlimited Salon and many other local businesses have benefited from that counseling.

Susan Beno founded Susan's Basketree in Bellevue 17 years ago with SCORE's help and admits she didn't always follow the volunteers' advice.

"Basically they give you as much information and advice as they can, and then it's up to you to follow it or not," she said.

Beno actually chose to ignore one piece of advice SCORE members harp on more than almost any other - having a business plan.

Her thinking: "If it doesn't work, then you feel like a failure," she said Thursday from the kitchen at her latest venture - Cafe Susan. "I wouldn't advise that for everybody," she quickly added.

Membership changing

While most SCORE members are retired businessmen, more women join each year, including Jill Rodrian, who works at Wisconsin Public Service Corp. and is the group's treasurer, and June Zimonick, who owned Zimonick's Studio Inc. for many years.

The people SCORE members counsel "find out there are people just like them.

They can ask us questions and we follow through," Zimonick said.

Retired or not, it's a matter of sharing their time and talents.

"You'd like to continue to use the knowledge and talents you have," said Larry Nelson, who leads the group's Marketing Committee. "You want to give back."

Lisa Hildebrand is the Press Gazette's business editor. She can be reached at (920) 431-8221 or

lhildebr@greenbaypressgazette.com.