



The

INNOVATOR

The WBIA - "Accelerating Businesses...Creating Jobs"

Championing the Veterans' Plight for Entrepreneurship

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WBIA Executive Committee

Therese Fellner, President

Gateway Technical College
Center for Advanced Technology & Innovation
Sturtevant, WI. 53177
262-898-7524

Rick Roeser, Vice Pres.

NW Regional Planning Commission
Spooner, WI. 54801
715-635-2197
roeser@nwrpc.com

Romey Wagner, Secretary

Wausau Business Development Ctr
Wausau, WI. 54401
715-848-2016
romey@Wausauincubator.com

Ed White, Treasurer

Platteville Business Incubator, Inc.
Platteville, WI. 53818
608-348-2758
pbii@centurytel.net

Thalia Mendez, Past Pres.

WBIA Technical Assistance & Training Manager
414-587-8425
thalia.at.wbia@gmail.com



It is truly an honor to be involved in this event and to be chosen as a Champion for Change. As we all work toward building a stronger country, the value of service and sacrifice cannot be overstated, and there are few who know more about service and sacrifice than our Nation's Veterans. Putting their lives on the line, they protect the freedom that we enjoy, come to the aid of others, and build our Country's reputation internationally.

In his State of the Union Address, President Obama highlighted the courage, selflessness, and dependability of our troops. With all that they have to offer, one would hope that Veterans would have access to the best opportunities after their service. Unfortunately, many return home from active duty to find another battle: one for employment, stability, and a sense of purpose. Rather than having the opportunity to use the skills learned through military training, Veterans are discovering that employers are hesitant to hire them. These employers may not understand the value of military training, or may view hiring Veterans as risky. Recent legisla-

tion providing incentives for companies hiring Veterans takes a step in the right direction, but by no means solves the problems facing these men and women.

In the past, employment assistance resources have been available to Veterans; however, traditional employment is not always an easy fit for those with military backgrounds. The transition from military to civilian life is difficult in itself, both personally and professionally. An already stressful situation is intensified by the perception that many Veterans do not blend well into corporate culture. Most Veterans feel that civilian employers and coworkers simply cannot understand their experiences, and that the available jobs aren't as stimulating as the life-and-death situations they encountered in active duty. These challenges in turn cause feelings of isolation and frustration, thus limiting their success in the traditional workplace.

It is with this in mind that founders Ted Lasser, Greg Meier, and Nick Wichert have launched Veteran Entrepreneurial Transfer, Inc. (VETTransfer), a business accelerator/incubator exclusively for veterans. Our program fills a void existing in the career development services that are currently available to veterans. We believe that by starting their own businesses, Veterans can take control of their lives, follow their passion, and enjoy the freedom they've fought to protect.

The first of it's kind, VETTransfer is a pilot program funded

through the Department of Veteran Affairs VAI2 initiative. We provide entrepreneurship training and mentoring at our physical location in Milwaukee, WI and online through our virtual accelerator, Vetransfer.org. In program has been an integral element in the success of the program. Shared experiences, mutual understanding, and camaraderie build a sense of security and fellowship that our service men and women don't often find in the civilian community. In fact, when Veterans launch their businesses, they create jobs in their communities, and tend to hire other Veterans to fill these positions.

One year ago, when we founded VETTransfer, we established a goal to incorporate forty Veteran owned innovations into our program by the end of the two-year pilot program. Today, only one year later, we have launched or accelerated over 200 Veteran owned businesses, and have had to create a waiting list to manage the overwhelming demand for the program. We are thrilled to have experienced such success, and excited to continue expanding our program to help more of our Nation's heroes find hope and opportunity through entrepreneurship.

Meet the VETTransfer Team:



WBIA MISSION STATEMENT

To educate, inspire, and advocate on behalf of small business start-ups & entrepreneurs by providing incubation facilities and networking resources.



Exodus Machines began leasing space at the Superior Business Center in May 2008. One year later,



they graduated out of the SBC into its new 32,000 square foot facility located on Connors Point. The building includes a state-of-the-art fabrication area, large assembly area with multiple overhead cranes, and administrative offices. Exodus Machines manufactures and sells heavy loading equipment

primarily for the scrap steel industry. Thirty new full-time jobs within 3 years (up to 78 jobs in 5- years) will be created. Exodus Machines received \$7.5 million in New Markets Tax Credits. www.exodusmachinesinc.com.

BusinessNorth, a regional economic news



publication, was launched in 1992 at the Superior Business Center. It is the only publication in the area devoted solely to regional economic news. BusinessNorth has since relocated and grown to deliver 7,000 copies each month, reaching more

than 21,000 readers monthly. www.businessnorth.com

Northern Waters Smokehaus Eric and Lynn Goerdts founded Northern Waters Smokehaus in 1999. It began



at the Superior Business Center. The Goerdts moved to the Twin Ports from Sitka, AK, where Eric long indulged his passion for fishing, especially salmon. The Goerdts have

perfected their technique for smoked fish and other types of meats. After graduating from the Superior Business Center in 2005, they expanded Northern Waters Smokehaus to the DeWitt-Seitz Marketplace building, in Duluth, MN, where they have expanded the little shop with not only smoked fish, but also includes handcrafted deli meats, artisan cheeses, unique deli sandwiches, and other gourmet sundries. The shop was visited in 2010 by Guy Fieri from the Food Network's popular show, 'Diners, Drive-Ins & Dives'.

www.northernwaterssmokehaus.com

Food Business Innovation Network (Food BIN)

The Food Business Innovation Network (Food BIN) is an informal collaboration of public and private organizations working together to provide access to facilities and technical assistance for aspiring food processors.

In the summer of 2008 the AIC worked its regional partner, Thrive, to explore the need for a food business incubator in the eight-county region surrounding Madison.

By February 2009 they co-sponsored a training program in Baraboo that drew about 90

people from around the state (and Iowa too!) who wanted to start "food business incubators" in their communities. After the February meeting the AIC established an email listserve to keep interested parties informed on the issue..

The AIC also partnered with Thrive and Commonwealth Development of Madison to submit two successful grant proposals. The grants have helped four communities get started and provided the impetus to form the Food Business

Incubator Network (Food BIN).

Food BIN is coordinated by the Agricultural Innovation Center (AIC) at UW-Extension. It has also been supported by Thrive, a regional economic development enterprise serving South Central Wisconsin, and by funding from the Wisconsin Department of Commerce and the U.S. Economic Development Administration.

Shared and Incubator kitchens have gained an enormous amount of popularity in recent

years and several new facilities are either operating or under discussion across the state. A list and contact information for many of these kitchen projects can be found on the FoodBIN website at: <http://fyi.uwex.edu/foodbin/the-food-bin-network/>

Resources developed by the AIC to support food business incubators and their clients are can also be found on the website along with the community-based projects that participate in FoodBIN.

WE WOULD LOVE TO SHOWCASE YOU AND/OR YOUR ORGANIZATION! PLEASE SEND US YOUR ARTICLES!!

Send your information to:

Steve Sengstock scepi@frontiernet.net

or

Lisa Harmann lharmann@titletown.org

About the WBIA

The WBIA is a 501(c) 3 non-profit corporation that was founded in 1998. It is governed by an eleven member Board of Directors. The WBIA has twice hosted the National Business Incubator Association (NBIA) international conference in Milwaukee and has maintained representation on the NBIA Board of Directors for many years. The WBIA sponsors comprehensive surveys of Wisconsin's incubation programs and state entrepreneurship/incubation conferences. www.wbiastate.org

EDA seeks input on improving grant process

The U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) — a longtime funder of business incubators — is reviewing its grant process to ensure that the agency continues to meet the needs of American communities. For 45 years, EDA has partnered with distressed communities throughout the United States to foster job creation, collaboration and regional innovation. The agency's mission is to lead the federal economic development agenda by promoting competitiveness and preparing American regions for growth and success in the worldwide economy.

EDA is working to make its grant approval process more competitive, transparent and efficient. In order to create a system that works best for its stakeholders, EDA is inviting comments and suggestions on the proposed new process. Specific changes in the proposed grant approval process include:

- Applicants will receive an answer in less than 90 days.
- Set funding cycles and standardized assessment tools will make the process more competitive.
- EDA's customer service will be unchanged. Regional office staff will work closely with applicants prior to submission deadlines.

For more information or to send comments to EDA, go to www.eda.gov/InvestmentsGrants/Grant%20Process.xml.

Beyond Best Practices: The Cutting Edge of Entrepreneur Support

NBIA's 26th International Conference on Business Incubation will take place May 6-9, 2012, in Atlanta, Ga., and will bring together around 600 business incubation practitioners and economic development professionals to explore strategies for entrepreneur support. Participants will attend in-depth workshops, educational sessions, incubator tours and receptions, and will have many opportunities to connect with colleagues through informal conversations. Through these training and networking opportunities, attendees learn about incubator sustainability, entrepreneur

support services, client funding options, industry best practices and more.

Atlanta is known as a city that welcomes economic development, as 10 companies that are headquartered there — including The Home Depot, UPS, The Coca-Cola Co. and Delta Air Lines — made the 2011 Fortune 500, a list of the largest corporations in the United States. The city is also easy to get to, as many domestic and international flights are routed through Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport.

INCUBATING SUCCESS. INCUBATION BEST PRACTICES THAT LEAD TO SUCCESSFUL NEW VENTURES

EDA Study Home

The U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA), a long-time financial supporter of business incubators, funded a research study to examine the relationship between incubator best practices and client outcomes. This research - conducted by the University of Michigan's Institute for Research on Labor, Employment and the Economy; the State University of New York at Albany, the National Business Incubation Association, and Cybergroup Inc. - used a robust methodology to collect and statistically analyze data, and determine specific relationships between how an incubation program operates and how its client companies perform, as measured by a number of outcomes.

The purpose of this study is to test whether there is a causal relationship between business incubation practices and client firm success, particularly after

these firms have moved out of - or graduated - from the incubation program. Using the results of this study, the research team also created a Web-based tool for incubation practitioners that measures their program's performance compared with industry best practices and provides feedback about how they can improve their performance, and a brochure that highlights the study's findings. Dedicated incubation professionals are always looking for ways to enhance their program's effectiveness and efficiency. This online tool, based on research funded by the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration, will provide incubator managers with the input they need to do just that. Using this tool, incubation practitioners can measure their program's performance compared with the business incubation practices deemed most important to client success, as well as receive feedback on how to improve their program's operations.

For more details, visit the NBIA website at: www.nbia.org

There are also scholarship opportunities through the WBIA. Therese Fellner.



Atlanta's weather is pleasant in May, so it should be a good time to take advantage of all the city has to offer when the conference is not in session. On nice days, you might want to visit the Atlanta Botanical Garden or Centennial Olympic Park, a 21-acre park built in celebration of the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta. If the skies are gray and rainy, you can check out some of the city's indoor attractions, such as the High Museum of Art, the Georgia Aquarium or the Inside CNN Studio Tour. With all the city of Atlanta and the NBIA conference have to offer, you won't want to miss out!

Meet Our Newest WBIA Member!



Three Lakes is reinventing its local economy from one that over the past 100 years has relied nearly exclusively on tourism into a diversified infrastructure founded on the four cornerstones of *technology, tourism, agriculture, and the cultural arts*. Tourism will forever remain an important calling card to attract visitors. However, we now boast more high speed internet and broadband options than any other community our size in a five county region, making Three Lakes the *anchor for technology in the Northwoods*.

WBIA welcomes the Town of Three Lakes Plan Commission Economic Development Committee. Three Lakes is looking to a future that seeks out, welcomes, and supports innovative and entrepreneurial businesses. As the 'Anchor for Technology in the Northwoods', Three Lakes will look to efficiently and effectively connect emerging businesses with the support and resources they require via technology. Spearheading the incubator effort are Don Sidlowski and BJ Panke. BJ has a decades-long attachment to the Three Lakes area and is pleased to be participating in a portion of the economic development activities of Eco-Dev committee. BJ's background includes both private sector employment as well as non-profit Board membership and a lengthy career as a civil servant. Don serves as chairman of the Economic Development Committee. Don also serves as Three Lakes Town Chairman and is a Commissioner on the Three Lakes Plan Commission. In addition, Don serves on the Board of Directors for the Oneida County Economic Development Corporation and the PSC's LinkWISCONSIN Region 2 Executive Team.

WBIA Important "Save the Dates"

- July 12-13, 2012:** WBIA Board Meeting. The summer quarterly Board meeting will be held on **Thursday, July 12, 2012** hosted by Advance Business & Manufacturing Center, Green Bay. The time and other details will be posted on the website when determined.
- WBIA Member Meeting. The summer quarterly Member meeting will be held on **Friday, July 13, 2012** at the Advance Business & Manufacturing Center, 2701 Larsen Rd., Green Bay. The educational presentation will be posted when determined.
- August 30, 2012:** NBIA Training. The training will be held on August 30, 2012 at the Center for Advanced Technology and Innovation, Sturtevant (*tentative*). The location, time and other details will be posted when determined.
- October 1-3, 2012:** NBIA Fall Training Institute. The NBIA Fall Training Institute (FTI) will be held on October 1-3, 2012 in Milwaukee. The location, time and other details will be posted when determined.
- WBIA Quarterly Meeting. The fall quarterly WBIA members meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 3, 2012 in Milwaukee (as part of NBIA FTI workshop agenda). The location, time and educational presentation will be posted when determined.