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Local News for Saturday 10/02/04

Classes groom owners for small business

Enrollment at CCC development center program more than doubles.

By BROOKE J. SHERMAN
Star-Gazette
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Deb Weigel wants to make sure her new business venture succeeds.

That's why she is spending four nights in September and October at the Small Business Management Certificate Program, learning what to expect in the business world and how to build a business plan.

The program, run by Corning Community College's Small Business Development Center in partnership with the city of Elmira, Elmira Downtown Development, Rural Economic Development and Energy Corp. and Southern Tier Economic Growth, is growing in popularity.

The last time it was offered, about 17 people participated, but in this round, 36 people have signed up for some or all of the classes, said Rick Pirozzolo, EDD director.

Weigel was one of those students who attended Tony Compese's lecture on marketing Monday night.

Weigel is weeks away from opening her new candle business, Simply Common Scents Candle Co., at 104 W. 14th St. in Elmira Heights.

For the past three years, she's made candles in her Elmira home and sold her work at craft shows and fairs. Now, she's ready to take the step and open her own storefront. The Small Business Management course is designed to help her do that.

"I don't want to fail," Weigel said. "So I'm getting as much out of this as I possibly can."

She's learned a great deal and is crafting a business plan that she can present to a bank if the business needs future financing, she said.

Ross Spallone, 48, of Corning, also is attending the business classes, to



learn how to improve his already-existing business.

R.M. Spallone Building and Renovating Inc. has been open since April 1991, but Spallone hopes to take it to the next level in the next few years.

While he has worked for himself for years in construction, remodeling and renovating, Spallone said he's ready to try his hand at developing, but he wants to take the educated next step.

"I'm here picking up tips for business and planning to put together a business plan," he said. "That's one of the more difficult things I've encountered in business."

The class is something Spallone and Weigel would recommend to others, and that's what Pirozzolo and Compese want to hear.

Compese has been teaching these types of classes since 1995 and has seen numerous business plans come into existence and eventually succeed, such as Karen Nisco's for The Community Book Store in downtown Elmira.

Compese said he is always hopeful that the participants -- who have varied ideas and skill levels -- gain valuable knowledge about running a business.

"I want them to know what they are going to face," the instructor said. "I want them to know what's really going on out there."

Diane Lantz, executive director of REDEC, said the classes have a huge impact on the success of new businesses.

"It's really teaching them how to be better prepared," she said.

Class leaders are hopeful that attendance will lead to new, successful businesses, but Compese and Pirozzolo said it will take time -- at least a year for many of the plans to come together.

"I hope that we get new businesses out of this, but more importantly, I hope that we get educated businesspeople out of the classes," Pirozzolo said.

For information

- Elmira Downtown Development: 607/734-0341.
- Southern Tier Economic Development: 607/733-6513.
- The Small Business Development Center: 607/936-6642.