



Providing Professional Guidance for Business Growth

November 23, 2015

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Spotlight on Success – Correction – Flying Squirrel

Correction: Last week we incorrectly credited Flying Squirrel Aero Film and Photography with earning second place in the Enterprise U Business Plan Writing Competition sponsored by the Illinois Small Business Development Center at Kankakee Community College and the Economic Development Alliance of Kankakee County. In fact, we are happy to report that Flying Squirrel won **FIRST** place in this competition. Congratulations to Mr. Jim Dewey, owner of Flying Squirrel.

Spotlight on Success – G. P. Morris Acts 1013, Inc.

Gary and Pam Morris first came to the **Illinois Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Southeastern Illinois College (SIC)** in September 2012 to discuss a prototype of a new style of gun stock.

Several **SIC SBDC** advisors assisted them with a business plan, trademark information, sales and distribution issues, marketing tools such as a website, a Facebook page, business cards, brochures, and YouTube. The business plan was crucial in helping the couple garner startup capital.

The Morris' product, the Badger Stock for the Marlin LR22 rifle, has been a great success with sales across the United States. Marlin claims this is "the most popular 22 in the world" so the Morris' knew they would have an extensive market for the Badger Stock.

Their company, G. P. Morris Acts 1013, Inc. is primarily an online business utilizing their own website and eBay. They also offer the Badger Stock at gun shows.

Mrs. Morris said, "The counselors at the SBDC were such tremendous help to us from the very beginning of the process to the reality of actual sales online." She continued, "I don't know how we could have obtained all the information necessary without their assistance." Learn more about the Badger Stock at www.badger22.com

SBDC's In The News – Veteran's Entrepreneurial Boot Camp

Calvin Young has an idea. He wants farmers to be able to see distressed areas in their crops while sitting in their living rooms. For Young, a 21 year veteran of the Illinois Army National Guard, the idea has bloomed into a business called Sky Farmer. He came to GSU to find ways to make it a success.



Young was one of the 120 attendees at the **Illinois Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Governor's State University (GSU)** 13th annual Veteran's Entrepreneurial Boot Camp held November 12. He came away with a "plethora" of knowledge he will use to get his 18-month-old start-up company off the ground.

Calvin Young of Sky Farmer was one of the 120 attendees at the Veteran's Entrepreneurial Boot Camp November 12.

For business-minded veterans, the Boot Camp is a full day of workshops and networking events that provides practical guidance for business owners on a variety of topics from experts; many of them veterans themselves.

Young said the resources he found at the Boot Camp would help his business and would be beneficial to any veteran considering business ownership. "This is phenomenal for veterans," he said. "I have had conversations with many of my veteran friends who would like to start a business, but they don't know how to take it to the next step. This event allows them to start getting the information they need to start creating a business plan, how to think about money and getting funds to start their businesses."

Illinois State Senators Tom Cullerton (23rd) and Napoleon Harris (15th) addressed the attendees over lunch. Cullerton was the keynote speaker and said that being a veteran himself, he knows better than most the difficult waters business owners face in Illinois. He told the group that building a business is a challenge for anyone, but veterans have tools for success. "The state puts a lot of hurdles in front of you to operate a business, but they are not insurmountable. Our military training gives us an ability to solve problems put in front of us," he said.



Illinois State Senators Tom Cullerton (left) (23rd) and Napoleon Harris (15th) spoke at the Boot Camp luncheon.

Events like the **GSU SBDC** Boot Camp and the daily work of the GSU [Veteran's Resource Center](#) (VRC) have enabled the university to be named to *U.S. Veterans Magazine's* [Best of the Best List](#) for 2015, as one of the publication's Top Veteran-

Friendly Schools. The VRC has made it their mission to make veteran students feel at home at GSU, working with them to make sure their transition to GSU is as seamless as possible, and that their educational goals are being met. VRC Coordinator Kevin Smith said endeavors like the Boot Camp help enhance the university's reputation.

For **Priscilla Cordero, Director of the Illinois SBDC at GSU**, the annual event is an important reminder not only of the sacrifices veterans have made for their country, but also of their ability to give back to communities economically. "Veterans put their lives on the line for us. It is a privilege to be able to serve them in return by helping them get their businesses started and continue to grow. They are then further able to help their community by creating jobs and economic opportunity," she said.

Veterans coming together to help each other is important to an entrepreneur like Young, whose partners in the company include a U.S. Air Force veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom and another Illinois National Guardsman, who fought in both Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

The feeling of camaraderie and unity will keep Young coming back, even if his business is soaring. "I can always learn a lot from the people who are here. This is a wonderful event and I look forward to the next boot camp at GSU," he said.

@Illinois SBDC on Twitter

The Illinois SBDC Network is working to increase our presence and relevancy on social media. We encourage all Illinois SBDC Network centers to follow [@IllinoisSBDC on Twitter](#) and retweet our posts to help get the word out about the Network and help us promote the value of our services. If your center does not currently have a twitter account, we urge you to think about creating one as an effective way to promote your services and the activities at your center.

Maximizing Neoserra – Electronic & Paper Training Survey Forms

Neoserra supports both electronic surveys and anonymous, paper-based evaluation forms. While the electronic surveys are, generally speaking, preferred due to their ease of distribution and tallying, the paper-based evaluation forms do provide improved response rates. The response rate improves by collecting evaluation forms as trainees leave the event. Open the Neoserra FAQ below to learn how you can distribute hard-copy evaluation forms at the end of your training event and tally the responses received, in Neoserra.

<https://support.outreachsystems.com/resources/help/neoserra/faq.jsp?id=n228>

Shop Small – Small Business Saturday

On Saturday, November 28, please join us in supporting America's dynamic small business and entrepreneur community by participating in the sixth annual 'Small Business Saturday' and encouraging American consumers to "shop small" every day.

'Small Business Saturday' plays a key role in driving customer traffic and growing revenue for our 28 million independent businesses during the important holiday retail season. We're also encouraging consumers to "dine small" by grabbing a bite at a local eatery.

This year, we encourage you to visit a small business that is an exporter – a great way to highlight the benefits of TPP and the President's trade agenda.

Here is how you can play a role:

- **Promote it!** Share our website: <https://www.sba.gov/about-sba/sba-initiatives/small-business-saturday> and use the official hashtags #SmallBizSaturday and #DineSmall on social media. SBA will provide a wide range of digital materials to your teams.
- **Shop Small!** Visit a local small business in your community (don't forget our exporters), encourage your followers to learn more on @SBAGov, and promote the event using the hashtag #SmallBizSaturday.
- **Dine Small!** Have a meal at an independent restaurant. Share your visit using the hashtag: #DineSmall, and go to @SBAGov to learn more.

Maria Contreras-Sweet

Administrator
Small Business Administration

National Small Business Week

Mark your calendar for National Small Business Week 2016 – May 1-7, 2016. SBA will be holding events in Atlanta, Denver, Phoenix and Oakland. For more information, visit <https://www.sba.gov/nsbw/>

Network News and Moves - King, Kowalski and Markopoulos

Please join us in recognizing and congratulating **Esther King, Randy Kowalski and Margo Markopoulos** for their recent promotions at the Illinois Department of Commerce.

Esther King our former Deputy Director of the OEIT is transitioning to a role as Senior Advisor to the Director, and will be focusing on building effective processes for managing my schedule, public presentations, and key relationships. The Director is grateful that Esther has agreed to take on this new role, and firmly believes that her help and advice will allow him to better lead the Department and manage the critical relationships needed to succeed as a team. Esther will remain based in Chicago.

We'll Miss You, Esther !!

Randy Kowalski has joined our team as our new Deputy Director of the Office of Entrepreneurship, Innovation, & Technology (OEIT). Randy has been assisting the Agency with the Angel Investment Tax Credit program for the last month or so, and we are thrilled to have him join us in this key leadership role. Randy has a strong background in finance, most recently running his own institutional brokerage. Randy has also served as an executive at both HSBC and Morgan Stanley. Randy will be based in Chicago.

Welcome, Randy !!

Margo Markopoulos has accepted a promotion to Deputy Director, Office of Trade & Investment. Margo has been with the Department for 8 years, and has been serving as Acting Deputy Director for several months. Prior to that, Margo was the Department's Export Program Director for 3 years. Margo also serves as the coordinator of the Governor's Export Advisory Council. Margo will continue to be based out of Chicago. **Congratulations, Margo!!**

America's SBDC Network Connect

The latest edition of the [America's SBDC Network Connect Newsletter](#) can be found by [CLICKING HERE](#). Check out the access to a number of resources available to your Illinois SBDC as a part of the America's SBDC Network.

Happy Thanksgiving !!!

All of us at the OEIT and the Illinois SBDC Network would like to wish you and your loved ones the very, very best for the upcoming Holiday Season. Have a very Peaceful, Joyful and Happy Thanksgiving Holiday Weekend as we come together to demonstrate our gratitude and give thanks for all of our many blessings. Enjoy !!!

Happy Thanksgiving

The **WEEKLY CONNECTION** is distributed by the Illinois SBDC and Illinois Department of Commerce Office of Entrepreneurship, Innovation & Technology each Monday to members of the Illinois SBDC Network to provide our service delivery partners with current updates on small business issues, opportunities and resources. Please send information to share with the Illinois SBDC Network to Tom.Becker@illinois.gov. Please feel free to forward this update to any other interested resource providers and key stakeholders.



Illinois Department of Commerce

& Economic Opportunity

OFFICE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP,
INNOVATION & TECHNOLOGY

Bruce Rauner, Governor

