



Providing Professional Guidance for Business Growth

December 7, 2015

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Spotlight on Success – My Special Pocket

For the last two decades, Martha Lamont has had a winning idea and no one to tell about it. As a nurse, Ms. Lamont, who is 71 and lives in Benton, cared for hundreds of children with feeding tubes and diabetic pumps that made finding clothes that fit, more difficult. "I saw it over and over again," Ms. Lamont said. "And I knew I had a way to help them out, but I didn't know the first thing about making it happen." She first met with the **Illinois Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale (SIU-C)** in 2012 to start her company, My Special Pocket

Cue InnovateHER, a national competition, created by the US **Small Business Administration** that looks for products "designed to impact and empower women and families." Cities around the country, including Carbondale, invited people to pitch their ideas for women and family-centered products.

On Tuesday, Ms. Lamont brought her idea for a children's clothing line that includes pockets and openings for medical devices before a group of judges at Southern Illinois University where she won top prize. "I was just so shocked, I still can't get over it," she said. "This is something I've been thinking about for a long time, but I never thought it would win."

The **SBDC at SIU-C** hosted the event, and gathered sponsorships to grant Lamont a \$1,000 award. **Greg Bouhl**, the **SBDC at SIU-C** director, said his team was excited to participate and give these niche-market inventors a sounding board. "If you think about the way the demographics have changed over the last five or six decades, it's been a big jump for the workforce," he said. "We don't always think about what products need to be made to keep up."

He said the judges and business consultants responded to the simplicity and potential of the clothing line. "This is a product that could impact parents and lift the spirits of a family, and that's important," Greg said. "There aren't a lot of avenues for those kind of ideas to be heard."

Ms. Lamont was glad to have people with business experience to share her idea with. "There was no other way to get this idea out to the public," she said. "It felt so good to hear that they thought this was valid idea."

Along with Ms. Lamont's idea, the pitches included an energy drink specifically for women, a learning center for mothers and daughters and a community garden made only with organic materials.

In March, Ms. Lamont will travel to Washington, D.C., for the next phase of the competition and a chance at winning \$70,000 to put toward her business plan. Greg looks forward to helping Ms. Lamont along the way. "This is a really unique way for ideas to be heard," he said. "In this line of work, it's always amazing what people will come up with that you never think of."

SBDC's In The News

As members of the Illinois SBDC Network develop success stories, media releases or anything that highlights the good work you do for small businesses in your community, please be sure to send these publications along to Trevor Lawson at trevor.lawson@illinois.gov and your Network Coordinator. We would like to highlight some of those published success in this column and also use other information on your centers here at the state office. We would like to leverage these successes and publications on social media to help further promote our value in the state. So essentially, if you're doing anything that you think would help make your center look relevant and good, send it along to trevor.lawson@illinois.gov and your Network Coordinator. Thank You.

Maximizing Neoserra – Seeing Advisor Expertise

See the example of the filter below to find advisors with an expertise you need. We hope to expand the areas of expertise options in the future.

The screenshot shows the 'Advisors / Advisors' interface with the following filter parameters:

- Status: Active
- Area(s) of Expertise: Pharmaceutical
- Center: College of DuPage

The resulting list of advisors is as follows:

Advisor	ID	Status	Email Address	Office Phone	Center
Larry Bussow	0123	Active	lbussow@att.net	630-877-5538	ILSBDC/ITC/PTAC @ College of DuPage
Eddie Soto	001871	Active	edsoto16@gmail.com	8478337209	ILSBDC/ITC @ College of Lake County

Neoserra Entry Deadlines

Due to last week's strategic planning session and the upcoming Holidays the deadlines for entering information into the NeoSerra system for the months of November and December have been extended.

Data entry for November 2015 must be completed before Close of Business on **12/16/15**.

Data entry for December 2015 must be completed before Close of Business on **1/15/16**.

Valued Resources – You Can Book Me

Steve Bob, Associate Director at the Illinois Small Business Development Center at University of Illinois Chicago, uses the free You Can Book Me to schedule client appointments. Clients can see what time slots are available and book online. This schedule can link with Google or iCloud calendars. Learn more at: <https://youcanbook.me/>

Chicago Kent Patent Hub

A Pro Bono Program for Illinois Inventors - The Chicago-Kent Patent Hub, a program of Chicago-Kent College of Law, facilitates the placement of qualified, under-resourced inventors with the pro bono legal assistance of licensed patent attorneys.

Launched by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office in 2011, the Patent Pro Bono Program is now offered in all 50 states. Regional program administrators match inventors who qualify (based on income threshold and other requirements) with local patent agents or attorneys licensed to practice before the Patent and Trademark Office. Under this program, the Chicago-Kent Patent Hub coordinates services to inventors in Illinois.

Eligibility

To qualify for services from the Chicago-Kent Patent Hub, an inventor must be Illinois-based and have a total household income of less than 300% of the federal poverty guidelines issued each year by the Department of Health and Human Services.

For example, in 2015, this amount is about \$35,300 for a single person, and \$60,270 for a family of three.

In addition, the inventor must demonstrate an understanding of the patent process and what can be done with a patent once it is received. This can be done by completing a training module on the Patent and Trademark Office website or showing a filing receipt for having filed a provisional patent. There are additional requirements for small businesses.

Payment of USPTO Fees

While the services provided by patent agents and attorneys are provided pro bono (without fees), accepted applicants are responsible for all Patent and Trademark Office fees and any other necessary costs and charges outside of attorney fees.

Details and Application

Details about the program as well links to additional information and to the inventor application can be found at www.kentlaw.iit.edu/patentprobono. Questions can be directed to Mary Anne Smith, Director, Chicago-Kent Patent Hub, 312-906-5379, msmith@kentlaw.iit.edu.

America's SBDC Network Call for Presentations

America's SBDC Annual Conference is the number one professional development event for the national SBDC Network, providing the latest information and techniques to enhance consultation skills, improve the training programs, or increase center metrics and productivity. America's SBDC Annual Conference will be held September 19-22, 2016 at the Hyatt Regency, in beautiful Orlando, Florida.

America's SBDC Professional Development and Education Conference Committee seeks proposals for 1.5 hour, 3-hour (half day), and 6-hour (full day) programs. Though the conference draws nearly 1500 professionals from across the country, the number of participants per program could range 35-150 people.

The Four key areas of education include: 1) advisor core competencies; 2) advanced consultant skills; 3) center management (including State/Region, Associate, and Center Directors; 4) specialty[NSB1] programs. Topics in marketing and sales, counseling and leadership, management and planning, finance and accounting, technology, self-improvement, and international trade may be submitted for consideration.

The Theme for the conference is "Generational Change" - your workshop submission will need to incorporate the theme within your workshop presentation; whether in the opening, the closing, or you weave the theme throughout the presentation.

Your workshop submission should include a presentation (PowerPoint slide deck) and/or handouts OR an in depth outline, as this will provide the Professional Development Committee the information needed to review your submission. Updates to submissions are permitted prior to review by the Conference Committee, and if selected, presentations can be updated prior to conference. The sessions submitted should enhance the quality of SBDC services and provide the SBDC Network practical information to either assist small businesses or improve their centers. Criteria for selection include: quality of the proposal, clarity and organization, creativity and/or delivery method, ability to deliver in prescribed time frame, and fit to the professional development needs of the SBDC. We are now accepting submissions conducted in Spanish.

Submissions should include title (40 characters or less), brief description, program outline or agenda, and program learning objectives.

Additional workshop information can be found on America's SBDC website; www.AmericasSBDC.org/conference. WiFi internet access will be provided throughout the entire conference area, if your workshop submission includes streaming a video - it may come at an additional cost to you or your center, as this will require a dedicated internet cable into the workshop room.

Returning submitters may use the same login and password, while those posting submissions for the first time will be required to set up user login and password. A sample proposal format is posted on America's SBDC conference portal. This is a guideline for coordinating your proposal online submission. A complete[NSB2] list of topics of interest is also available at the conference portal.

Completed submissions are due by January 31, 2016.

You may submit your proposal(s) here: [Online Submissions Page](#)

We are not accepting any submissions for Key Note Speakers.

All proposal questions should be referred to Brett Thibodeau (Brett@AmericasSBDC.org) at America's SBDC: 703-764-9855. We look forward to seeing you in September, 2016 at in Orlando.

Seasons Greetings

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.



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