

Belknap Matters

June 2008

Welcome

The Belknap County Economic Development Council is proud to welcome these new investors:

- Hannaford Supermarket
- Gunstock Inn & Fitness Center
- Shell Crest Vacation Rentals
- Winnepesaukee Motorsports LLC

The BCEDC serves the businesses and organizations of the 11 municipalities in Belknap County. The Council offers a range of support and technical services, in addition to a Revolving Loan Fund. For more information, please contact:

Belknap County Economic Development Council

Lakes Venture Resource Center
 Southern NH University – Laconia Center
 2 Airport Road, Gilford, NH 03249
 603-524-3057
 www.bcedc.org
 www.liveworkandplaynh.com



Annual Meeting & Awards

The annual meeting of the Belknap County Economic Development Council Board of Incorporators was held March 27 at Church Landing in Meredith, where more than 130 business and community leaders gathered for an evening of camaraderie and celebration. The event featured the release of the Council's 2007 Annual Report, subtitled "Change and Progress," a theme which was repeated throughout the program and which culminated in remarks by principal speaker, economist Russ Thibeault, and a presentation from the Lakes Region Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy steering committee. Also released was the Belknap County Economic Snapshot for 2007, which noted that the economic strength of the county, ranked 17th among 576 micropolitans, continues to be strong; Belknap has consistently ranked in the top 10th percentile.

Newly elected Incorporators include Patricia Fuller, *Alton*; Michael Kowalski, *Barnstead*; Ronald Cormier, *Belmont*; Nathaniel Abbott, *Gilmanton*; Ken Mertz, *New Hampton*; Joanne Phillips, *All Metal Industries*; Donna Gaudet Hosmer, *AutoServ Tilton*; Diane Hanley, *Laconia Conservation Commission ad hoc*; Deborah Jordan, *Northway Bank*; K. Mark Primeau, *Laconia Savings Bank*; Lou Guevin, *Laconia Savings Bank*; Paige Quigley, *The Wilder Company*; Norm Soucy, *Aavid Thermalloy*; and Kristian Svindland, *HRO Plus*.

A highlight of the Council's annual meeting is the presentation of awards. This year, the Council recognized the economic and philanthropic investments of U.S.D.A. Rural Development, the Bahre Family of NHIS, and restaurateur Alex Ray. The Corporate Soul Award was presented to U.S.D.A. Rural Development for its encouragement, investment, and support of economic vitality of businesses and communities in Belknap County, citing the more than \$9 million invested in 2006 and 2007. The 2007 Director's Award honored the Bahre Family of New Hampshire International Speedway for two decades of making a substantial



Steve Epstein of USDA Rural Development



Bob Bahre and BCEDC's John Thomas



Alex Ray with BCEDC Chair Greg Goddard

B·C·E·D·C

BELKNAP COUNTY
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Board of Directors

Officers

Greg Goddard, Chair
Gunstock Mountain Resort
David Haley, Vice Chair
Munsey & Brazil Insurance Agency
Michael Persson, Esq., Treasurer
Lawson & Persson, P.C.
Tom Garfield, Secretary
Laconia Savings Bank

Directors

Bill Beyer
Meredith Village Savings Bank
Christopher Boothby
Commissioner, Belknap County
Fred Clausen
Proctor's Lakehouse Cottages
Dale Dormody
DK Net Deign
Mark Edelstein, Ph.D.
Lakes Region Community College
Ed Engler
Laconia Daily Sun
Tony Ferruolo
Hospitality Consultant
James Fitzgerald
Former State Representative
Debbie Frawley Drake
Lakes Region Linen
Kim Koulet
Lakes Region Planning Commission
Henry Lipman
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Don Morrissey
Retired Educator
Andy Patterson
LRGHealthcare
Steven J. Smith
Steven J. Smith & Associates
Sean Sullivan
Nathan Wechsler & Company, PA
Representative John Thomas
Belknap County Delegation
Representative Jane Wood
Patrick Wood Law Office, PLLC

Staff

Jennifer Boulanger
Executive Director
Maria Del Rio
Loan Fund Manager
Lyn O'Callaghan
Program Coordinator



Retiring BCEDC Secretary Joe LaPlante with incoming BCEDC Vice Chair David Haley

economic impact on the travel and tourism sector of New Hampshire's economy, as well as for generosity to countless non-profit causes. The Council presented local restaurateur and philanthropist Alex Ray, founder of The Common Man family of restaurants, with the Norman Marsh Award in recognition of Ray's success in building his 14 popular restaurants which employ more than 800 people, for his creative adaptation and reuse of buildings, and for his outstanding vision, commitment, and leadership in raising funds for and awareness of worthy causes.

Retiring BCEDC Board Secretary, Joe LaPlante, received the 2007 Appreciation Award for his commitment to the organization. Two longtime members of the BCEDC Board of Directors, Stewart Lamprey (who retired in 2007) and Jim Dirubbo (who retired this year), were conferred the title and privileges of Incorporator Emeritus.

Elected to the BCEDC Board of Directors for a three-year term expiring in March 2011 were Bill Beyer, *Meredith Village Savings Bank*; Dale Dormody, *DK Net Design*; Ed Engler, *Laconia Daily Sun*; Greg Goddard, *Gunstock Mountain Resort*; Kimon Koulet, *Lakes Region Planning Commission*; Michael Persson, *Lawson & Person, P.C.*; Steve Smith, *Steven Smith & Associates*; and Sean Sullivan, *Nathan Wechsler & Company*. Officers of the BCEDC Board of Directors in 2008-2009 are Greg Goddard, *chair*; David Haley, *vice chair*; Michael Persson, *treasurer*; and Tom Garfield, *secretary*.



Do You Know Your Council?

Created in 1992, Belknap County Economic Development Council works to foster a climate that promotes a balance of quality employment and economic opportunities. Our better known services include direct loans to businesses, financial counseling, regulatory advice, tips on researching international markets, and securing a trained workforce. We also help people develop their start-up business plans, register a trade name or logo, and determine their working capital needs. We link businesses with resources to help identify available sites or facilities, construct new, or adapt something for a completely new life. We secure and interpret data needed by businesses. Over the last 13 years, the county-wide Revolving Loan Fund has assisted 36 businesses with loans totaling in excess of \$6.5 million. In addition, we have helped businesses throughout the region secure financing from either commercial or non-traditional lenders.

Our Business Information Center (BIC) provides valuable resources such as reference books, statistical reports, and business software. We have partnered with Chambers of Commerce, agencies and associations to market the region and its economic opportunities.

The Council could not accomplish this without the support of the greater community. A very significant partnership is that between the Council and Southern New Hampshire University which continues to stand by our work by donating our suite of offices. We are deeply grateful that Belknap County continues to recognize the role the Council plays by annually investing approximately 25% of our operating funds. The balance is raised from the business community either through direct investment, the purchase of tax credits, or as loan clients. Many member businesses invest in the BCEDC even though they do not receive our services directly. They invest because they recognize the role the Council plays in enhancing regional economic vitality for all businesses. Won't you join us?

Together we make a difference!

Soft Skills

Teaching New (and Old) Dogs Old (and New) Tricks

by Denise Sleeper, CWDP, GCDF, and Heather Carson, CWDP, GCDF

Soft skills are a confusing topic for both employees and employers, for both rookies starting out and old pros who have been in the workforce for years. In a nutshell, soft skills can be described as the successful integration of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills into the workplace. What does that mouthful mean? For one thing, it means demonstrating communication skills in all of our responsibilities and relationships. As employees, this may mean asking appropriate questions when we don't understand our assigned duties or telling a supervisor in advance when we suspect a problem with a deadline or coworker. For employers, it also means understanding that people have different communication styles so sometimes we need to follow up with our workers to make sure our goals and expectations are being understood. Just like communication, most soft skills are a two-way street.

Soft skills also encompass respect for ourselves and others. If we can accept that we are all different in our communication style, learning style, temperament, and life experience, we can be more tolerant when someone else's style doesn't match our own. Too often, conflicts arise at work because people, both employees and employers, assume that all people see the world the way they do, and that there is only one correct way to see it.

Why should employers care about soft skills? Aside from producing an environment where people want to belong, and thereby retaining experienced employees longer, soft skills are essential to maximizing productivity. It all comes back to time, money and resources lost. Supervisors don't want to be kindergarten teachers or referees. They want to coach, guide and mentor their staff to meet company goals as efficiently as possible, not spend time babysitting poor quality workers. Supervisors want to manage the daily functions of their business, not referee the latest fight between two inflexible employees.

How do we get soft skills? Through simultaneous effort. In a perfect world, we would like to think that all employees and employers possess a long list of desired soft skills: professional work ethic, strong communication skills, teamwork, and problem solving, to name some important categories. Experience teaches us that this is simply not the case. So what can employers do?

- **State the obvious** in employee manuals and new employee orientation so employees more easily make the connections between the desired outcomes and their daily behaviors.
- **Provide employees** with "big picture" knowledge so they can see how their daily jobs relate to the company's goals and mission.
- **Invest in**, encourage, and participate in on-going training in the areas of communication, self-assessment, team relations, problem solving and managing conflict. A little bit of knowledge goes a very long way.
- **Learn how to screen** for "soft skills" during the interview process.
- **Encourage employees** and potential new hires to obtain a National Workplace Readiness credential from a qualified outside training source. At the very least, this will provide a base line for knowing that they have heard what is important to being successful in the workplace.
- Finally, **continue to encourage** our high schools, colleges and training programs to include more of the essential soft skills training in the curriculum before sending graduates into the workforce.

Research shows that soft skills training can improve worker performance and overall productivity for both incumbent workers and new hires when such training is tied to how each employee impacts an organization's mission and achievement of its goals.



For more information about this topic and the National Workplace Readiness credential, e-mail Denise at dsleeper@second-start.org or visit www.second-start.org

References:

J. Dawson-Threat, "Strategy for Maturing the Basic Soft Skill Sets of New Hires and Incumbent Workers", *Journal of Workforce Development Professionals*, Volume 4, Number 1, Spring 2008: pp. 1-10.

"Are They Ready to Work?", Conference Board Inc., The Partnerships for 21st Century Skills and the Society for Human Resources Management, 2006.

Leadership Lakes Region

Leadership Lakes Region is designed to educate and inform area individuals about numerous issues at work in the Lakes Region and to foster a climate of greater volunteerism among its graduates. The program begins with an orientation, continues with six workshops, and ends with a graduation/wrap-up session.

Leadership Lakes Region is now accepting applications for 2008-2009 program. For details about the next session or to learn about the benefits of sponsorship, please contact the Leadership Lakes Region Program Coordinator, Marian Gill at 524-6791 or email leadershiplakes@hotmail.com. Visit the website: www.leadershiplakesregion.org



"Training for Tomorrow's Leaders"



BELKNAP COUNTY

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Lakes Venture Resource Center at SNHU - Laconia Center

2 Airport Road | Gilford, NH 03249 | www.bcedc.org

Together we make a difference

SCORE

Client Preserves a Lakes Region Business



Congratulations to SCORE Lakes Region Branch manager, Leo B. Glasheen, Jr., who was named SCORE Counselor of the Year by the NH Small Business Development Center. Leo was honored at the 2008 SBA Small Business Awards Luncheon held May 15 in Manchester.

Two years ago, the owner of Newfound Computer was contemplating closing his 16-year-old business and moving to North Carolina. Learning of that decision, Anthony Putorek's interest in the computer service business sparked in him a desire to keep it going. In June of 2006, he applied for business advice at the SCORE Lakes Region Branch. Leo Glasheen was assigned the case and immediately set up a meeting with Putorek. After the two worked to establish the worth of the business, examined the existing customer base of several thousand, and conducted a market evaluation, Putorek felt comfortable about buying the business.

The first step was to move the business to establish a much-needed service in New Hampton. Putorek renamed it All About Computers and operates the business from his home. In addition to computer service, the company offers network cable installation, wireless setup, and router and switch configurations. The company has not only retained most of its customers but has grown two-fold.

Operating a one-man business means Putorek wears all the hats. After working an eight-hour day, he keeps the books, grows the business through various marketing techniques, and stays current with the latest computer technology. His three-year plan is to take on a skilled partner and focus on market growth. He feels if you don't grow the business, you eventually will lose market share.

Glasheen always advises his clients to do something different than the competition. Putorek spent numerous hours and incurred expense to educate himself on many facets of computer technology. The certificates he proudly displays in his shop illustrate his industry knowledge and inspire in his customers confidence that their property is in good hands. All About Computers can be reached at 603-968-4080 or www.aacnh.com.

