

Centralia College: Lewis EDC Provides Opportunity for Potential Business Owners to Discuss Possibilities

Entrepreneur Networking

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Entrepreneurial Spirit Comes Front and Center at Networking Event By Christopher Brewer / cbrewer@chronline.com | 0 comments

Sparking a desire among aspiring entrepreneurs in Lewis County was the focus of an event at Centralia College Tuesday evening, as several people who have gone on to be successful starting local businesses networked with college students and area business professionals.

The Lewis Economic Development Council and Centralia College teamed up to host the event, which served as an opportunity for people to hear from entrepreneurs and ask questions on how they can start their own businesses if they so desire.

The goal was to spark interest among people who aspire to start their own business by hearing from local people who have done so themselves. One such person, Tim Saylor of Service Saw in Chehalis, said the event reminded him of a time that he knew he wanted to be an entrepreneur but just didn't know what direction to go.

"I didn't know what I was going to do, but I knew I had to work 20 of 24 hours in a day and enjoy it," Saylor said. "My business came to be because another was closing. ... In the end, it was on me to have the work ethic."

Consultant John Diefendorf spoke of an added benefit of being an entrepreneur: being able to give back to one's community outside his or her business. He mentioned the work of the Chehalis Foundation, composed primarily of business owners and leaders who have a goal to improve the schools and quality of life of all Chehalis residents.

Success in entrepreneurship, he said, starts with simply dreaming big and having a drive to succeed.

"If you think big, your life gets exciting and excites people around you," Diefendorf said. "If you don't, you usually end up working for someone who does."

Julie Young, owner of Dick's Brewery, spoke of her role in ownership of the business she inherited when her father died. The Centralia-based brewery continues its success and will crank it up further with the addition of a brewpub in downtown Centralia sometime in 2015.

"It's been a big learning curve, but it's been very rewarding," Young said.

The road to entrepreneurship isn't all smooth, many there agreed; in fact, there will be times that a prospective business owner will encounter resistance along the way. Saylor had a rather unique word of encouragement he shared that he hoped would resonate in the minds of the area's future business owners.

"I want to tell you all the bad things, because if you don't accept them then you'll probably be a good business owner," Saylor said, eliciting a few chuckles. "Don't be afraid, and have people around you willing to help."

Matt Matayoshi, executive director of the EDC, said Tuesday evening's gathering would be the first of many events of that nature to be held as the economy shows signs of improvement in Lewis County.

"We're getting the people on the bus, and the right people in the right seats," Matayoshi said.