

[print](#)

Helping hands

by Ashley Fuller
afuller@cherokeetribune.com
03.19.10 - 12:00 am



The Cherokee Office of Economic Development and the Cherokee County Chamber of Commerce are pushing a program this year to help new and small businesses keep their doors open.

Through the Resource Services from Valuable Professionals program, a new or small business owner can get a free one-hour consultation with an established business owner. The mentor

can help the small business owner with specific problems and gives feedback on new ideas.

The program is a joint venture between the chamber of commerce and the office of economic development.

Misti Martin, president of the office of economic development, said staff is developing a marketing piece to unveil in the community later this year.

"People need help now more than ever," she said about the need to get the program known throughout the county.

Wendy Corlett of Acclaim Professional Services is a mentor through the program and recently worked with Cheek Electrical Mechanical in Woodstock to help the company with the Quickbooks program and with accounting regulations and procedures.

Corlett said she is hopeful the program will catch on with other small businesses. Some of the benefits for new and small businesses include guidance on growing sales and increasing market share, turning weaknesses into strengths, solutions to business issues, creating operational efficiencies, increasing brand awareness, financial and tax planning advice, expense reduction, and strategic planning.

"It is vitally important in the county that company start-ups are solid and know what they need to do," Corlett said.

The first hour of consultation with a mentor is free.

"Sometimes, that is all it takes," Ms. Corlett said, adding that the experience through the program has "now developed into a relationship beyond the RSVP program."

Beth Cheek, owner of Cheek Electrical Mechanical, said participating in the program should be a "no-brainer," especially for a new business. She said it can

also be useful for small businesses that have been around for several years.

"I don't know of anybody who could not benefit in some way," she said.

More than helping with paperwork, the program also can introduce a business owner to what is going on throughout the county. Mrs. Cheek said that working with Mrs. Corlett has pushed her to become a member of the Cherokee County Chamber of Commerce. It can also generate some business for the mentors.

"I have mentioned her to other business people that I know," Mrs. Cheek said.

For more information about the RSVP program, call the chamber of commerce at (770) 345-0400 or the office of economic development at (770) 345-0600.

© cherokeetribune.com 2010