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### **Operation JumpStart Classes at MSCC Preparing Participants for Challenges of Starting, Maintaining, Boosting a Business**

Entrepreneurship classes offered at Mid-South Community College in collaboration with the Delta Regional Authority, U.S. Small Business Administration, and Southeast Missouri State University are helping area residents achieve their dreams.

Operation JumpStart training on the MSCC campus is giving business owners and those interesting in starting a business the foundational information for financial success. The objective of the effort is to increase the capacity for communities to train, support, and mentor aspiring entrepreneurs and to accelerate the number of new ventures created each year throughout the region.



***Pictured from left are Tim Davie, Justin Rogers, Linda Rogers, Freida Ellis, Eric Wells, Trista Blakely, Gary Rice, and Willie Robinson Jr.***

“I would highly recommend it,” said Linda Rogers of West Memphis, who graduated from the first class this summer. “I think anyone who is considering starting a business should take this course. The resources were good, and it also gave me the opportunity to make some really good contacts.”

“It gave me a little bit of everything and provided a broader picture of what it takes to start a business. I really enjoyed the class and found it helpful. I had not done anything at the community college previously and was just not aware of the talent and resources available there.”

At the first class meeting, Rogers indicated an interest in starting a retail/e-commerce type of business and said being asked to put her plan on paper was “extremely helpful to me.”

Willie Robinson Jr. of Robinson’s Electrical Repair and Service Co., Inc., who has been in business for about 28 years, said the training helped open his eyes to some new opportunities and to some organizational areas where he can improve.

“The training really does what it says; it jumpstarts you and helps you head in the right direction,” he said. “I thought I had a pretty good handle on my business, but now I really know what to do and am looking forward to putting what I learned into action.”

“I realized I didn’t have much structure or a business plan, and I wasn’t focused on marketing. The class put me in a mood to study the market and my competition. It helped me understand the importance of developing strategies to negotiate the system. I wanted to build on my existing business, and the classes helped me out a lot.”

James Van Terry serves as the training facilitator, and class participants complete numerous in- and out-of-class assignments relevant to the business realm. Pete Selden, MSCC Coordinator of Workforce Education, said the training emphasizes real-world applications and connections.

“When our students complete the curriculum, they leave with a feasibility plan for their business and a completed cash flow statement which includes a detailed budget of expected expenses and estimated profits,” Selden explained.

“Throughout the class, we have resources from the community come in and provide guidance and insight into some of the specific areas of business. Fidelity National Bank, the City Clerk’s Office, the West Memphis Chamber of Commerce, and

alt. Consulting help to provide guest speakers, and we have everything from accountants to business lawyers to talk about the different aspects of creating, owning, and operating a business.”

Students also have the opportunity to share their business idea or concept with people who can help them realize their dream.

“Not only is the content interactive, but we also engage the students by providing opportunities for networking,” Selden said. “Instead of just telling them they need to see this or that person, we give them the information and then bring those people to class.”

Selden said aspiring business owners also benefit from talking with classmates who already own one.

“They are able to share their challenges and ideas and learn from each other, especially from those who are already in business. The evaluations and comments from the first class were all positive, and we feel like all of the students left with something they can use.”

In addition to Rogers and Robinson, other graduates from the first class included Trista Blakely, Tim Davie, Freida Ellis, Gary Rice, Justin Rogers, and Eric Wells. Blakely and Davie had such a positive experience that they returned to provide the welcome for the second class which began in August.

MSCC received a \$19,950 grant to provide the training. The Delta Regional Authority and the Douglas C. Greene Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship at Southeast Missouri State announced the program that included \$185,000 in grants funded by the U.S. Small Business Administration’s PRIME program and the DRA.

“Access to training and resources is crucial to developing successful small businesses and creating good-paying jobs for the people of the Delta region,” said Chris Masingill, the Federal Co-Chairman of the DRA. “This program is one in a series of initiatives we are supporting to accelerate entrepreneurship and continue building our economy of the future.”

MSCC’s goal is to train a minimum of 30 entrepreneurs with the expectation that 15 new small businesses will be created.

For information about training and learning opportunities on the MSCC campus, call (870) 733-6728, visit the campus at 2000 West Broadway in West Memphis, see the website at [www.midsouthcc.edu](http://www.midsouthcc.edu), or send an email to [admissions@midsouthcc.edu](mailto:admissions@midsouthcc.edu).