

Growing Businesses . . . Building Communities

Small Manufacturing Businesses – Productive In Our Community

Although it looks a lot different than it did 25 years ago, manufacturing is alive and well in Franklin County and North Quabbin. No longer do we have a few big companies that employ thousands. Instead there are hundreds of smaller, more flexible and efficient operations growing up all around us. And the Franklin County CDC is there to help.

The manufacturing sector currently employs the largest percentage of Franklin County workers. This makes Franklin County unique: 20.1% of our workers are employed in the manufacturing sector compared to 9.5% in the state as a whole. When large manufacturing plants close or layoff people it usually makes headline news. But when an entrepreneur starts making something in his basement and then moves into a business incubator with two employees, and then adds another seven over the next two years, it rarely attracts much attention. The CDC has helped hundreds of these types of businesses over the years and they account for thousands of jobs for area residents. You can read about a few of these businesses in this newsletter.

The CDC assists local companies because we know that locally grown businesses are more likely

to stay in the area as they grow and mature. SmallCorp, Hillside Plastics, Lightlife Foods, Heatfab, Main Street Millworks, Applied Dynamics, South River Miso, Ewing Controls, and Silver Screen Design are just a few of the companies that started small and now provide more than 500 good jobs right here in our backyard. And all of these businesses were helped by the CDC.

It takes economic diversity to make a healthy

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community and that's why the CDC assists all types of businesses. Future issues of this newsletter will feature some of the food producers, restaurants, farms, artisans, retail and service businesses that we assist. If you're a business owner, an

employee, an employer, a consumer, a neighbor or resident of Franklin County or the North Quabbin, I invite you to learn more about the CDC. Plan to attend our Annual Meeting (see back page for details) or contact us to find out how you can get involved in helping to build sustainable businesses and communities.

Thank you for your part in supporting our community.

Sustainably yours,
John Waite
Executive Director

FCCDC Staff

John Waite, Executive Director
Dennis Gemme, Accountant
Amy Shapiro, Technical Assistance Program Manager
Herb Heller, Food Processing Center Manager
Larry DiLuzio, Food Processing Center Assistant Manager

Linda Marks, Food Processing Center
Production Assistant
Alan Singer, Lending Manager
Susan Laing, Lending Assistant
Judy Scherer, Bookkeeper/
Business Programs Coordinator

Colrain Mountain Candle

In July of this year Russ Peck made the tough decision that faces most entrepreneurs — he left his day job to devote his energy full time to Colrain Mountain Candleworks, a business he launched with his wife, Nancy, in October of 2002. “I felt the candle business was being held back because I didn’t have time because of my other job,” he said. The decision has already paid off, in the form of an 85% increase in sales over last year.

The candles are all produced in a former garage next to their house by Russ and Nancy and some occasional part-time staff. After only five years in business Colrain Mountain Candleworks has about 70 wholesale accounts around the country, and sells additional candles at fairs and craft events and through a website.

“One thing that accounts for our success is the help we got from Franklin County CDC,” says Russ. In the spring of 2003 he took the Business Planning course and found it



“helpful in teaching me the way to approach developing a business plan and how to modify it as you go along – it’s not a static thing.”

FCCDC has continued to be helpful, adds Russ. “Amy Shapiro [Technical Assistance Program Manager at FCCDC] has been very helpful in being willing to sit down and talk whenever I have questions planning and moving forward.” FCCDC is also providing Russ’ business with a bookkeeper to help develop accounting systems.

“I enjoy being my own boss,” says Russ, “but knowing when to take some time off is hard. Being self-employed you can find things to do seven days a week, 16 hours a day, and sometimes I do that.”

“The CDC is a great resource for anybody who has a small business or who has a notion that they want to start one,” says Russ. “It’s a very valuable source of information and help.”

Manufacturing is alive and well...

The Button Box

Like many small businesses, The Button Box was established in 1986 as a hobby. Today they’re one of the premier crafters of concertinas and accordions, making about 100 instruments a year in their Sunderland shop and selling them to individuals and dealers in the US, Ireland and England. But they’re finding that’s not enough, says manager Doug Creighton. With 30-40 instruments regularly on back order, the business wants to expand production to cover that demand.

“We’re using the CDCs resources and contacts to help us expand” says Doug. FCCDC has connected the Button Box with a number of valuable resources, he says, and has provided funding for Don Stone, an accounting consultant, to review the business’ books and revamp the company’s accounting systems.



In addition, FCCDC connected The Button Box with the Manufacturers Extension Partnership (MEP). Three MEP business consultants spent two days reviewing everything about the company and gave them a written report and presentation, laying out a strategic planning process that has been very helpful in strengthening the company’s ability to set and reach its own goals, says Doug.

“Working with everyone from the CDC has been a very positive experience,” says Doug. “At no point did I feel like they were rolling their eyes, snickering or shaking their heads when I told the truth about how I was using financial statements. Their responses were all positive and encouraging.”

eRolls

eRolls is a full service manufacturer and supplier of industrial rolls and related equipment, focusing on the paper, converting and advanced composites industries. The materials produced in the company's factory in Orange are used worldwide, but the company is very much a local business, committed to its community. "We take raw stock and turn it into a finished product," says Jim Spooner, who started eRolls in 2000. "Nobody thinks this country does that anymore."



The company has grown a great deal in the last seven years, but when business wasn't doing so well, after the terrorist attacks in 2001, Jim turned to FCCDC. "Alan Singer [Lending Manager at FCCDC] came in and really got to know our business and us," says Jim. That led to a \$150,000 loan from the CDC in November of 2003, an infusion

of much needed working capital that allowed the business to grow. "Banks aren't interested in supporting start up manufacturing," says Jim, "but the CDC was."

Support from FCCDC didn't end there. "They came in and really got to know our business," says Jim. "They get involved, they're willing to learn and they want to help. They're not just trying to make money. They actually want to see manufacturing in this area and are willing to take a risk."

When he first contacted FCCDC eRolls had a staff of four people and about \$300,000 of business each year. Today the staff has grown to eleven and the company will have more than \$2 million in business this year.

...in Franklin County and North Quabbin

NEWS BRIEFS FROM FCCDC

FCCDC has applied for another \$50,000 from the Massachusetts Small Business Office to continue providing Technical Assistance to small businesses

This past July, sixty Food Producers displayed their products to buyers at the CDC's 2nd Annual Food Show. This past year also marked the fifth anniversary of the Food Processing Center.

The CDC has been helping the Greenfield Mercantile, a Community-Owned Department Store, develop their business plan and they have just begun selling shares.

The CDC has submitted an application to the Department of Housing & Community Development for

a \$500,000 North Quabbin Loan Fund. This fund will allow us to lend to many more small and growing businesses.

In September, CISA honored the CDC with the Local Hero Award because of our work with farmers. Our Food Processing Center continues to add-value to local produce and our Technical Assistance program helps farmers with their business plans and finances.

FCCDC has selected the construction firm of Mowry & Schmidt to complete more renovations on the First National Bank Building. HUD funding will help pay for window restoration and renovations to the façade and entrance.

Business Training Opportunities at the CDC

- **Monthly Information Sessions**, First Wednesday of each month 3:30-5
- 12 Week class: **Business Planning for Start up and Existing Business Owners** begins November 6th, 6-9 pm
- 12 Week class: **Business Planning for Value Added Food Entrepreneurs** Winter 2008
- 10 Week Business Plan Class, **Tilling the Soil for Farmers**, Winter 2008
- 4 Session class, **Explore Your Business Dream for Farmers**, Spring 2008
- **Business Plan Class Reunion**, November 29, 6-9pm

For more information call 413-774-7204 or check the FCCDC website: www.fccdc.org



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Please join us at FCCDC's Annual Meeting

Wednesday, November 14, 2007 • 4:30 to 7:00 pm
At The Pushkin, corner of Federal and Main, downtown Greenfield, MA

Learn about the CDC's exciting projects!

4:00-5:00 pm 28th Annual Meeting

5:00-7:00 pm Reception, featuring refreshments, music and exhibits from CDC clients

Free Admission

Membership contributions accepted at the event • R.S.V.P. judys@fccdc.org or 413-774-7204 ext. 100

www.fccdc.org

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