

April 11, 2006

Issue: Camden County & the Georgia Department of Economic Development's Entrepreneurial Friendly Designation

Camden County is participating in the Georgia Department of Economic Development's Entrepreneur & Small Business Office's (GDECD) community based program to build entrepreneur and small business strategy into the county's overall economic development strategy. The Camden-Kings Bay Area Chamber of Commerce sponsoring this initiative led by local entrepreneurs and community leaders will implement the required eight steps to earn the GDECD's designation of approval for the *Camden! Entrepreneurial Friendly* program. This designation releases a host of economic benefits directly to entrepreneurs and small businesses in Camden County.

Challenging Issues

Currently, the exploding demographic rate of new home owners in Camden County has spurred an increase in entrepreneurs risking the start-up of a business. Small business licenses issued within Camden County are estimated at approximately 1500 to 1800 from year to year. Many of these licensed are persons with a vision and skill but with no business training or knowledge about beginning and sustaining a business.

A primary goal for our Camden County initiative is to develop a skills index matched to federal occupational codes, which will closely link this initiative to the County's ongoing Workforce Development planning initiative. Skilled workers are the backbone for a growing entrepreneurial business. Many jobs require skills that draw higher wages than this county can pay. Success depends on knowing skill needs, educating local population on these skills, and growing the local entrepreneurial business base to pay the higher wage. We will raise awareness for a "buy at home" program.

The "Camden! Entrepreneurial Friendly" Planned Benefits

- Published centralized information source for requirements to start a new business in the Camden County area. Including personal help to create effective business plans and information on matching loan programs from local banks. The Small Business Administration program is helpful, but rarely assists new "start-up" organizations.
- Centralized mentoring program for business to assist with operational challenges.
- Centralized small business database for collection of data to assist local colleges and schools to better plan for skills training to prepare our population for employment in our county and attract appropriate new business.
- Centralized place for ordering documents and resources for owners to remain up-to date on state and federal issues of interest to entrepreneurial owners.
- A Web-site that will provide online links to helpful business strategies and implementation hints.

Action: Requires raising local funds to support the sustaining initiative and tapping other federal and state available resources.

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