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FEATURED

Local program helps jump start Corry businesses

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Sixteen individuals celebrated their successful completion of a Small Business Jump Start program at Corry Higher Education Council on Monday evening. In front, from left are Brent McCray, Stephen Demeter, Jill Burr, Caitlyn Phelps, Keeley Phelps and Morgan Phelps. In back, from left are Michelle Demeter, Crystal Matteson, Beth Fox-Dean, Connor Dean, Kathy Neylon, Matt Richards, Shane Buell, Laban Ehrhart and instructor Gary Svetz. Missing from photo are Brett and Anthony Sproveri.

Rebekah Wallace/The Corry Journal

A group of 16 local businesspeople and aspiring entrepreneurs recently completed a Small Business Jump Start program held in Corry. Their graduation event took place at Corry Higher Education Council on Monday evening.

Participants in the 2022 cohort were Anthony Sproveri, Brett Sproveri, Shane Buell of Buell's Tree and Stump Removal, Connor Dean, Brent McCray, Crystal Matteson, Keeley Phelps, Kathy Neylon and Jill Burr of 3 Broke Girls Gallery, Beth Fox-Dean of Fox Family Insurance, Caitlyn Phelps, Laban Erhart, Morgan Phelps, Matt Richards of Deluxe Barber Co. and Michelle and Stephen Demeter.

The program consists of a nine-week course meant to guide participants in learning business skills and marketing strategies to help further their work on a wide array of business plans and projects. It has been taking place in Corry for three years now, and Gary Svetz, program facilitator and instructor, commented he is proud of this year's participants, stating there was a wide variety of business types and industries being represented.

"I'm pretty amazed at how fast they've grown," he said. "They are enhancing their businesses, and there's quite a few startup ideas. Anything from a machine business to retail. I have two in timber, I have a couple of artisans, photographers and a creative design/drawing person. I have a high school student that wants to open up a graphics company."

Svetz describes the program as a hands-on business workshop that aims to build a network of local business people and a pool of resources for use by the same.

"We're kind of building a pool of Corry entrepreneurs," he said. "We're building a community."

Financial knowledge, marketing strategies and business development are among the numerous topics covered in the course. There are also perks such as free printing of business cards and brochures, discounts on payroll services, a free Chamber of Commerce membership for one year, and more. Participants are also given information about grants and other funding opportunities.

"We try to bring down to earth, ample and real information to our participants," Svetz said, adding that alumni often come back to speak about accounting and other subjects.

"They're there to help people really understand what it takes to run a business," Svetz said. "Not overwhelming, but usable knowledge. We're constantly changing the program to see what works and what doesn't work."

Some of the valuable skills students said they learned were time management, goal setting, creating a business plan and doing expense reports.

Dean, a graphic designer, commented he expects this new knowledge to be useful in the future.



“It will help me because I understand how to identify summary costs, actions to reach goals and expense projections,” he said.

Phelps, an artist, agreed. She said she feels ready to move forward in enhancing and growing her business.

“I’ve learned the things I’ll need and the information I need to know for the foundation of my business,” she said. “By taking this class, I now know where to begin, and I know the resources I’ll need to further my business.”

Following the program, Svetz said he continues to coach these individuals as they go about putting their plans into action.

“I can’t count the number of emails or texts I get from previous program people,” he said. “There’s no charge after the program. There’s support there.”

In a survey, each of the recent graduates stated he or she would recommend the program to others.

Svetz, who has been leading such groups since 2004, coordinates similar programs in Meadville and Venango County.

Betsy Grinder of Your Daily Serving, Donnie Rosie of Rosie Marketing, Josh Dyne of Dynasty Construction Unlimited Inc., Jennifer Utegg of the Juice Shop, Brad Allen of Rossbacher Insurance Group and Corry Hi-Ed’s Brody Howard are a few of the more than 30 participants since the program came to Corry in 2020.

Program sponsors for 2022 are Rossbacher Insurance Group, Svez Consulting Services, Rosie Marketing, Corry Community Foundation, Corry Area Chamber of Commerce, Your Daily Serving, Sawyer Printing, Northwest Charitable Foundation, Save-A-Lot, PMP Printing, Impact Corry, Downtown Corry Business Association, Corry Young Professionals Network and Maloney, Reed, Scarpitti & Co.

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