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FEATURED

## New graduates set to jump start careers

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Graduates of a 2021 Small Business Jump Start program gather with their instructor, Gary Svetz, far left, and multiple sponsors of the program at their ceremony on Wednesday evening. Their graduation dinner took place at the Corry Higher Education Council, 221 N. Center St., and was catered by Betsy Grinder, owner of Your Daily Serving and an alumnus of the program.

Rebekah Wallace/ The Corry Journal

Six local entrepreneurs were recognized this week as graduates of a 2021 Small Business Jump Start (SBJs) program. The ceremony honoring their achievement took place on Wednesday evening at the Corry Higher Education Council, 221 N. Center St.

The program, which was first implemented in 2020, 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.

Six individuals successfully completed the program this year: Cherie Dickey, Sara Provencio, Tyler McClain, Victoria Boehmer, Nick Heil and Elizabeth Austin.

Gary Svetz, program facilitator and instructor, noted the program is made possible not by any one individual or entity, but by a group of benefactors and volunteers.

"It's a community initiative," Svetz said. "We have a lot of great community players who make this happen."

Sponsors of the program include, but are not limited to, Rossbacher Insurance Group, Svetz Consulting Services LLC, Rosie Marketing, Corry Community Foundation, Corry Area Chamber of Commerce, Dynasty Construction Unlimited Inc. and Sawyer Printing.

Dinner was provided for all attendees by Your Daily Serving, a food preparation and delivery service started by Betsy Grinder, a graduate of last year's program.

After dinner, each graduate had the opportunity to share a bit about their work and their goals for the future.

Austin, a writer, commented she gained friends and networking skills from her time in the program, along with a variety of new business skills.

"Things I haven't really thought about when it comes to business," Austin said.

She went on to say her passion is providing support for small businesses, and would like to use her blog and brand to provide support for them and give them exposure. Other blogs she hopes to publish might include DIY articles for things such as home decor projects, or career and marketing advice.

Provencio said she enjoyed learning about the needs of the local community and that gaining knowledge of accounting was especially helpful. She hopes to use her law degree and work with her husband, Jack, a paralegal, to provide low-cost legal services to potential clients.

The Provencios aren't the only couple from the program who are in business together. Boehmer and her husband, Kyle, run a farm-to-table business called Dragonwood Ranch, which focuses on raising sheep for fibers, but also provides fresh eggs and other products for customers.

Boehmer announced she will be participating in the Corry Farmers Market beginning June 19. She also teaches knitting, spinning and fiber preparation through another branch of her service that she calls The Knitting Dragon.



From left, Svetz; Victoria Boehmer, program graduate; and her husband, Kyle. The Boehmers own a farm-to-table business called Dragonwood Ranch.

Kyle has an electric business.

"We're looking forward to growing that," he said.

Dickey, who operates a micro-dairy of about 15 cows, mentioned she finds educating young people about farming to be paramount.

"I think we need to get our kids back to learning about agriculture," Dickey said.

Certain challenges keep her from being able to go organic as she would like to, Dickey explained, but she remains devoted to operating a wholesome farming operation.

Additionally, graduates were given advice from different sponsors that were present.

Brad Allen of Rossbacher Insurance Group, an alumnus of the program, pointed out the class is not just meant for starting new businesses, but established companies can also benefit from the training.

"It really took us to the next level," Allen said, emphasizing the advantages of visioning and strategic planning his company uses that stemmed from his experience in the program.

"Dream big and nail the details," Donnie Rosie of Rosie Marketing said. "It starts with doing a good job."

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Rosie also commented there is more to running a small business than some might think.

"Starting a small business is a lifestyle," he said. "It's not just a job."

Finally, Bob Brown, board member of the Corry Chamber of Commerce and owner of Snap Fitness in Corry stressed the importance of being marketing-oriented, while not being solely concerned with profit.

"If I only worried about the money, I'd be out of business," Brown said.

He also stated the Chamber is available as a resource to the graduates as they continue their projects.

"We're here to support you," Brown said.

McClain, who is in music production, and Heil, who runs a storage service in Clymer, N.Y. called Boxit-N-Lockit, could not attend the event.



Cherie Dickey, program graduate, stands proudly holding her plaque. Dickey runs a small dairy farm.