

**March 20, 2008**

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Regional Entrepreneurship Summit Scheduled**

"Give a person a job and you feed them for a day. Teach a person how to start and run their own business and you feed them for a lifetime." This quote by Larry Levy, co-founder of the Levy Institute of Entrepreneurial Practice at Northwestern University, is the mindset behind the second annual Sandhills Regional Entrepreneurship Summit on March 25<sup>th</sup> in Aberdeen, hosted by the Sandhills Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership (SCEL).

Statistics indicate that small businesses less than five years old are creating most of the new jobs in the United States and that entrepreneurship will play an even larger role in our nation's job growth and wealth creation in the future. Sandhills Community College has responded to this trend by organizing the SCEL to bring together regional partners in a joint effort to enhance entrepreneurship education and to create a network of support and accessible resources for entrepreneurs.

Sponsored by BB&T, the Summit will bring together these partners and other area leaders to discuss entrepreneurship's role in the economy, to discuss current initiatives and stimulate new ideas for encouraging and supporting entrepreneurship, and to showcase local entrepreneurs and their ventures.

The event will feature keynote speaker Dr. Harry Davis, Economist and Professor of Finance at Appalachian State University's Walker College of Business, who will speak about the role of entrepreneurs in North Carolina and examine whether these individuals are leaders or followers.

Dr. Michael Menefee, Thomas Family Distinguished Professor of Entrepreneurship at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke, will explore the growing impact of rural entrepreneurship in the changing North Carolina economy and the challenges faced by rural entrepreneurs.

The Summit will also include a business panel discussing the steps to start and grow a successful business, and an education panel focusing on regional resources that support community growth. Dr. Sid Gautam, Director of the Center for Entrepreneurship at Methodist College, will serve on the education panel.

The SCEL comprises a regional community who recognizes the increasing focus on entrepreneurship as an economic catalyst. This regional community includes Sandhills Community College's Management and Business Technologies Department, the College's Small Business Center, UNC-Pembroke's School of Business, the Moore County Chamber of Commerce, and Moore County Partners in Progress. Through the various initiatives each organization has implemented, this group strives to promote entrepreneurship's role in achieving positive economic development.

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These initiatives include Sandhills Community College's innovative Entrepreneurship Certificate Program, created in 2005 to provide students with the skills, experience and networks to become successful business owners and entrepreneurial leaders. The College's support services already included the Small Business Center, which has assisted over 300 entrepreneurs and small business owners with business plan preparation, confidential counseling, and networking opportunities.

UNC-Pembroke is providing education, research, and outreach to the regional entrepreneurial community through its Thomas Family Center for Entrepreneurship. Founded in 2006, the Center's mission is to stimulate entrepreneurial thinking among students, as well as assist and support entrepreneurs and new ventures in the southeastern North Carolina region.

The Moore County Chamber of Commerce hosts an annual Entrepreneur Boot Camp for high school students, encouraging them to look at the business world for a rewarding career. Through its Moore County Leadership Institute established in 1988, the Chamber focuses on building leadership skills locally, and uses its Educators Leadership Institute to connect middle school, secondary and post-secondary educators to the business community, giving these educators real-world application for academic instruction in the classroom.

Moore County Partners in Progress spearheaded the creation of Angels for Moore, a confidential angel investor network that brings accredited investors together with local entrepreneurs in an effort to assist entrepreneurs with working capital needs. Created in 2004, Angels for Moore is currently 50 members strong, and members have invested approximately \$500,000 in high-growth companies.

“The Summit will increase awareness of these regional efforts and will clearly convey the correlation between economic growth and entrepreneurial education and development”, said Mary Dixon, Chair of SCC's Management and Business Technologies Department and member of the SCEL. “In facilitating local entrepreneurship, the Summit will be a direct investment in Moore County's economic future. We look forward to this collaborative expression.”

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