

Grow Your Small Market Farm Business Newsletter

April 2004

Greetings

Grow Your Small Market Farm Business Planning program has partnered with Iowa State University, to work with those who have attended our program to identify ways in which we can continue to support your efforts as small business owners. One of these ways is this new quarterly newsletter.

The focus of this newsletter will be oriented around business skill development and business techniques, information, ideas and opportunities. It will be a way for you to communicate about your business, to stay connected

with other like business owners and to hear about new opportunities. I welcome any input you wish to share with your fellow graduates and hope that we will be able to feature each of you in an upcoming issue.

Each of you are pioneering new specialty businesses in Iowa. As you build your business I welcome this opportunity to continue to assist you in your small business.

Penny Brown Huber
Program Administrator



Penny Brown Huber giving lecture to the 2004 "Grow Your Small Market Farm" class

Special points of interest:

- Helpful Business Tips
- Greene Bean Project
- Buy Fresh, Buy Local
- Welcome class of 2004
- Directory of Graduates
- Upcoming Events

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Helpful Business Tips

The Drake Small Business Center at 2429 University, Des Moines provides one-on-one free counseling, tax workshops and other programs for new and existing businesses. If you need help with your business plan, complete cash flows and other assistance please feel free to contact us at 515-271-2655 or go to our center website for information. It is www.sbdc.drake.edu. There are 14 centers in Iowa and you can find them and more small business information at www.iabusnet.org. We are happy to hear from you and have helped a number of alternative and value-added agriculture small businesses over the years. If you seek funding, you want to present the best plan and cash

flows to the lenders who will expect to see this type of information and the center can help you.

The Drake SBDC has a special program for existing businesses called "Benchmarking". We will provide a customized financial profile for existing business owners who are in a growth mode or recovery cycle. This analysis contains an easy to understand narrative report with graphics and interpretation. It highlights the strengths and weaknesses of your company and helps with strategic planning to better position yourself to prosper in tough times. If you would like to know:

- *Where your company stands

- *Whether your performance meets budget projections
- *How you compare to others in your industry

If you would like to see:

- *Productivity increasing
- *An increase in quality in products/services
- *Reduced costs
- *Decreased cycle time
- *How you measure up against the standard

Then this service and report are for you. A small fee of \$125 for this report with ideas and suggestions on how to proceed are followed with free one-on-one counseling. Call 271-2655 for information and how to get this report on your business.

Featured Graduate of the Month

The Grow Your Small Market Farm Business graduate of the month is Chris Henning Cooklin. Chris is a 2001 graduate of the class and resides in Greene County, IA.



Members of the Greene Bean Project share the work, risks, and profits of their azuki bean.

She became involved in the class as a result of her general interest in trying new things. Triggered by her curiosity, Chris decided to pursue selling and buying food through entrepreneurship. While attending class, she was also involved with a local Greene County farmers' market group.

After twenty-five years of working in corporate America, Chris started a new adventure by becoming the coordinator of the Greene Bean Project in Greene County.

The Greene Bean Project is a cooperative farming venture devoted to "growing alternative crops on row crop acreage using existing practices and equipment." The cooperative was founded through the vision and efforts of a group of Greene County farmers to diversify their crops and to promote value-added farming. Due to the uncertainty of such efforts, the farmers decided to cooperate and share in the risk involved.

Out of this cooperative initiative the Greene Bean Project was born. Since Chris has taken over the Greene Bean Project, the organization has added to the project's mission to "produce high quality beans for human consumption and help farmers in Greene County Iowa." The business also has added a Limited Liability Corporation, the

Alternative Crop Enterprises of Iowa, and has extended its reach beyond Greene to thirteen counties in Iowa. By the end of 2004 Chris anticipates that the project will be extended throughout the state of Iowa.

According to Chris, one of the main contributors to the Greene Bean Project has been the Grow Your Small Market Farm class. When she became the director of the project, the information she received from class and the networking opportunities that surfaced has proven to be invaluable. In addition, through her experiences as a former student, Chris was able to obtain a much-needed grant to aid in the project's growth. Chris stated, "the [Grow Your Small Market

Farm] class was the basis of the Greene Bean Project and was one of the main reasons the project received a grant from the USDA to fund it." She added, "The class helped with securing grant funding, offering insightful class materials, and connecting with informal networks of people. It was an all around great experience." In particular, Chris felt that the networking opportunities with class members and other individuals related to the class have been extremely advantageous for her and the project. Her personal philosophy about such opportunities is that "The whole world is interwoven, and we must watch how the pieces are all connected. We must take advantage of the opportunities."

To date, the most enjoyable part of small market farm life, specifically being a part of the Greene Bean Project, has been "the nature of cooperative ventures, working with others, and

the entrepreneurial-ness of it." Chris feels that one of the greatest accomplishments of the project has been the people. Over the last three years, the Greene Bean project has worked directly with over forty farmers and hundreds of customers, business people, politicians, and other county farmers. Chris stated, "The business is infinitely richer because of these people. The people involved with the project have experienced different problems that someone else may be confronting at the current moment. These experiences can be very helpful and resourceful for overcoming problems."

"The business is infinitely richer because of these people."

In spite of its success, the Greene Bean Project has not come without challenges. Chris stated that even though the people are her favorite aspect of the cooperative, they are

also the most difficult part due to the logistics and planning required in directing a group of farmers during the hectic farm season. Chris stated, "The farm season is short and intense. You have to be able to go with what is happening now. I worked in computer programming and farming doesn't work that way. We are at the mercy of nature's whim. And nature isn't always very cooperative." As a result, some of the most demanding challenges arise from communication and the logistics of planning for the project.

"Cooperatives are more work in coordinating and planning with others than normal farming or business ventures." Despite (continued p. 3)



The azuki bean is a small russet-colored dried bean with a sweet flavor.

Featured Graduate of the Month continued...

these challenges, Chris feels the effort is worth it.

The only advice Chris has for other small market farmers and other individuals thinking about starting a small market farm is to "...be open to where the path leads. Appreciate and pay close attention to your networks. And most importantly, don't figure on

[work] being an 8-5...and don't plan on getting rich quick. It's a process."

Chris Henning Cooklin's can be contacted at: 515-386-2436 or gbp@net.nis.net



Azuki bean is a long, warm season crop similar to field beans.

Buy Fresh, Buy Local Coming to Des Moines Area

Part of a national campaign run by Food Routes, a 501(c)3 non-profit, to build local food systems across the country. Iowa has signed on, and Robert Karp's, Practical Farmers of Iowa, in collaboration with Kamyar Enshayan of UNI, have run a successful multi-year campaign in the Waterloo area.

This year, professor Neil Hamilton, director of the Drake Agricultural Law Center, liked what he heard about the Waterloo campaign, and asked Practical Farmers to help him pilot a campaign in Des Moines. Together these

two groups are working with John Norwood, a consultant to the Drake Agricultural Law Center, to launch the "Buy Fresh, Buy Local - Des Moines Metro" campaign, in collaboration with metro area farmers' markets, participating restaurants, and other stakeholders.

The Campaign is designed to assist consumers in locating local sources of food, including participating producers, Farmers Markets, restaurants, and retailers. Consumer members will be asked to make a 5% local purchasing pledge for the

months of June-September, and report back to the campaign at the end of the season on how they did. The long-term goal is to achieve a 5% local purchasing goal for consumers and businesses -- if realized, these efforts could result in \$70 million, annually, in local reinvestment back into the seven county Des Moines area, alone. Now that's a powerful economic development strategy.

For more information, please call John Norwood at 515-556-9765.

"A successful business is 90% planning and 10% doing."— Sherry Shafer, Drake, SBDC—Program Host

Welcome to the Incoming 2004 Class

At the end of January this year, another great group of enthusiastic small business owners began the 2004 class. They represent almost every corner of Iowa coming from Iowa City, Guthrie Center, Manning, Fontanelle, Marshalltown, Ames, Charles City, Ankeny and Webster City.

They are enthusiastically working on their business concepts around specialty livestock (beef, chicken, turkey, lamb, goat and fish),

CSA, cut flowers, agritourism, eggs, energy efficiency and stained glass. Of course, the journey has already begun to help bring focus to their business ideas.

Nan Bonfils came to class in March to share Full Circle Farm's journey since attending class in 2001. Her presentation helped put a realistic view of building a small, specialty business. We were grateful for the time she spent with us.

All the 2004 class is



Current members 2004 "Grow Your Small Market" class

listed in our new directory. If you meet them, make sure you introduce yourself. They will appreciate it!



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WE'RE ON THE WEB @
www.sbdc.drake.edu
(look under programs)

"When it comes to executing a strategy, the end target may be clearly visible -" I want to climb that mountain over there" - but much of the route may be invisible from the starting point. The only way you're going to see the path ahead is to start moving. Thus strategy is as much about experimentation as it is about foresight and passion."—Gary Hamel.

For more information regarding Grow Your Small Market Farm Business Network contact Penny Brown Huber or the Small Business Development Center at Drake.

Upcoming Events

PACK Expo 2004, McCormick Place:

—McCormick Place, Chicago, Illinois November 7-11, 2004

—Everything you need to know about packaging

—Visit us on the web @ www.packexpo.com

12th Annual Urban-Rural Regional Food Systems Conference:

—Michael Fields Agricultural Institute, East Troy, Michigan November 12-14, 2004

—Visit us on the web @ www.MichaelFieldsAgInst.org

Risk Management Conference:

—Sponsored by the Grow Your Small Market Farm Business

—more information forthcoming



Business Directory

You will be receiving your 2004 class directory within the next couple of weeks. We hope this tool will keep you connected with one another, provide a resource to look to one another for answers and provide a way to help you know what everyone is doing.

Quick reminder to those who have not returned their directory information that was sent to your email. Please return the form soon, so we can complete the directory and get it distributed. Thank you.

Check It Out!

Quick Books Pro Upgrades can be downloaded at: <http://quickbooks.intuit.com>

"Grow Your Small Market Farm Business" Newsletter is edited by Brandon Hofstedt, Research Assistant, Department of Sociology at Iowa State University. Please email submissions, classifieds, photos, and ideas to hofstedt@iastate.edu—We welcome your comments and suggestions.