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Dear Fellow North Carolinians,

With the issuance of this 2013 – 2014 Annual Report, we celebrate the 30th year of service by the North Carolina Small Business and Technology Development Center to our state’s small businesses.

It began with The University of North Carolina System’s Board of Governors approval of the establishment of the SBTDC in April, 1984. The North Carolina General Assembly provided the initial appropriation ($300,000) to support the program in June of 1984. These actions were taken specifically to create our state’s participant in the national SBDC program administered by the US Small Business Administration. That was followed by SBA approval of the SBTDC for participation in the national program and its first year funding ($354,000). Since then, the SBTDC has grown to become the largest multi-campus inter-institutional center of The University with offices across the state and has served over 130,000 small to medium sized businesses.

As one might expect, the SBTDC has changed significantly over the years. It’s larger by far and the range of its services, much more extensive. But, there are also some important consistencies throughout the history of the SBTDC. Key among these are:

• An understanding that hiring the right people and supporting their professional development is critically important to our success
• A record of continuous self-assessment and improvement
• A commitment to outcomes and impact-based performance
• An on-going interest in the engagement of the energy and talent of students in “real world” business and economic development issues.

We will only briefly celebrate our 30 years of service. The opportunities and challenges confronting existing small to medium-sized businesses still demand our full attention and support. The data on the performance and impact of the SBTDC (see page 10) is impressive; but it is the success stories of the featured clients that really convey what we do and how we impact the lives of so many of North Carolina’s entrepreneurs year in and year out.

The clients included in this year’s report are representative of hundreds and hundreds of others who are growing their businesses in North Carolina – and helping to make this a great place to live. We at the SBTDC are very proud to be able to serve them. And, we look forward to many more years ahead in which to continue to contribute to North Carolina’s growth and prosperity.
Thirty years ago, in the spring of 1984, the UNC Board of Governors authorized the creation of the North Carolina Small Business and Technology Development Center (SBTDC). That same year, the North Carolina General Assembly appropriated initial funding and the program was launched in the fall. At the time, I suspect that few people envisioned the growth and impact of what has since become our University’s largest inter-institutional program, with a broad statewide presence.

SBTDC’s longevity is attributable to its relevance, the quality and responsiveness of its services and resources, and its ability to document very positive outcomes and impacts for the 130,000 small business clients it has served. This year’s annual report provides an impressive snapshot of the SBTDC’s work and its impact on our state.

It is also relevant to note that the SBTDC has been able to effectively engage and leverage significant resources among the UNC constituent institutions that host SBTDC operations. Most notable has been the SBTDC’s commitment to enhance the educational experience of students. As a result, hundreds of graduate and professional students on UNC campuses have been engaged each year in practicum experiences with SBTDC clients.

We applaud the SBTDC for its fine record of service over the past 30 years, and we hope its high-quality work will continue in the years ahead.

I am pleased to acknowledge and congratulate the SBTDC on thirty years of service to North Carolina’s small and medium sized businesses. Through its 16 offices across the state, each hosted by one of the constituent institutions of the University of North Carolina System, it has served thousands of North Carolinians from startups through larger firms with 200 employees.

NC State, as a land grant institution, well understands the role and importance of extension-based advisory services and education. The SBTDC’s record of service and demonstrative economic impact is representative of the very best of the extension role that our public universities play.

We are pleased to have the SBTDC as a part of NC State’s extension portfolio. We also highly value the fact that the SBTDC delivers its programs and services through offices hosted by our sister institutions within the University System. This organizational approach is unique and provides a powerful example of the potential of a collaborative model for multi campus engagement and outreach.

Congratulations to the SBTDC on its 30 years of service – and the promise of more good work to come.
The SBTDC is a highly valued resource partner of the US Small Business Administration (SBA) in North Carolina. The SBTDC provides a broad range of business management counseling, educational programs and high profile conferences and events aimed at serving a broad spectrum of businesses across our state. The SBTDC can always be counted on to step up and take a role in new SBA programs and initiatives. Its advice and counsel to our District Office is regularly sought-out and greatly appreciated. Its business clients are often recognized for their accomplishments, as is the case with this year’s NC Small Business Exporter of the Year, Vessoclude Medical. A strategically-focused organization, the SBTDC is constantly looking for new ways to support entrepreneurship and small businesses in North Carolina.

We have a strong and highly effective partnership with our SBTDC and share their deep commitment to their work and their clients.

Congratulations to the SBTDC staff on 30 years of great service and results.

LYNN DOUTHETT
DISTRICT DIRECTOR
US Small Business Administration

PARTNERSHIPS

These last 30 years never would have been possible without the support, funding, collaboration and teamwork of the SBTDC’s partners. They really are the key to our success and the reason we are able to provide innovative and effective services to North Carolina’s Business Community.

Thank you.

UNC SYSTEM www.unc.edu
US SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION www.sba.gov
NC SMALL BUSINESS CENTER NETWORK www.ncsbc.net
DEFENSE LOGISTICS AGENCY (DLA) www.dla.mil
NC DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE (NC DOC) www.nccommerce.com
US EXPORT-IMPORT BANK (EX-IM) www.exim.gov
Kelly King serves as the Chairman and Chief Executive of Branch Banking and Trust Company (BB&T). He joined the bank in 1972 and has served in many progressively more responsible roles during his remarkable career with BB&T. He is well regarded for his acumen, business focus and values-based approach to both business and life. This approach has well served his firm, his employees and colleagues and many other organizations and individuals with whom he has been associated. This includes the SBTDC.

We were most fortunate when Kelly, as a rising young executive at BB&T in Raleigh, agreed to become the first Chairman of the SBTDC’s Statewide Advisory Board. In that role, he was actively engaged in helping us to shape the initial organizational structure and focus of the SBTDC. The most notable outcome of this was the commitment to an inter-institutional program approach to statewide service delivery. This approach started as and continues to be unique among the 63 national SBDC programs. It provides for fully integrated university campus participation in the statewide program and the broadest possible public access to campus services and resources.

We are grateful for the contributions that Kelly King made to the formation and growth of the SBTDC in our early years. And, we’ve benefited from the ongoing advice and support provided to us by BB&T and a number of key executives who have continued to serve on our Statewide Advisory Board for nearly 30 years.

Larry Clark came to the UNC Wilmington Cameron School of Business in July 2000 following 15 years of prior service as the Dean of the Business Schools at Sonoma State University (CA) and LSU – Shreveport. In July 2014, he will leave North Carolina to assume the role of Chancellor at LSU – Shreveport.

Upon his arrival at UNC Wilmington, Larry immediately embraced the SBTDC – thanks in part to the positive experiences that he had with the SBDC program at LSU – Shreveport. He championed the development of several programs which provide integrative learning experience aimed at increasing MBA student knowledge. One of these, the Learning Alliance, places students in consulting teams paired with regional firms. Projects with these firms coincide with course work. The SBTDC is directly engaged in the Learning Alliance. It identifies businesses in its client portfolio as candidates for participation in the Alliance. SBTDC staff then provide ongoing support for MBA Student Teams working with the participating firms.

Larry’s vision and leadership as the Dean of the Cameron School of Business at UNC Wilmington have been remarkable. He will be greatly missed; but his many contributions to graduate business student education and small business development will be long remembered.
ABOUT THE SBTDC

Celebrating 30 Years of Service to North Carolina Small to Medium-Sized Businesses

The Small Business and Technology Development Center (SBTDC) is a business advisory service of The University of North Carolina System. Since 1984, the SBTDC has helped over 130,000 North Carolina entrepreneurs make their business better.

The SBTDC's statewide team provides personalized management counseling and education services designed to help small and medium-sized businesses:

- Obtain quality business and market information
- Evaluate and improve financial performance
- Access new capital and markets
- Improve management and employee performance
- Make better decisions and achieve goals

FINANCING

The SBTDC specializes in helping businesses:

- Analyze revenue and costs, and understand financial data and reports
- Prepare financial projections
- Identify and access sources of capital, including traditional and SBA-backed loans, angel and venture capital, R&D funding, and export financing

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT

The SBTDC's performance enhancement services help clients:

- Link business strategies to workplace learning and accomplishments
- Strengthen leadership and management skills
- Refine internal processes to improve performance
- Enhance communications and teamwork

ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The SBTDC also provides research, planning facilitation, and strategy development to public and private sector organizations, leading to enhanced economic opportunities and an improved environment for small business and entrepreneurs in their respective communities.

STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

SBTDC assessments, strategic performance retreats, and ongoing counseling help owners and managers:

- Assess and benchmark company performance and effectiveness
- Develop and implement successful strategies, both short and long term
- Identify priorities and action steps
- Measure and monitor progress

MARKETING

SBTDC counselors and specialized market research staff help companies enhance their success in the marketplace by identifying:

- Information on industry trends, customers, competitors and best business practices
- New or expanded markets for existing products and services including exporting
- Federal, state, and local government contracting opportunities
- Commercialization options for new, innovative technologies
The SBTDC is administered by NC State University on behalf of The University of North Carolina System. We maintain 16 offices across the state which are each affiliated with one or more constituent institution campuses. Through the experience and skill of SBTDC staff across this statewide network of university-affiliated offices, we are able to reach and serve a diverse client base and quickly support their changing needs.
In the last 30 years, the SBTDC has provided more than 1 million hours of counseling to over 130,000 clients.

**ONE MILLION HOURS**

Counseling provided to clients consistently generates $3.67 in new tax revenues for every $1.00 invested in the SBTDC program according to the national Economic Impact Assessment Studies of the ASBDC’s Chrisman Report from 1996-2013.

Note: The study only includes federal and state income tax income and sales taxes. It does not include additional taxes such as corporate taxes, property taxes, unemployment taxes or social security payments. Source: 1996-2013 Impact Assessment Studies

The SBTDC helps client companies increase revenue and create jobs at significantly greater rates that the average North Carolina business.

Source: 2013 Impact Assessment Study
For the last several years, the SBTDC has focused significant effort and resources on serving companies with between 10 and 100 employees. In fact, the SBTDC’s Strategic Plan directs over 40% of our resources to medium-sized companies. These existing firms often receive less attention in the larger economic development landscape, but contribute significantly to job creation and the tax base in North Carolina.

The SBTDC provides direct, personal attention to help medium-sized businesses become more efficient and effective, enhance their marketing and find new customers, improve their chances for accessing credit and funding, strengthen employee performance, manage uncertainty, and prepare for the future.

Mid-size company clients frequently request assistance with market development, including government contracting and exporting. The SBTDC’s Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) counselors’ main goal is to assist manufacturers as they navigate the ins and outs of government contracting. The SBTDC’s International Business Development (IBD) counselors help North Carolina manufacturers identify export markets and develop finance plans to support the growth of export sales.

The SBTDC’s work with thousands of owners and managers had led to the creation of a set of specialized tools to help medium-sized companies focus and accelerate achievement of their goals with less stress on human and financial resources.

The SBTDC’s Strategy and Growth Services focus on Leadership, Strategy and Decision Making. These services have led our medium-sized business clients to increased sales, improved strategies, ease leadership transitions, increased internal morale, and rates of growth greater than their peers. Specific approaches include the following:

- diagnostic assessments to inform decision making
- research & analysis leading to fact-based discussion
- facilitations to clarify goals, intent and action
- leadership development to insure implementation
- training to build the next generation of key staff

Over the last four years, the SBTDC’s work with medium-sized companies has resulted in over 11,000 jobs created and retained.

CASE STUDY: RHINO ASSEMBLY CORP.

Rhino Assembly Corporation’s mission is to identify and deliver the world’s most innovative assembly solutions. They came to the SBTDC in Charlotte for assistance with managing rapid growth and expanding their export business. Over the last three years, Rhino Assembly has utilized several SBTDC services, including a strategic organizational assessment, ProfitCents financial analysis, HR assessments, and International Business Development (IBD) counseling. Rhino Assembly credits the SBTDC with helping them to increase sales and create 14 new jobs.
Carolina Management Team
2006 Annual Report

It has been eight years since Carolina Management Team was featured in our Annual Report, and they’ve continued their success. This year they were awarded the 2014 North Carolina Family Business of the Year Award in the Small Category. They are now an industry leader in infrastructure rehabilitation.

3C Institute
2012-2013 Annual Report

Since last year’s annual report, Dr. Melissa DeRosier, founder and CEO of 3C Institute was honored with an Award for Excellence for Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship by the US Small Business Administration. The firm develops specialized technologies for health, including intelligent games, dynamic e-training platforms, and software systems to support quality healthcare practices.
AWARD-WINNING CLIENTS

VESOCCLUDE
2012-2013 Annual Report

Vesocclude was a shorter story in last year’s Annual Report, and this year the US Small Business Administration (SBA) named Vesocclude Medical, LLC the North Carolina Exporter of the Year for 2014!

“For us winning this award validates that Made In America has great value to OUS (Outside the United States) markets and our export process, with the help of SBTDC, has exceeded our expectations. We are also very happy to receive such prestigious recognition and we would thank Alex Viva at the SBTDC for both leadership and resource support that kept our confidence high as we continue to reach out to many new customers around the world.”

-Freddy Cannady, Business Owner

GARRIS GRADING AND PAVING
2010-2011 Annual Report

In 2013, Garris Grading and Paving was honored as a runner-up for Business NC’s Small Business of the Year award. Since being featured in our 2010-2011 Annual Report, the company paid off a 10-year loan in one year, hired nine additional employees, and won bids for seven new bridge construction projects.
**Q: DESCRIBE YOUR BUSINESS:**

We are a full service Internet marketing agency including SEO, online advertising, social media, public relations, and strategy. We have also started what we call the “JB Media Institute” which is a six-week school with specialized training so companies can understand and manage their own Internet marketing. We are somewhat unique in combining both professional services with training, at least in this area, but this way we can give clients completely customized Internet marketing support.

**Q: WHAT’S YOUR STORY?**

I had been working in the web development world and Internet marketing for 10 years and had built up a small freelance base. I realized I either needed to take a job doing this full time or start an agency and in Fall 2010, I began working on a business plan. By the next April, I had signed a lease at Mojo Coworking and launched JB Media Group. I was on full time and brought on three part time staff.

**Q: HOW DID YOU LEARN ABOUT THE SBTDC?**

We had been crossing paths for some time and in Spring 2013, we were invited to meet with the SBTDC Asheville staff to tell them about what we offer, specifically about the Institute. I also learned more about SBTDC. At the time I was looking for financing options to buy office space and started working with Adrianne Gordon.

**Q: HAS THE SBTDC MADE A DIFFERENCE?**

I make an effort to surround myself with mentors and advisors and whenever I have a problem, I ask them all to get multiple opinions.

With the addition of so many new staff members, there have been new operational needs that I have been able to address with SBTDC resources.

Business coaches have limited time available, though, and so I sometimes get the easy answer. With the SBTDC, the answer is quick, ultimately the shortcut to the answer I need. Instead of making multiple calls and asking a lot of people, I only have to call the SBTDC and they give me critical feedback.

Not only did Adrianne help me receive the necessary financing for the new space, but she also helped me look at the business from a new perspective. As I look at where I’m spending my time vs. where I should be spending my time, I am better able to make adjustments. With the addition of so many new staff members, there have been new operational needs that I have been able to address with SBTDC resources.

**Q: HOW MUCH GROWTH HAVE YOU SEEN SINCE WORKING WITH THE SBTDC?**

Probably the biggest impact on the business I’ve seen as a result of working with the SBTDC is the funding for the new office. With the help of my counselor I was able to borrow $201,000 and open up $35,000 in new credit lines. The new space is a much better fit and will allow for future growth. Each year, our sales revenues have been up 80-100%. We’ve been able to hire 3 more people to bring us up to 7 full time and 4 part time, and we plan on adding 2 additional positions this year.

**Q: DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE?**

Put together a good support system. On one side of the scale is the break down zone. Here you are trying to do everything yourself. On the other side of the scale is the comfort zone where you aren’t pushing yourself hard enough. In the middle is the courage zone. I believe that the
more helpful people that a business owner has in their support system, including employees, advisors, vendors and mentors, the larger the courage zone will become by combining the resources of others and pushing yourself at the same time. I have learned about this concept from one of my mentors, Bill Treasurer of Giant Leap Consulting.

Know when to ask for advice. Every business decision has been made before. Learn from others’ mistakes as well as their successes.

Threshold Provisions, owned and operated by husband and wife team Josh Mitchell and Diane Hutt, is an Asheville, NC – based business devoted to developing athletic potential through delicious and sustaining wholesome food including salmon jerky and gluten-free energy bars.

Being new to Asheville in 2012, they were looking for business assistance with networking opportunities, finding a manufacturing site, and help with packaging to get into natural foods retailers.

Business counselor Annice Brown gave them extensive referrals to local resources and institutional partners including Blue Ridge Food Ventures, French Broad Food Coop, NC Natural Products Association, a local flavor chemist, a gluten-free bakery, and natural products consultants who help small businesses get products into stores like Earth Fare.

Threshold Provisions launched an $8,000 Kickstarter campaign to help fund the development and production of their new energy bar, which is manufactured by Blue Ridge Food Ventures.

Today, they are selling foods in regional retailers including Earth Fare stores. Josh credits the SBTDC referral network as the exact reason for Threshold Provision’s recent dramatic growth, including the opportunity to have products in Earth Fare stores.

Q: WHAT’S YOUR STORY?
I come from a long line of furniture designers and manufacturers. Zagaroli Classics was my first venture into the furniture business. For nearly two decades, we followed the traditional business model of designing, building and selling quality furniture to wholesalers at the Furniture Market. When the economy took a downturn, sadly, we were forced to close the doors. I took a job selling quality leather, and it was in that capacity two of my former customers approached me and asked me to start building furniture for them again. That side business has become Revive Furniture. Our business model is revolutionary for the furniture industry and we have seen exponential growth because of it.

Q: DESCRIBE YOUR BUSINESS:
Revive Furniture manufactures bench made, custom furniture, built to customer specifications. Typically, a designer will approach us with a design idea and Revive turns that idea into a reality. We build the furniture and the designer puts his/her label on it. It is that private label nature of what we do that makes our model unique & highly effective. It has allowed us to virtually eliminate the marketing and advertising expense associated with a more traditional furniture business. We are able to focus on what we do well, upholstering furniture and customer service. We put our designers first and in exchange they drive our sales. Additionally, this model allows us more flexibility. We are better able to produce smaller quantities with more customization than a typical furniture manufacturer.

Q: HOW HAS THE SBTDC MADE A DIFFERENCE?
I had the customers and knew the industry, but the SBTDC was able to help me come up with and implement new strategies for success. The idea for the business was already in place. I had the customers and knew the industry, but the SBTDC was able to help me come up with and implement new strategies for success. Byron Hicks, my business counselor, is able to meet with me periodically. He and I look at the big picture and he is able to advise me as well as assist me in setting goals. Byron has served as a sounding board on many occasions and his diverse background has been insightful.

The SBTDC also connected me with an MBA student who has been instrumental in helping us to redesign our HR policies. She has assisted us in the development of an employee manual, outlining specific job descriptions, and implementing a new 360 degree employee evaluation system.

I was also invited to speak at the NC Entrepreneurship Summit, which was a very educational experience.

Q: HOW MUCH GROWTH HAVE YOU SEEN SINCE WORKING WITH THE SBTDC?
We have grown exponentially since working with the SBTDC. We are in the midst of doubling our manufacturing space, our revenues are up 75% over last year, and we have been able to add 14 full time employees.
CORNERSTONE BENEFITS FROM EDISON PROJECT

Tim Clark and Drew Estes formed Cornerstone Columbarium and Crematorium, Inc., in 2013 to meet an after-life experience need in Caldwell County and surrounding areas. Many local cemeteries are at capacity and only a few funeral homes provide cremation services. Cornerstone provides cremation, columbaria and niche walls for churches, existing cemeteries, municipalities and individuals.

They first came to the SBTDC seeking help with writing a business plan, startup guidance, and capital to acquire a location and purchase equipment. Their business counselor suggested that they participate in The Edison Project business competition through the Catawba Chamber of Commerce. Cornerstone placed as a finalist and their counselor’s assisted with their business plan, projections and pitch. As part of the competition, they presented their business plan to a panel of angel investors.

After closing on a $280K loan with BB&T, they purchased a building in Lenoir, NC, and crematory equipment and now have 6 employees. They completed the upfit on the building and began offering cremation services in early 2014.

Q: WHAT’S YOUR STORY?
ERD is an engineer owned and operated commercial and industrial electronic repair company. Providing repair services to a broad range of industry and government sectors, we anticipate that our current rapid growth will continue into the foreseeable future. Interestingly, our growth has been largely achieved by word of mouth or via Internet marketing — ERD has no sales force. In just 3 years, ERD has expanded from a customer base of 2,500 and an international presence of only 5 countries to over 5,000 clients in every state in the Union and more than 65 countries, including 26 of the Fortune 100 companies in the world. It was through our association with and guidance from the SBTDC and its partner agencies that ERD was able to ignite growth.

Q: DESCRIBE YOUR BUSINESS:
Although we repair all types of industrial and commercial electronics, we are most known for our ability to repair legacy (older) electronics that others claim cannot be repaired. To grasp the scope of this market, you must understand that anything currently being made or moved in the world today is made or moved by equipment that is over 14 years old. Every repair done in our 15,000 square foot building comes with our industry leading three-year warranty. We usually repair an electronic unit for less than 40% of the cost of replacing it. Our customer base includes companies like Ford, GE, GM, Cargill, Pepsi, Coca Cola, Chevron, Shell, Sea World, Houston Texas Water, Texas Instruments, Hoover Dam, Exxon, Boeing, Washington Post, Duke Energy, US Supreme Court, and all branches of our military.

Q: WHAT IS YOUR HISTORY WITH THE SBTDC?
We started working with the SBTDC from the very beginning in 1995. We developed a business and marketing plan and within a year and a half worked with SBTDC to obtain an SBA loan for expansion. In 2009, in what we call the “restart phase”, we went to the SBTDC again. This time around, we eliminated the need for a sales department and designed a cutting edge SEO strategy with social media. The assistance of Owen George of the SBTDC has and continues to provide us with vital information that helps us evolve as a company. He has been a virtual member of our team. In 2013 he guided us in securing an SBA loan to purchase our 15,000 square foot facility.

Q: HOW HAS THE SBTDC BEEN ABLE TO HELP?
The SBTDC has been instrumental in guiding and moving us into the proper channels to achieve the growth that we have experienced. Our international presence began the day Owen called to let us know about the possibility of obtaining an NC Step grant to support travel to a trade show in Thailand. Owen walked us through the process to apply for the grant and coordinated communications with SBTDC partner agencies, NC Department of Commerce and US Commercial Services. Since participating

The SBTDC counselors are constantly thinking of ways to use the resources at their fingertips to help the small businesses in their community grow and thrive.
in the Thailand trade show, we’ve traveled to Hong Kong, Beijing and South America with support from grants that SBTDC helped procure. This is the perfect example of how the SBTDC counselors are constantly thinking of ways to use the resources at their fingertips to help the small businesses in their community grow and thrive.

**Q: WHAT IMPACT HAVE YOU SEEN ON THE BUSINESS?**

We have seen high double-digit revenue growth and continue to hire additional employees and anticipate hiring four more employees before the end of 2014. In addition, international expansion has been extremely beneficial for us. Those trips have increased our client base and also effected some surprising changes. For example, we noticed on our trips to China that their lighting has been converted to LED bulbs. We have now switched all of the lighting in our building to LEDs, which has resulted in a 50%+ cost saving in energy consumption.

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**WOMAN-OWNED BUSINESS IMPROVES OPERATIONS BEFORE SALE**

When Lori Bushell of Machine and Wheels of High Point came to the SBTDC in 2011, she had plans to retire and sell her business within a few years. She needed help with improving the business structure, expanding from a single revenue source to two or more, and selling the business.

Her business counselors worked with her over the past two years to identify her cost issues and assist in preparing her records to enable a transition into a sale of the business. They also assisted with business plan development, cash flow analysis, and product costing for the new revenue source of repairing and resurfacing stone cutting tools for counter tops.

In 2013, the new revenue source created two full-time jobs. The business operations became more stable and streamlined which made it attractive to buyers. As Lori planned, the Machine and Wheels was sold in 2014. From beginning to end, the SBTDC helped Lori achieve her goal to improve and sell the business.

Visit Machines and Wheels, Inc at www.machinesandwheels.com
Q: DESCRIBE YOUR BUSINESS:
H&H is a sprayer manufacturer. Every crop and every piece of land is unique, so they all require specific needs in spraying—whether for water, fertilizer or herbicide. That’s what we do. We take their needs and produce an effective sprayer. Customizing is pretty unique, most sprayers are just a one size fits all so this is appealing to a lot of farmers.

Q: WHAT’S YOUR STORY?
I grew up working on farms. I know what it takes to run one and anything that makes a job easier is really important. H&H started out selling farming equipment when a gentleman requested a custom sprayer to apply herbicide and it just kind of took off from there. H&H had been around; I bought sprayers from them. So, when I heard the owner was looking to retire, I knew it was a good opportunity. I worked for H&H for an entire year learning the industry, the market and the business before taking it over in 2004.

Q: HOW HAS THE SBTDC HELPED?
I knew the industry and the sprayers, but there were still things about running the business that I needed help with. I reached out first to the county agriculture extension agency who referred me to the SBTDC. They helped me analyze the financial side and develop a budget. The collaboration has really been an education. Now I can assess the health of the business, see where problems are developing and fix those areas to stay on track.

I look at numbers completely different. Now I know how to find the numbers I need and understand what they mean. Now I can assess the health of the business, see where problems are developing and fix those areas to stay on track.

We’ve also been working on management skills through the SBTDC’s Strategy and Growth Services and that has made an impact on how fast we turn a product. Recently, I started talking to Mary Romano about expanding into the international market and she’s helping me with the paperwork.

Q: WHAT IMPACT HAVE YOU SEEN ON THE BUSINESS?
H&H has grown significantly with doubled revenue growth and the addition of 10 new employees to make a total of 18. We have expanded our customer base into Tennessee, Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama, and we have plans for other expansion both locally and internationally. We’ve also moved into a new building which has streamlined the manufacturing process and is large enough to accommodate future growth. We’re ready to continue expanding but we’re working with the SBTDC on planning that growth to make sure it is controlled growth.

Q: WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR OTHER NEW BUSINESS OWNERS?
Contact the SBTDC and keep utilizing their available resources. They are great to work with. It’s free of charge and provides understandable business advice from professional people that is worthwhile.
Furniture Maker Benefits from MBA Marketing Analysis

Troutman Chair Company is a 90-year-old manufacturer of wooden rockers and chairs. In 2009, Troutman acquired P&P Chair Company, the original manufacturer of the famous “Kennedy Rocker” used by President John F. Kennedy, Jr. because of his back problems.

In 2013, a UNC Charlotte MBA student team conducted an extensive marketing analysis of the business. Working with owners Champ and Jean Land, the team focused their efforts on analyzing Troutman’s digital and printed marketing materials, value proposition, and the geographic reach of the sales force and sales channels.

The MBA students interviewed each of Troutman’s sales representatives and visited retail stores carrying Troutman furniture. The students asked sales representatives for their opinions on the sales process, marketing materials, and product quality. The information gathered aided making final recommendations and creating the competitive analysis.

At the end of the fall semester, the MBA team presented their research findings and recommendations to Troutman’s management team who plans to implement several of the recommendations.

Q: DESCRIBE YOUR BUSINESS:
Lucinda: We are developing a new therapy for glaucoma, which will provide a level of efficacy not seen in the past 45 years. Glaucoma is the second leading cause of blindness after cataracts; however, there is a huge gap in the treatment success between these diseases. Cataract surgery is one of the best procedures performed in medicine. There are no drugs on the market to treat cataracts, because the surgery is so safe and effective. Camras Vision’s goal is to make glaucoma surgery like cataract surgery with our patented device and surgical approach. Our novel technology will provide the first-ever personalized treatment to prevent blindness for each patient.

Q: WHAT’S YOUR STORY?
Roberto: Lucinda comes from a long lineage of inventors. Her grandfather, Marvin Camras, developed magnetic tape recording in his 20s and is in the Inventors Hall of Fame. At 19 years old, her father, Carl Camras, discovered a new class of drugs (prostaglandin analogues) to treat glaucoma that remains the first-line treatment in the field. Lucinda started working in glaucoma at the age of 16 years old. By the time she was 19, she and her father had created a new glaucoma device and surgical approach. They worked together on the design and towards pursuing licensing agreements and funding. In 2009, Lucinda’s father passed away, but she continued their work to make their idea into a viable product.

Q: HOW DID YOU LEARN ABOUT THE SBTDC?
Lucinda: Our first attempt at funding failed so we were looking for a funding strategy and a colleague of mine recommended Kim Mayer at the SBTDC. Kim has been wonderful. We wouldn’t have been able to get off the ground without her. She helped us tailor our Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) grant application to the agency and knew how to package it.

ROBERTO: Funding is so limited in North Carolina for small startups like ours that don’t even have the capital to get answers to questions, so a free service like the SBTDC is absolutely essential.

Q: HOW HAS THE SBTDC HELPED?
The SBIR grant assistance is the most valuable thing the SBTDC has provided. Receiving the SBIR funding is what allowed us to move forward and we’ve actually been able to win three grants, although we had to turn one down. They have provided much needed advice on business development and we have also paired up with several student interns for marketing analysis.

Q: WHAT IMPACT HAVE YOU SEEN ON THE BUSINESS?
Well, we have an existing company that has produced a functioning medical device. We’ve been able to receive grant funding and we’re both able to work full time with some part-time help.
Q: WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?
We are seeking seed funding as well as continuing our grant strategy to further develop our device and begin our FDA preclinical testing to ensure that it is safe for humans. Then we will begin our first-in-man studies, which will be followed by long-term clinical studies to get FDA and CE approval. Once completed, we will start selling our product to help the millions of glaucoma suffers worldwide.

COMPANY SUSTAINS SUCCESS AFTER GRADUATING FROM SBA’S 8(A) PROGRAM

Established in 1993, J.A. Farrington Janitorial Services is a Durham, NC-based environmentally-friendly commercial and institutional cleaning business serving the tri-state area.

A long-time SBTDC client, James came to the SBTDC requesting help with getting into the SBA’s 8(a) Business Development Program, which helps small, disadvantaged businesses compete in the government marketplace. Sales were up and down for the first few years after being admitted into the 8(a) program, and mentoring and coaching were needed to make the successful transition and sustain long-term success after graduating from the 8(a) program.

The business became competitive in the marketplace before completing nine years in the program, which is the program’s goal. The business’ contract size prior to the 8(a) program was less than $100,000 compared to the $600,000 multi-year contract received in 2012 with six jobs retained and sixteen jobs created. The business is well positioned with government entities to receive $750,000 to $1M multi-year contracts into 2014 in both North and South Carolina.

Q: WHAT’S YOUR STORY?
As a Communications Officer in the Marine Corps, I worked with cutting edge technology developing and managing networks. It became a passion and with a little bit of research and training in civilian methods, I started Carolinas IT. We started out with just the two of us, but we envisioned a company where the clients felt like Carolinas IT was an extension of their own team, where high level IT talent could be utilized by small and medium sized businesses who otherwise would be unable to afford the level of quality that we could offer. Today, 18 years later, I feel like we’ve accomplished that.

Q: DESCRIBE YOUR BUSINESS:
Carolinas IT is a flexible technology solutions company specializing in the design, implementation and support of computer networking systems. We provide support via our 24 x 7 Network Operations Center in Raleigh, and also have developed our own private Cloud service. What makes Carolinas IT unique, however, is our ability and willingness to listen to our client’s needs and create custom solutions based on that requirement.

Q: HOW DID YOU FIRST MEET THE SBTDC?
I first met with my business counselor, Pete Donahue, about four years ago. We took a detailed look at every aspect of the company and came up with a list of focus areas and goals. So far we’ve tackled an HR overhaul, a restructuring of legal documents, a financial analysis with industry comparables, a focused business plan, and increasing the strength of the company.

In the last year, our revenue has increased by 23%. In the last five years, we have increased the staff from 43 people to 55.

Q: HOW HAS THE SBTDC BEEN ABLE TO HELP?
For the HR overhaul, we worked with Pete to complete an HR Audit. I am ready to admit that my focus and passion is with the customers and technology, so having an outside source give me feedback and help create a handbook was great.

Management also underwent a two-day leadership seminar where we analyzed how we see ourselves compared to how our clients see us. From this, we were able to make the company stronger for both our clients and employees and developed a business plan that is still effective.

A team of four students working towards their Masters in Accounting from Wake Forest University was paired up with us to assess the company’s market value, to see what we were doing right and compare the company to other similar companies in the area, which has been useful in identifying areas to continue strengthening the company.

Most recently we have worked with the SBTDC to learn more about pursuing government contracts in order to determine if this is a market segment we would like to pursue.
Q: HAVE YOU SEEN ANY GROWTH SINCE WORKING WITH THE SBTDC?
In the last year, our revenue has increased by 23%. In the last four years, we have increased the staff from 43 people to 55. We opened a branch office in Norfolk, Virginia and developed three new services that are available to clients—Managed Services, Cloud Services and implementation of Electronic Healthcare Systems. And we were recently honored as a Fast 50 Company of 2012 in the Triangle Business Journal.

MANAGEMENT LEARNS LEADERSHIP BEST PRACTICES

With 25 years in the structural metal fabrication and steel construction business, Weldon Steel of Halifax County has developed business practices that focus on high quality, timely delivery, and customer satisfaction.

Kris Neal, president of Weldon Steel, became an SBTDC client in 2010 after learning about Biz Boost, a program that aimed to help mid-size businesses retain jobs and accelerate their growth prospects by focusing additional SBTDC resources and leveraging partnerships. They received assistance with accounting, customer relations, government contracting, strategic planning, organization, human resources, legal issues, marketing and sales.

Weldon Steel participated in the SBTDC Strategy and Growth Services Leadership Challenge, which turns the abstract concept of leadership into easy-to-grasp practices and behaviors that can be taught and learned by anyone willing to step up and accept the challenge to lead.

Since working with the SBTDC, Weldon Steel’s management team has improved communications, received numerous government contracts and strengthened their operations allowing the business to navigate through a difficult economy.

Q: DESCRIBE YOUR BUSINESS:
S3T is the name of my business. We are a micro trucking company that is contracted to move Coca Cola products from bottling facilities to distribution facilities in the southeast.
I am 100% Veteran Owned right now, and all of my employees are combat veterans. I plan to continue to employ veterans, with preferential selection of combat veterans as future employees.

Q: WHAT’S YOUR STORY?
S3T was started in June of 2011 and we originally partnered with New Generation Trucking for logistical planning and regulatory compliance. We began stand-alone operations in 2012 and primarily moved dry freight in the southeast region until November of 2013, when we began our current contract with Coca Cola.

Q: HAS THE SBTDC HELPED?
Absolutely. I have taken advice from the SBTDC counselors at every major decision point through the last couple of years and my business has benefited greatly from the sound advice and research provided by the SBTDC.

I have had several meetings with Lexie Denman and originally she helped me with my business plan. Then we transitioned into cost benefit analysis for different options in truck leasing vs. purchasing and fuel program management. Last year she organized a team of students to research methods of reducing fuel costs, maintenance costs and driver turnover.

Q: HAVE YOU SEEN AN IMPACT ON THE BUSINESS?
Right now my business is more of a hobby business that does not require a great deal of my time or energy. In the coming months I am going to expand my business to turn the corner from a micro business to a small business and my gross income will more than triple. I currently have 3 employees; however, I am planning to expand my business this summer from 3 to 5 and later this year from 5 to 7.

Q: WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR STARTING A BUSINESS?
I made two major mistakes when starting my business. The first mistake was taking bad advice. I planned to operate my business with oversight and advice from a parent company, only to learn the parent company was mismanaged and on its way out of business. Only after I realized I had made some fiscal and managerial mistakes did I write my business plan and really begin to understand the financial and managerial structuring that I needed to accomplish. Lexie was instrumental in helping me educate myself and turn around my business.

The second mistake I made was using my own money to start the business. Of course a new business owner should expect to make financial contributions from personal assets, but I invested about 50K of money from my retirement savings,
and borrowed another 25K through a personal loan to start my business. I should have researched the market I wanted to operate my business in, written my business plan, and then secured a Small Business Loan in conjunction with some personal assets to start my business.

BUSINESS THRIVES AFTER TAXPAYER RECOVERY PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

When Sonya Evans Oates, owner of Need Speech, Inc. in Fayetteville, contacted the NC Department of Revenue, she learned about the NC Small Business Taxpayer Recovery Program, which required participants to seek business counseling from the SBTDC or a Small Business Center (SBC) to get delinquent tax fees and interest waived.

Need Speech enrolled to address the tax situation, but the business gained far more by working with SBTDC business counselor Ron Duffer. To strengthen her business, Sonya attended the SBTDC’s NxLeveL Workshop for Entrepreneurs and classes offered by Fayetteville Technical Community College’s SBC. Ron also acquired a group of business student interns from FSU to assist Need Speech. The SBTDC’s Strategy and Growth Services facilitated a strategic planning retreat to help the business strategize ways to grow and succeed in the future.

While some of its competitors have dissolved or drastically decreased their employee base, Need Speech has remained intact with improved business operations. Sonya’s more confident that she’s running the business properly.

Q: WHAT’S YOUR STORY?
I have always been passionate about communication, and making sure people have the ability to communicate, which is why I went into Speech Pathology 20 years ago. Pediatrics drew me in about 10 years ago while working at the Department of Defense as a speech therapist. I became particularly close with a mother whose child I was providing therapy for. Her son had a doctor’s appointment with a developmental pediatrician and she asked that I come with her. At that appointment, he was diagnosed with autism. I knew right then that I had to help this woman find a way through and open a line of communication with her son. Not too long after that, I started Speech 4 Kidz in Jacksonville, NC – that was 2004. Since then, I’ve opened offices in Wilmington and Fayetteville.

Q: DESCRIBE YOUR COMPANY:
We help kids and families learn how to communicate. Educating the families andcaretakers is an important part of that so they can continue working even when they aren’t in our office. I am also working on a software program which streamlines the insurance, invoicing and state regulations for speech and language pathologists.

Q: HOW HAS THE SBTDC HELPED?
I first met with my business counselor, Janis Mueller in 2010 for information about marketing for the software program. Together we looked at market research, which provided significant insight into what the consumer wants. From that, I have been able to refine the software and start testing with a small audience.
When I decided to open a second office in Wilmington, Janis was ready to help me look at available options for managing the office and clients already established in Jacksonville.

The additional staff meant improving Human Resources and management skills and Janis was able to work with us on that.
Between my husband’s financial skills and the Strategy and Growth Services offered by the SBTDC, the business plan is now much stronger. And, when I have a new idea for marketing or anything else, I can understand the financial projections and see if it will benefit the company so I can make better decisions.
Through the SBTDC, we have also teamed with MBA students from UNC Wilmington for 18 months. The students are analyzing competitors to see where Speech 4 Kidz is positioned in the market. At the end, they will provide a Growth and Profit report including a presentation and 40-page paper.
The SBTDC is a fountain of never-ending information. If they don’t have the answers ready, they will tell you exactly where to look to find the answers you need. I have learned more, truly, in my 30-60 minute sessions about small business and strategies than in all my years of just breathing.
Donna Treolo owns and operates Treolo Properties, a real estate and rental/leasing business in Hampstead, NC. Donna and her husband wanted to invest in a commercial property to offset rental of their other company in the marine repair industry. They had various concerns regarding startup, legal concerns, marketing, and operational components of the potential startup.

The SBTDC educated the Treolos on startup procedures, pros and cons of legal entities, resources for legal and accounting assistance, software, and web development. Additionally, they received assistance on financial projections and business planning throughout the loan process. Treolo Properties plans to work with PTAC on Woman-Owned Small Business (WOSB) certification.

With the SBTDC’s assistance, Treolo Properties was able to start an LLC, prepare a business plan and projections that culminated in a loan for the commercial real estate purchase. They are marketing the space and have numerous potential tenants in process of applying to lease space.
Q: WHAT’S YOUR STORY?
Converter’s Unlimited started up 30 years ago buying scrap converters and stripping them for their precious metals. They gradually moved away from scrap and began re-building converters and selling directly to consumers out of trucks. As the company and market continued to evolve, the owner of Converters Unlimited recognized the need to move away from this type of sales and into the wholesale market. This is where I came in. The owner knew my reputation in the industry and called me for an interview. Honestly, I only agreed in order to spy on the enemy, but they ended up making me an offer I couldn’t refuse. I became the Sales Manager and moved Converters Unlimited out of the peddler market and into the world of wholesale. We began making appointments and selling to auto shops.

About two years ago, I decided to make an offer to purchase the company. I knew with the right staff, we could make some necessary changes to Converters Unlimited. It was a long process but I’ve owned the company for about a year now and we are already seeing growth.

Q: HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THE SBTDC?
After the previous owner agreed to sell me the company, I started looking into procuring a loan. I was discussing with a small group at church about what I wanted to do about buying the business when someone referred me to the SBTDC where I met my business counselor, Debbie Hathaway.

If I had gone to the bank before meeting Debbie, none of this would have happened.
Aurora Industrial Supply (AIS) is an industrial supply company located in Aurora, NC. For many years, AIS has been a major supplier for PCS Phosphate. To diversify their business and drive increased profitability they have recently created two new high-growth segments: Dewatering Resource Innovators and Environmental Acid Solutions.

AIS initially came to the SBTDC for assistance with grant applications, business planning, and financial projections for the two growth segments. Business counselor David Mayo worked with the company on a financing package. After making introductions to banks and attending banker presentations, AIS decided to self-fund the venture because of lower interest rates.

Their counselor also made referrals to Beaufort County Economic Development Commission who provided land for a building at no cost.

The business invested over $3.5 million into the project and booked sales of $10 million for 2013, an increase of $6 million. AIS hired 9 employees in 2013 and expects to add another 30 employees in 2014.

Q: Describe your business:
A.W. Brinkley Hardware is an independent, family-owned retail hardware store in operation since 1979. We’re the old-timey, country hardware store stocking anything you might need and the things that you can’t find at the big box stores. We also have a beautiful garden center specializing in mowers and in the last three years, we have started selling and repairing small engines.

Q: What’s your story?
In 1979, my father, Buddy Brinkley, bought out W.H. Goodman Hardware. It evolved to carry the hardware and supplies needed for the rural community around here and in 1989, we moved into this larger location. I started working here as a teenager before getting degrees in Engineering and Architecture. My father passed away in 2000 and my mother and I incorporated A.W. Brinkley Hardware. Since then we’ve been able to bring my wife, Jodie Brinkley, in as an Office Manager.

Q: How has the SBTDC been able to help?
We’re working on revising our business plan and developing new ways to drive traffic toward the store. A nearby paper plant closed and we have a lot less traffic coming by here. That, combined with the city pushing to centralize businesses, has created a real need to motivate people to come out this way. One solution is the small engine service and repair. We’re seeing local customers but Lowes Hardware is also outsourcing a lot of that service to us. One of the most important ways the SBTDC has influenced the business was by helping us receive a workforce development grant. We’re using it to send two of our mechanics to specialized training for standby generators. We will be the only business in 75 miles licensed to work on these types of generators. Plus, we took a leap of faith by expanding our engine parts department by $20,000. Between the two, we’re looking forward to the results.
We worked with the SBTDC’s Strategy and Growth Services on two days of training and development for the management team here, and we are now undergoing customer service and sales training for all of the staff.

Q: What impact have you seen on the business?
In the last year, A.W. Brinkley Hardware has increased sales by 15%. It has been hard work and has taken some innovative marketing. We are opening a nearby farmer’s market and my mother is using part of her land as a shooting range. We just added another mower manufacturer and opened a new line of credit which we are using to expand the store in anticipation of future growth.

The SBTDC’s help has been invaluable. Before their involvement, we were a family owned business lacking organizational structure. But, once we brought them into our world, we changed our mentality and are moving forward one bite at a time.
SBTDC EXPERTISE HELPS COMPANY GET DEAL WITH YAMAHA

Established in 2002, Joe’s Marine Service is a family-owned, full-service boat sales and marine maintenance and repair facility located in the Wanchese Marine Industrial Park.

The business came to the SBTDC seeking assistance to get certified as a full-service Yamaha engine center that can sell Yamaha engines directly from the manufacturing plant and not through a third-party source. They needed a business plan to submit to Yamaha and to GE Capital for the certification, and to floor financing for the engine inventory.

Business counselor Gena Martin assisted with getting the business plan written and submitted to Yamaha and GE Capital. Joe’s Marine Service was approved by Yamaha and GE Capital to inventory Yamaha engines at their business for sales and service.

The Statewide Advisory Board has played an important role in supporting SBTDC leadership since 1985 and is comprised of both at-large and regional center representatives.

Board members are selected to enhance the SBTDC and its capacity to provide high-quality service to stimulate business growth and economic development throughout North Carolina. In addition to advocating on behalf of the small to medium-sized business community, board members help develop the SBTDC’s strategic plan and annual work plans, identify new resources, and provide feedback and recommendations on SBTDC programs and services. Many board members have offered guidance to SBTDC counselors and clients, spoken at SBTDC conferences and events, and worked on special projects, including the development of Inception Micro Angel Funds across the state.

The following individuals are currently serving on the SBTDC’s Statewide Advisory Board, and we thank them for their generous commitment to the SBTDC and small businesses across North Carolina.

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