

THE sbtcdc PRESENTS...

SMALL BUSINESS SUPER HEROES

STARRING REAL BUSINESS-OWNERS
FROM ACROSS NORTH CAROLINA WHO
ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE

THE STORIES

THE REAL SUPER HEROES
WALK AMONG US. THEY'RE THE
NEIGHBORS LENDING A HAND,
THE TEACHERS GOING ABOVE
AND BEYOND, AND THEY ARE
THE SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS
OFFERING JOBS AND CAREERS
TO THEIR COMMUNITIES.

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FROM THE STATE DIRECTOR



SCOTT DAUGHERTY

State Director
SBTDC



Dear Fellow North Carolinians,

Here at the SBTDC we have the great privilege of leveraging resources of The University of North Carolina System for the benefit of indomitable and inspiring small and mid-sized business owners across North Carolina. They spend their days meeting challenges, growing their companies, creating jobs, and supporting their communities.

While recruiting large companies into the state garners the lion's share of the attention, it's the small to mid-sized firms that create the most net new jobs. They also generate a quarter of our state's total export revenue, and account for the lion's share of innovation that drives high tech growth.

These owners start and grow their companies in North Carolina, and rarely leave for "greener pastures." They have roots in their communities and regions, give back, and encourage their employees to do so as well.

They are truly superheroes, and this publication celebrates ten of them.

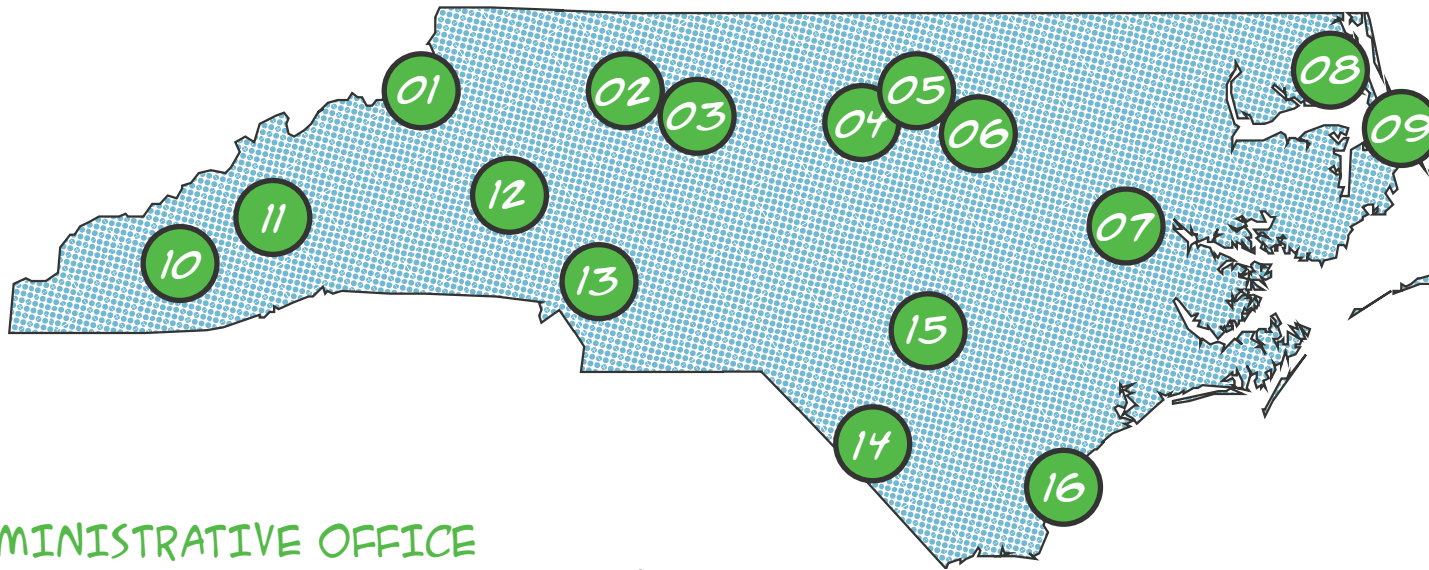
**"ALL THE BEST HEROS ARE ORDINARY PEOPLE
WHO MAKE THEMSELVES EXTRAORDINARY"**

GERALD MAY, PSYCHIATRIST AND THEOLOGIAN

SBTDC STATEWIDE OFFICES

The SBTDC is administered by NC State University on behalf of The University of North Carolina System. We maintain 16 offices across the state that 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.



STATE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

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|---|---|---|--|
| 01 BOONE
Appalachian State University | 05 DURHAM
North Carolina Central University | 09 NAGS HEAD
Elizabeth City State University | 13 CHARLOTTE
University of North Carolina at Charlotte |
| 02 WINSTON-SALEM
Winston-Salem State University | 06 RALEIGH
North Carolina State University | 10 CULLOWHEE
Western Carolina University | 14 FAYETTEVILLE
Fayetteville State University |
| 03 GREENSBORO
North Carolina A&T State University
University of North Carolina at Greensboro | 07 GREENVILLE
East Carolina University | 11 ASHEVILLE
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University of North Carolina at Asheville | 15 PEMBROKE
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| 04 CHAPEL HILL
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill | 08 ELIZABETH CITY
Elizabeth City State University | 12 HICKORY
Appalachian State University | 16 WILMINGTON
University of North Carolina at Wilmington |

WHAT WE DO

The Small Business and Technology Development Center (SBTDC) is the business advisory service of The University of North Carolina System. We have 16 offices across the state staffed with experts ready to provide personalized counseling and education to small and midsize businesses. We help entrepreneurs make their businesses better, create and retain jobs and improve the economy of North Carolina.



STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT & 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

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 & 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.

THE SBTDC & ACCESS TO CAPITAL!



SBTDC specializes in helping small to mid-sized businesses identify and prepare for:

TRADITIONAL BANK LOANS

SBA-GUARANTEED LOANS

EXPORT FINANCING

EQUITY CAPITAL INVESTMENT

FEDERAL R+D AND
COMMERCIALIZATION FUNDING

\$123.8 MILLION

In Fiscal Year 2016-2017 alone, SBTDC clients raised \$123.8 million in capital.

According to the Federal Reserve Bank's 2016 "Small Business Credit Survey," SBTDC clients reported being approved for financing and operating profitably at significantly higher rates:

FINANCING APPROVAL

93% VS 76%
SBTDC NATIONAL AVERAGE

OPERATING AT A PROFIT (2015)

64% VS 53%
SBTDC NATIONAL AVERAGE

Large companies trying to raise additional capital typically look to debt and equity markets, but small businesses rarely have that opportunity. Instead, they are forced to look for non-traditional and unique places to find the funding they need to grow their businesses.

That's why the SBTDC is essential to these businesses. We have developed a robust set of tools and resources to serve businesses seeking capital and make sure that they succeed.

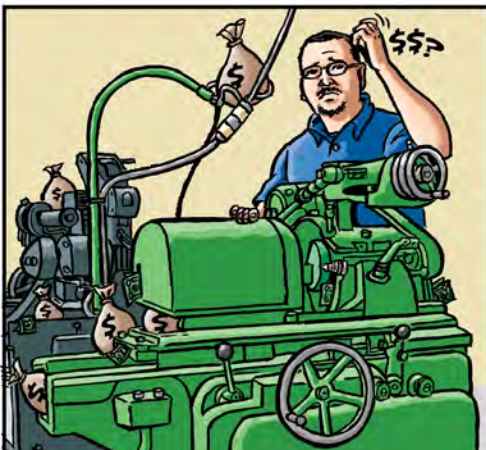
PROFITCENTS: a one-on-one analysis with the client to develop financial projections and risk assessments.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FINANCIAL PROFESSIONALS (EDFP): Thirteen of our counselors have completed this rigorous training series that develops essential skills for practicing economic development including business credit, real estate finance analysis, loan packaging, negotiating, and problem solving.

RELATIONSHIPS AND RESOURCES: We strive to maintain and develop relationships with lenders, grant agencies, angel and VC investors in order to help pair businesses with the right type of funding for their needs. We also maintain the Capital Opportunities Report, a comprehensive list of available funding options in NC.

Most importantly, these outcomes are all client-verified. They are not estimates, projections, or extrapolations. Counselors must receive attribution from the client, in writing, before submitting this information.

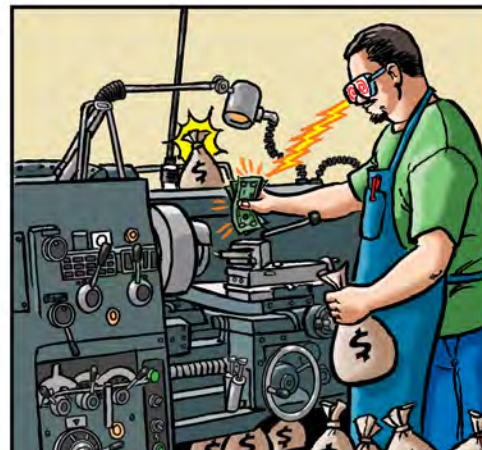




WHERE IS THE MONEY?



Jonathan, I can help you find the money.
Just put on these laser vision glasses
and take a closer look.



Of course! The money is hiding in all the
equipment and materials we've purchased.
Now what to do with all this extra cash...



We'll reinvest it in new markets and
opportunities like putting a grinding wheel
on Mars!

ASHEVILLE +
CULLOWHEE

ADVANCED SUPER- ABRASIVES

Mars Hill, NC

Jonathan Szucs

www.asiwhheels.com

WHAT THEY DO

Since 1993, Advanced Superabrasives, Inc. (ASI) has been a manufacturer of high-end and extreme-precision diamond and CBN grinding wheels for any industry. Their grinding wheels are used to create tools that need to be precise down to the micron—thinner than a human hair. For that kind of precision, the tool needs to be ground rather than laser-cut or eroded. ASI makes all of their products in house, taking the raw material through the manufacturing process to the final product. What makes them unique is their ability to customize wheels with different shapes, diamonds, and bonds as needed for each job, allowing them to produce wheels for a variety of industries rather than focusing exclusively on a single industry like woodworking, aerospace, automotive or silicone wafer grinding. ASI is about selling a solution to a problem rather than a wheel from a catalog, and prides themselves on working with clients to increase production and value. This goes beyond manufacturing and client training to building grinding equipment and filtration systems that compliment the wheels, helping them last longer and perform better.



UNDER THE CAPE In 1993, Atilla Szucs went out on his own and started what was then Advanced Tool. Jonathan, his son, had no desire to follow in his father's footsteps and instead wanted to be a doctor. He enrolled in Pre-Med at UNC Charlotte. It was during a hospital lab for dissection that he realized medicine might not actually be the right fit. He transferred to Western Carolina and graduated with a degree in electrical- and computer-engineering technology. With a new found love for the industry, he is back at ASI, never content unless there is grease in his hair and oil splattered across his shirt. He thrives on meeting clients and working with their machines, finding solutions for faster and better production, whether it is for joints in the medical industry or a brand new 787 jet. He can even claim the record for furthest export in the state of North Carolina with a grinding wheel on Mars.

REALIGNING ASSETS TO ENTER NEW MARKETS

In 2014, ASI teamed up with an SBTDC MBA intern from Western Carolina to do an in-depth market research project on aerospace markets in Europe. Poland kept surfacing as a viable potential market, but they didn't have the resources to pursue it. Actually, they could not pinpoint exactly where their money was tied up, so they worked with the SBTDC. It turns out that it was heavily invested in capital equipment, inventory, and research and development. It took several years to cut their inventory and realign their assets, but a direct result was the ability to enter the Polish market this year. Jonathan attended a trade show in March and landed \$60,000 in orders. He says "That's a really big success story because I got that report in 2014 and when we were finally able to act on it, we walked away with business."



GOING FROM SMALL BUSINESS TO MIDSIZE ASI is perched at the top of the small businesses in their market and they are ready to make the leap to midsize company. The SBTDC is helping with that transition. Jonathan and his counselor compared ASI to four competitors which gave them areas for improvement and showed how ASI fits into the overall market. Now it is all about opening up multiple product lines. For their

entire 24-year history, they have only produced a resin-bonded wheel, but this year they added metal bonded and plan to eventually add vitrified and hybrid. After that, Jonathan foresees a snowball effect in revenue and hiring. ASI has already grown to 40 employees since working with the SBTDC, a 33% increase. Revenues are up 15%, and in the machinist division, they are up 50%. They added the new metal bonded wheel in January, and they are now in 26 countries.

LOCAL HERO IMPROVES LIVES ASI has felt the familiar struggle of finding skilled workers. Jonathan believes it is partly due to the industry's bad reputation, but part of the problem is a gap in vocational training and exposure to potential career paths. So, ASI offers internships to high school seniors as well as apprenticeships to high school graduates. The interns work half days, receive \$10 an hour and

discover whether or not this is for them. The apprenticeship lasts four years and ASI pays 100% of their tuition and books at a community college while they get an degree. If they choose to continue with a four-year degree, then 100% of that will be covered as well. Jonathan is also on advisory boards for the county schools, community colleges and universities and is determined to get his hands dirty and make a difference.

I SHARE MY GOALS AND DREAMS WITH THE SBTDC AND THEY HELP KEEP ME IN THE TRACKS, LIKE THE LANE ASSIST IN A CAR. WHEN I START GOING TOO FAR TO THE SIDE, THEY SHAKE ME A LITTLE BIT AND PUSH ME BACK OVER.



HOST CAMPUSES:

Western Carolina University
University of North Carolina at Asheville



Due to instability in the market and a desire for a more sedentary life, Becky Loranger walked away from her high adventure pilot life.

And found herself as a Business Development Director in a business world that was just as unstable.



So she took matters into her own hands and opened her own business.



She now employs 50 people.

BOONE +
HICKORY

LAKESIDE PROJECT SOLUTIONS

Denver, NC

Becky Loranger

www.lakesideps.com

WHAT THEY DO

Lakeside Project Solutions provides facilities management services spanning many industries: Financial, Healthcare, Retail, Restaurant, to name a few. Lakeside employs a customer-centric approach, first understanding the client's needs and applying strategic thinking to tactical action. From small-scale custom fit-outs to massive multi-site renovations, and everything in between, Lakeside leverages years of experience, expert project management, and measurable results via unique KPIs.



UNDER THE CAPE Becky Loranger started her career as a pilot, flying everything from corporate and cargo to bush flying in Alaska. Flying was her life. Then came the economic downturn and the aviation industry had its own share of volatile ups and downs. Her job, pay, schedule and home base were constantly changing. By 2008, she made the decision to find something new. She wasn't altogether sure that she could translate her skills into another industry and met with an HR executive who encouraged her to become a Business Development Director. She took a job with a construction company and learned about the industry before they went bankrupt. It was then she took matters into her own hands and opened Lakeside Project Solutions (LPS) in 2009. Within six months she had her second employee, and now she has a staff of 50 in two buildings.

STRATEGY AND SALES For the first few years, sales grew organically through referrals and word of mouth. By the time there was a need for a salesperson, it was clear that they needed to change their strategy and have written processes. They needed a VP of Sales, but weren't ready for that hire. LPS worked with the SBTDC to put together a sales strategy and playbook. Over the course of three months, her counselor pinpointed what their needs were and created a program that walks sales personnel through the sale, the onboarding, and setting up a kickoff meeting with new customers. Since then, LPS has doubled in both sales and employees.

HOOK, LINE (OF CREDIT) AND SINKER LPS also took advantage of the SBTDC's help to increase their line of credit. The SBTDC showed LPS the benefit of having it available. "They said, 'By the time you need it to be bigger, it's too late to ask.'" Becky appreciates that the SBTDC is aligned with one of LPS' core values—proactive execution, meaning that it is important to look up from the day-to-day and anticipate the future.

INTERNSHIPS THAT ACTUALLY PROFIT Becky is no stranger to interns. She built internship programs for several other companies and she had one for LPS. At the end of each internship, she felt the student got more out of it than the company, and that was okay. "For me, internships were about getting a little bit of work done for the business, but it was more of a community service project." Then she became involved with the SBTDC's internship programs and her whole philosophy changed. One of LPS' first interns created

a 12-month marketing program including all of the content created, addresses loaded and ready to launch. "It was good enough to use without editing. Suddenly I realized we could be more effective and profitable with the SBTDC interns." The difference is that the SBTDC vets the student and matches their skills and interests with the businesses' projects to make sure that it is the right match from the beginning. Since then, they have had six MBA interns and one undergrad intern, whom they subsequently hired.

BETTER THAN LASER VISION Lakeside Project Solutions has been named one of the best places to work, and with good reason. Becky runs health programs that inspire employees to quit smoking and lose weight. They have a gym and on Fridays

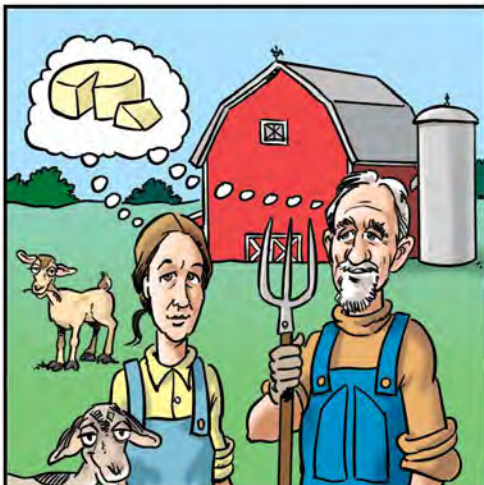
trainers encourage employees to try something new. She also runs financial-wealth classes with the goal that everyone eliminate debt and learn wealth building strategies. On the wall are the Lakeside Values, designed to make life work better. She wants what she calls "Happy Humans" and she walks the halls regularly to make sure employees do indeed seem happy. They are also actively involved in Camp Care—a summer camp for children diagnosed with cancer. Employees come up with fundraising events like mud runs, dunk tanks and barrel races to ensure these children have an incredible experience.



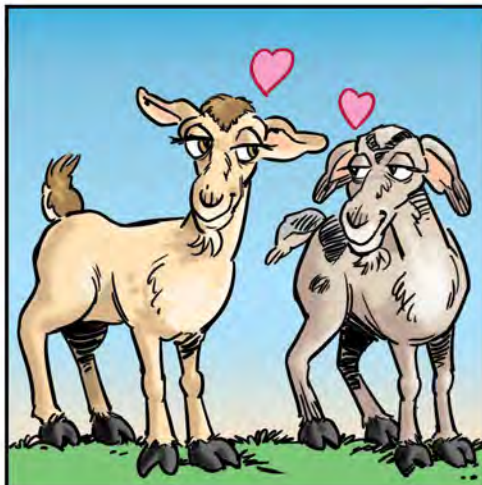
SUDDENLY I REALIZED WE COULD BE
MORE EFFECTIVE AND PROFITABLE WITH
THE SBTDC INTERNS



HOST CAMPUS:
Appalachian State University



Steve and Ginnie were content to run their goat farm and make cheese for years, but thoughts of the future start haunting them.



He sells most of the goats to a nearby farmer and gets started on a plan for the farm's survival.



He focuses on updating and upgrading the cheese making side of the business and gets the farm to a point where he can sell.



Steve sells the farm to long-time employees Bobby and Carrie.

GREENSBORO +
WINSTON-SALEM

GOAT LADY DAIRY

Climax, NC

Steven Kent Tate

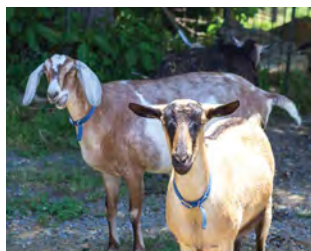
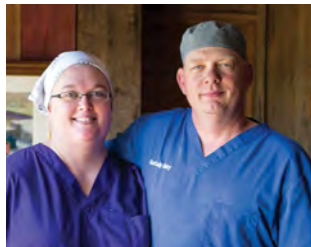
www.goatladydairy.com

WHAT THEY DO

Since 1995, Goat Lady Dairy (GLD) has produced artisanal goat- and cow-milk cheese on a 200-year-old, 40-acre farm in rural Randolph County, NC. The cheese is produced in small batches using traditional hand-crafted techniques. They produce a range of cheeses including their popular spreadable goat milk cheese with creamy flavors like Fig & Honey, Roasted Red Pepper, and an applewood smoked chevre called Smokey Mountain Round. Goat Lady Dairy also makes two aged cheeses, a natural rind goat milk cheese, and a raw cow milk Gouda, and two bloomy rind brie style cheeses. Today, GLD partners with three other farms to produce their nationally award-winning cheese. They are one of the oldest, and now one of the largest, artisan cheese dairies in the South. The Dairy is also committed to sustainable farming, farmland preservation, and education.



UNDER THE CAPE Steve and his sister, Ginnie, grew up on a corn farm in Illinois before Steve became a therapist, running a counseling center in Minneapolis, and Ginnie became a nurse in Chicago. In 1984, Ginnie moved to a new job in Greensboro, NC excited to get back to her agricultural roots. Looking for just the right land to buy, she drove around the country roads with two pet Nubian goats she had gathered along her way. Soon the neighbors nicknamed her “The Goat Lady.” She moved in, two goats became six and then twelve, and extra milk became cheese. Meanwhile, Steve and his wife, Lee, visited each summer, falling in love with the lifestyle and the goats. As he describes them, “goats are contagious and terminal, meaning once you have them in your life, you can’t get them out.” So, by 1995 they had cashed out their midlife equity and joined Ginnie on the farm.



SETTING UP THE LONG GAME For a long time, it was enough to live on the land while learning the skills of goat farming and the craft of cheesemaking. Ginnie kept her nursing job as Steve and Lee gradually grew the herd and cheese sales. Eleven years older than Steve, Ginnie retired from nursing in 2003. Sadly, she contracted ALS in 2006. Because they all lived on the same farm, the family was able to care for her until she passed in 2009. Steve and his wife started thinking about the future, about retirement and what they wanted for the farm. They wanted the work and mission of Goat Lady Dairy to continue, and they wanted to save the jobs they had created.

In 2011, Steve was introduced to the SBTDC and started meeting with business counselor Andy. After a thorough analysis, Andy helped them realize that the business was not big enough or profitable enough to sell as it was. He outlined a remedy: change the business model and expand. The first necessary change was moving the goats off the farm to make room for expanded cheese making. Another family farm now handles day-to-day maintenance

of the GLD herd, and they buy back the milk. Another goal was to take advantage of bulk purchasing. Having thought of himself as small for so long, Steve did not realize it was an option, but it improved their production costs. Next, they transformed their goat barn into one of the largest and most modern cheese creameries in the South. It quadrupled capacity, making them perfectly poised to fill the niche of the “big little guy” in the market. They could meet the demands of larger stores like Whole Foods and Lowes but still have that local and hand-crafted charm. Since then, they have doubled production and sales, continued adding accounts, and now have eight distributors who sell as far as the West Coast.



By 2015, they had made it. The business was profitable enough to put the dairy up for sale. There was interest from many prospective buyers, but eventually, they chose to sell to long-time employees Bobby and Carrie Routh Bradds in May, 2017. Now Steve is technically retired, though he is still invested through owner financing and helps with sales and marketing. Steve says he cannot overemphasize the role that Andy and the SBTDC played in getting to this point. “I think we would have had just to stop and then all those jobs and everything we built would have been lost. It was crucial to our success.”

THEIR SUPER POWERS Their motto from the beginning has been “when you change a person’s relationship to their food, you change them and the world together.” Pioneers in the Local Food Movement, the Tates have always worked to help urban eaters discover where their food comes from and promote environmental stewardship. They bring in up to 4,000 visitors a year for events on the farm that allow them to tell their story and share their vision about caring for the land. Steve serves on the board of the Piedmont Land Conservancy (PLC). Working with PLC, the Tates have protected the farm with a Conservation Easement, ensuring it will always be farmland or open land. In 2010, they were named Sustainable Farmers of the Year by the Carolina Farm Stewardship Association.

IF WE HADN'T MET OUR COUNSELOR, I THINK WE WOULD HAVE HAD TO JUST STOP AND THEN ALL THOSE JOBS AND EVERYTHING WE BUILT WOULD HAVE BEEN LOST. IT WAS CRUCIAL TO OUR SUCCESS



HOST CAMPUSES:

NC A&T State University
UNC Greensboro
Winston-Salem State University
University of North Carolina School of the Arts



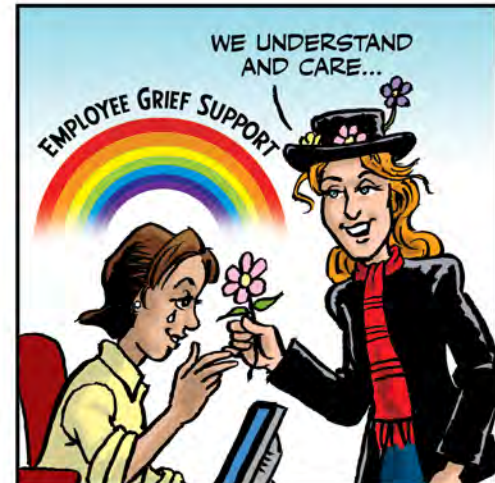
Courtney Silver floats in to the SBTDC after losing her husband and business wingman.



The SBTDC acts as her sounding board and gives her the tools and resources to become a certified woman-owned business.



She believes in her team of talented, loyal and dedicated machinists.



Courtney supports her employees by ensuring they come to a supportive and caring work environment each day.

CHARLOTTE

KETCHIE

Concord, NC

Courtney Silver

www.ketchieinc.com

WHAT THEY DO

For 70 years, Ketchie has been respected as the go-to precision machine shop, although it has grown a lot since 1947 when Ed Ketchie, Sr. served the local mills. Now, with its third-generation owner, it is an ISO-certified, woman-owned corporation operating CNC equipment. They produce custom machined parts, as well as a line of heavy- and standard-mounted bearing units. They focus on a broad range of industries including railroad, mining, lumber, and textiles. Courtney Silver prides herself on her team of talented, loyal, and dedicated machinists who are committed to fulfilling their mission to have the highest quality people, products and services.



UNDER THE CAPE Bobby Ketchie carried on the family tradition and became the third generation of Ketchies to take on the role of President and owner. In 2008, Courtney married Bobby and joined the team, using her experience at Bank of America to help run the HR, purchasing and financial departments at Ketchie. From there, she took on a variety of roles and responsibilities in order to learn the ins and outs of every area of the business. In 2014, Bobby passed away from the brain cancer he had been battling for seven and a half years, leaving Courtney as President and Owner of Ketchie, Inc.

AN OBJECTIVE EAR Although Bobby's death was not unexpected, Courtney felt like she had lost her wingman. She no longer had someone to run ideas past or to turn to for advice. She came across an ad for the SBTDC in Business North Carolina magazine and gave the number a call, which started her relationship with counselors Robin and Nick. "It can be so lonely as a business owner when you have to make hard decisions. They are my objective sounding board. They don't have any skin in the game, so it has been really helpful getting their support and feedback to help me make decisions."

PTAC AND WOMEN-OWNED CERTIFICATION

Early on, Courtney and the SBTDC tackled becoming a certified woman-owned business. Acquiring the certification was something that Courtney had considered, but was unsure if it would be worthwhile. Her SBTDC-PTAC Counselor encouraged her to go for it. They reviewed her capability statement and worked one-on-one to clarify her NAICS codes and specific customer lists for subcontracting. Since then, she has been able to add additional certifications like "Disadvantaged Business Certified" as customers require them.

MBAS ANALYZE BUILDING EXPANSION Courtney brought on an SBTDC-MBA intern team last year to help her decide whether to expand the building. They put together

a model that can be fed numbers and output resulting scenarios. "I was blown away. I'd give them an AAA+" said Courtney. She was impressed by the end result, but even more so by the process. She met with the team only a handful of times and she felt like she was overloading them with information, but they were able to ask the right questions and extract the key pieces to put together exactly what Courtney needed. "They showed a lot of initiative and clearly had business consulting skills. It's difficult for professional business consultants

to define the root issue that needs to be addressed, then take your information and find a way forward, and that's what these students did."

THE PITCH "My counselor always comes to mind when I have a general business support question because if she doesn't know, then she knows someone who does." And this was true when Courtney needed focused sales training. Robin suggested she look into a program called Sandler. After just three classes, Courtney paid a visit to one of Ketchie's oldest customers for whom they have consistently been making the same parts for years. Wanting to grow the relationship, on several previous visits she had offered to quote new parts without success. This time, using her newly learned techniques, Courtney walked away with a new request for a quote.

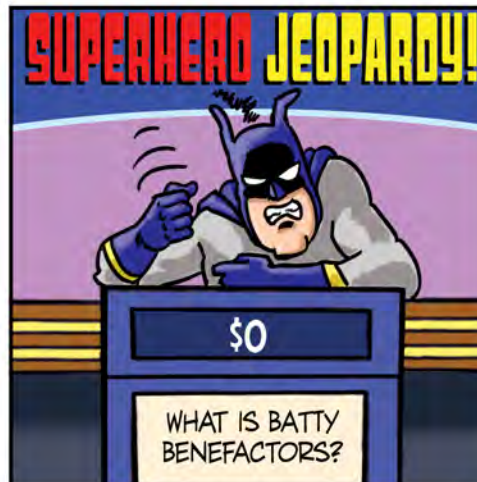
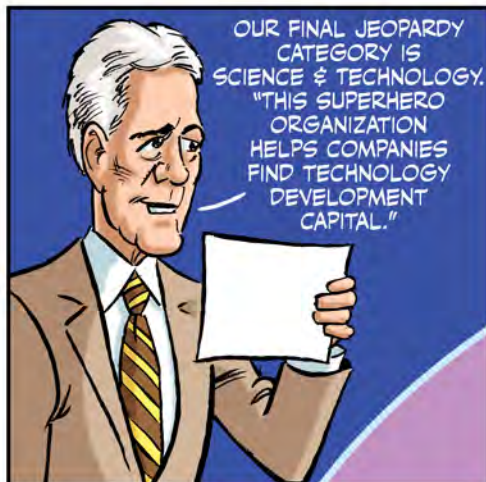
SUPERHERO Ketchie employees have recently dealt with more than their share of loss and grief and this has weighed heavily on Courtney. She has made it a priority to make Ketchie a place that provides a "family" feeling and encouragement, arranging food drop offs and providing flexible working arrangements. She knows that when people are going through something hard, performance and efficiency slips. "I'm just providing a work environment that is as supportive as possible because everyone has gone through something."



IT CAN BE SO LONELY AS A BUSINESS OWNER WHEN YOU HAVE TO MAKE HARD DECISIONS. THEY ARE MY OBJECTIVE SOUNDING BOARD. THEY DON'T HAVE ANY SKIN IN THE GAME, SO IT HAS BEEN REALLY HELPFUL GETTING THEIR SUPPORT AND FEEDBACK TO HELP ME MAKE DECISIONS.



HOST CAMPUS:
UNC Charlotte



In the high stakes game of pharmaceuticals, "What is the SBTDC" is the right question. Now Dignify Therapeutics is poised to bring a product to market that will change lives.

DURHAM +
CHAPEL HILL

DIGNIFY THERAPEUTICS

Durham, NC

Benny Ward

www.dignifytherapeutics.com

WHAT THEY DO

Founded in 2013, this start-up pharma company is working on an innovative new drug designed for patients with bladder and bowel voiding dysfunction. Their target patients primarily include those with spinal injuries and diseases including spina bifida and multiple sclerosis, but may expand to include the institutionalized elderly. For many of these individuals, their caregiver must insert a bladder catheter four or more times a day in order to empty their bladder. These patients often end up with additional complications as a result. Benjamin Franklin invented the bladder catheter in 1752 and, until now, there haven't been any advances in technology since. With Dignify Therapeutics' new drug, these patients would be able to place a tablet under their tongue or spray the solution into their nose, empty their bladder and bowel and move on with their lives. It's an on-demand therapy with rapid onset and rapid clearance from the body, meaning patients can choose when and where to void and have more time for themselves. They may no longer need a caregiver and their lives will improve dramatically as a result.



UNDER THE CAPE Benny Ward, the business executive at Dignify Therapeutics, joined the team with an impressive resume. His first encounter with the start-up tech world was while auditing various industries for Price Waterhouse. In 1996, he joined one of these companies as controller to take the company public. They developed an adhesive for the skin to replace sutures and staples that ultimately came to be known as Derma-Bond. After that, he worked to start several other firms before joining Dignify Therapeutics in 2013.

At Dignify, the rest of the team is made up of scientists and PhDs with expertise in urology, neuroscience and medicinal chemistry. They are focused on developing their product while Benny works the business angle. He helped establish the company and ensures they have the funding and resources they need to continue.

GREASING THE WHEELS As with all tech companies, the initial challenge is finding the funding necessary to bring the technology to a point where others see it as a worthwhile investment. The SBTDC has the experience and resources to help companies find and successfully apply for technology-development capital. Before Benny came on board, the SBTDC helped Dignify write a business plan and SBIR/STTR grant application, landing them \$150,000. Benny says, "We really appreciate the support of the SBTDC and think it's a great organization for early-stage technology companies that just need someone to show them the path to getting the company off the ground and funded through these SBIR/STTR opportunities." Since then, they have received close to another \$10 million in funding from the NC Biotech Center, institutional investors and SBIR/STTR grants from four separate branches within the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

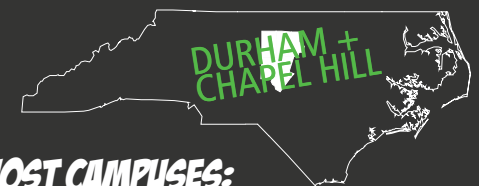
INTERNS DETERMINE VIABLE MARKETS Beyond the drug's original intended use for spinal cord injury patients, the team is constantly evaluating additional markets. Before those sparks of inspiration can be viable, however, they have to analyze the market to be sure there would be enough demand before committing

to time consuming and costly drug testing. This is where SBTDC interns have come in handy. Two summers ago, an intern at Dignify performed the market research for surgery patients requiring anesthesia that inhibits bladder emptying. Before being released from the hospital, patients are required to relieve themselves, and this drug could stimulate bladder emptying and allow for less time in the hospital. The intern researched the market size and potential for commercialization and found that this is indeed an avenue worth studying. Benny says, "We had no understanding of that market, and our intern was able to put together an assessment and presentation of the market that we presented to our board. They supported going forward with that opportunity." Dignify had a second intern this summer whose focus was on the institutionalized elderly market.

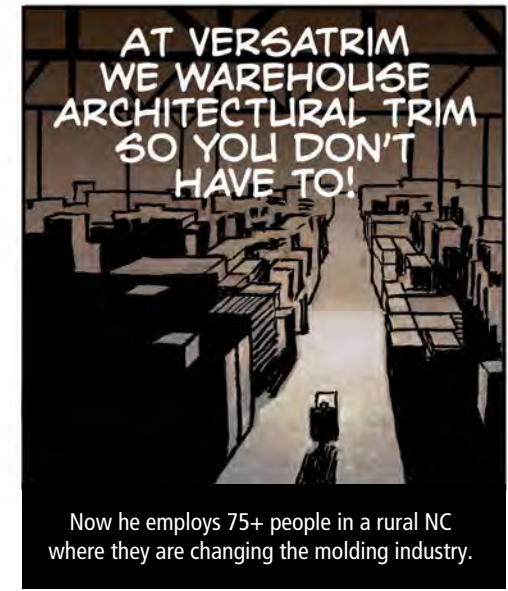
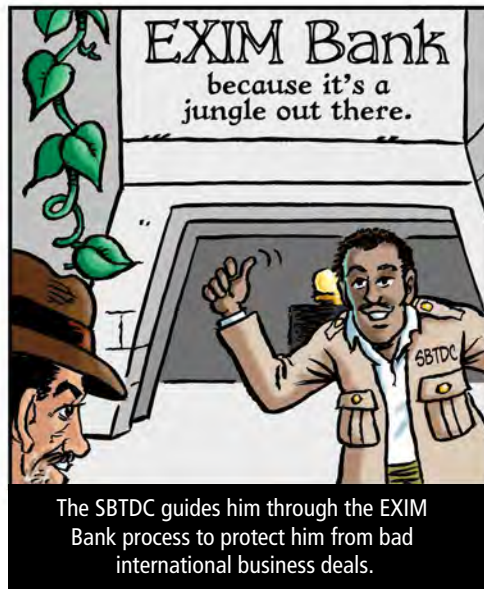
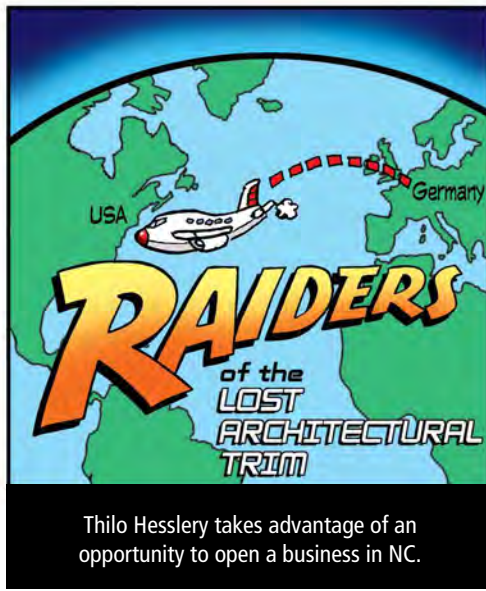
NEXT STEPS Dignify's drug development program is still in the pre-clinical stage but they hope to be testing in humans within two years. That study will enroll healthy human volunteers to test for side effects before testing spinal cord injury patients and the post-operative urinary retention patients. After that will be a large-scale study. Their plan is to find a commercialization partner before starting on the large-scale study, which would allow them to create the maximum value for the product before outlicensing it. Dignify also has follow-on products in the works to start developing.

CHAMPIONS OF IMPROVED LIVES Apart from walking, for many spinal cord injury patients, bladder and bowel function is one of the most important aspects of their lives. The amount of time necessary to use the catheter four to five times a day and the reliance on the aid of a caregiver can keep them from holding jobs and otherwise leading relatively normal lives. Additionally, many of these individuals often have related issues from skin exposure to urine and from the daily use of the catheter. These issues could be eliminated. For the Dignify Therapeutics team, that is what keeps them motivated. "I think we can really make a difference in people's lives. That's what we're trying to do and that's what we're passionate about."

WE REALLY APPRECIATE THE SUPPORT OF THE SBTDC AND THINK IT'S A GREAT ORGANIZATION FOR EARLY-STAGE TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES THAT JUST NEED SOMEONE TO SHOW THEM THE PATH TO GETTING THE COMPANY OFF THE GROUND AND FUNDED THROUGH THESE SBIR/STTR OPPORTUNITIES.



HOST CAMPUSES:
UNC Chapel Hill
NC Central University



RALEIGH

VERSATRIM

Henderson, NC

Thilo Hesslery

www.versatrim.com

WHAT THEY DO

Versatrim has been a manufacturer of vinyl floor moldings since 1998. Early on, Thilo took a step back from what they were doing to figure out what their customers actually wanted in terms of product and delivery. It turns out the answer was specialty coloring with no commitments, and they have built their business model around those needs. With more than 8,000 available colors, they have achieved a unique level of customization in their products. As for delivery, they have developed a special process that allows customers to order a single stick of molding with only a two-day lead-time.



UNDER THE CAPE Back in Germany, Thilo Hessler's father manufactured vinyl floor moldings. So, when Thilo had the opportunity to open a business in the United States, following in his father's footsteps simply made sense. At the time, North Carolina had a partnership with Stuttgart, Germany, which brought overseas businesses to the States. He has high praise for the program, which put him in touch with the resources he needed to be successful from the start. Thilo Hessler is not a man to sit still. His most recent project is a line of wall panels covered in extremely realistic, high-resolution photography of materials like tin tiles or chipped paint on wood. For now, it is just a little side project; but they are already the mandatory manufacturer for many of the Rooms To Go being built across the country. He is not sure it will turn into anything yet, but it exemplifies the energy and enthusiasm he has for the industry.

LOCATION LOCATION LOCATION Thilo set up shop in Raleigh for the first five years. After that, he moved Versatrim to Henderson as a way to reduce costs. He was able to purchase a building with a mortgage payment that is half the rent he was paying in Raleigh. With the freed up capital, he can funnel more money into marketing, leading to greater sales and the ability to hire additional staff.

GOING GLOBAL Vance County Economic Development put Thilo in touch with the SBTDC in order to take advantage of more exporting opportunities. His counselors introduced him to EXIM Bank and the credit insurance that they offer before walking him through the application process. Now, Thilo is able to give customers 30-day terms, allowing the product to reach the customer before they are required to pay, or with 60-day credit terms they have a chance to sell the product before paying Versatrim. This flexibility can be the difference between making a sale and watching your

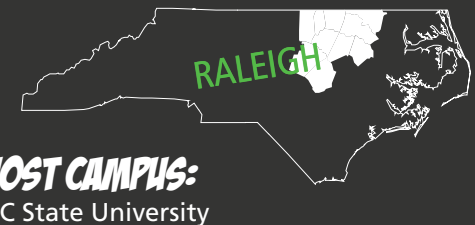
potential customer walk away. With credit insurance, Versatrim is not held back by any concern that some misfortune may occur and keep them from receiving payment. It is peace of mind. "I've yet to take advantage of a claim, but it is a lot of comfort knowing that if something were to happen, the credit insurance would be there. It has allowed me to take on more international business that I wouldn't have taken on otherwise." Now they have \$1 million in export sales to Canada and they are doing some exporting to the Caribbean, England, and Australia.

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX Thilo's habit of putting himself in his clients' shoes to discover what they really need has allowed him to offer some innovative options to his customers. Recently, he realized that his vinyl flooring manufacturing customers need more than a color and style match for their current line of products. They need a whole new method of distribution. Currently, the flooring manufacturers purchase the molding in bulk, but often end up with a warehouse full of discontinued product. Thilo's solution allows the customers of the flooring manufacturing companies to make direct purchases from Versatrim. The flooring manufacturers get a commission for promoting Versatrim and they free up warehouse storage. Versatrim, in return, gets the sale of the entire floor molding for the company.

THE RIGHT PEOPLE Thilo opened the doors with three employees. Today they employ between 75 and 80 people in the Henderson area. He believes in investing in his people because, like he says, "I can always go out and buy a machine off the shelf, but I can't go out and buy a good machine operator or a good customer service person." In an area with an unemployment rate at 7.5% and slower than average job growth, Versatrim is changing the lives of their employees every day.



THE SBTDC INTRODUCED ME TO EXIM BANK
WHICH HAS ALLOWED ME TO TAKE ON MORE
INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS THAT I WOULDN'T HAVE
TAKEN ON OTHERWISE





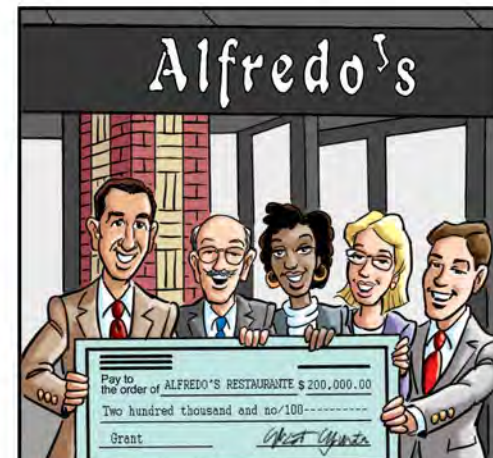
Alfredo makes his case for a \$200,000 grant but he still needs more information



Alfredo calls the SBTDC and they are able to dig into the details to get the information



Alfredo presents his plans with the additional financial details and is successful



He gets the \$200,000 grant and is able to hire more than 25 people in rural NC

FAYETTEVILLE + PEMBROKE

ALFREDO'S RISTORANTE ITALIANO

Clinton, NC

Alfredo DiPinto

www.alfredosofclinton.com

WHAT THEY DO

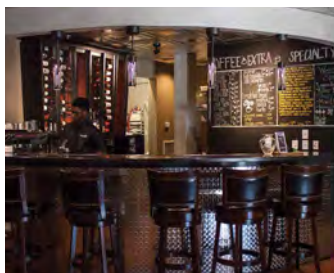
A full-service Italian restaurant situated in a beautifully-renovated historic building in downtown Clinton, Alfredo's prides themselves on offering something unique to the area: Authentic Italian cuisine coupled with a selection of wine and beer pairings. They push themselves to offer high-quality service and food that is a little bit surprising, a little bit interesting, and extremely delicious. When Alfredo's started out seven years ago, it was a hobby for Alfredo DiPinto and only open three days a week with no wine or beer. When he discovered that the restaurant could be something more, he renovated a building around the corner and a year ago he set up shop as a permanent fixture in the local landscape.



UNDER THE CAPE Alfredo DiPinto was born in Italy and knows good Italian food. By day he is an Investment Advisor for Wells Fargo Advisors, but by night he is the owner of Alfredo's Ristorante on Wall Street. It was December 2009, on Kiawah Island, that he was inspired by another small, family-owned Italian Restaurant and came home with the plans to start his own restaurant as a hobby. It is not that he didn't know the challenges, or the unsettling statistics of failure that surround new restaurants. His wife owns a chicken and BBQ place across town. He just knew that he had a solid concept in an area that was ready for it. Within a few months, he opened the doors. Now he works his day job and comes to the restaurant each evening from 5:00 pm to close, some nights taking advantage of the apartment upstairs to catch up on some rest when not layering batches of Tiramisu. His motto is, "If it's fun, it's not work." And to him, running Alfredo's is not only fun, it is a passion.



WHAT IT TAKES TO RECEIVE A GRANT FOR \$200,000 When Alfredo decided to make the leap from hobby restaurant to something more, he knew his biggest challenge was his location. He was leasing a 2,500sf building that did not allow alcohol sales. They decided to purchase a 12,000sf, two-story building nearly next door, but the renovations would be extensive. In order to help offset the costs, he pursued the Main Street Solutions Grant, which awarded \$25,000 per full-time employee hired. He went for the max of \$200,000 and he ended up winning it with the help of the SBTDC. Alfredo submitted his first proposal and thought that it was over, but they came back to him asking for a much more in-depth report. If they were going to award him \$200,000, they were going to need some substantiated information to warrant that kind of money. They suggested reaching out to the SBTDC,



so he did. Alfredo's counselor Ron said, "Let's shave this thing down and give a little more detail to it." And that's what they did. Ron sat with Alfredo several times, asked the necessary questions to pinpoint what was needed and then provided the details including market research that placed Alfredo's Ristorante within the context of industry averages. "It was critical to my success and that grant, no doubt."



ONE YEAR LATER Alfredo's Ristorante has been in its new location for one year and they have already gone from \$350K to \$800K in revenue. He is in awe of the community's response and the level of interest. The amount of space is something that still amazes him, and his staff is loving the size of the new kitchen. The menu has changed because they now have the space to store ingredients on site instead of at his wife's place across town. They are now serving beer and wine and customers love that enhancement to the dining experience.



HEROIC ANTICS Alfredo's Restaurant is a testament to the Main Street Solutions Grant. With the renovations and changes, they have gone from a staff of ten to now employing more than 25 people in a rural area where finding jobs can be difficult, and Alfredo is not afraid to pay for quality employees. Everyone starts above minimum wage, and he expects initiative

and dedication in return. Alfredo believes in his community and places an extraordinary emphasis on their support as the reason for his growth. "This whole project has been about other people. Yeah, I do the interviews and it's my name on the building. But let me tell you, it was the contractor, my wife, my SBTDC counselor, my staff and the people of this town that have been critical to our success."

WE WENT FROM DOING \$350,000 IN REVENUE TO JUST UNDER \$800,000



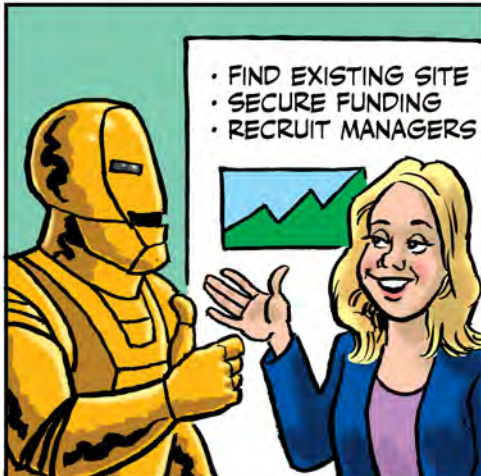
HOST CAMPUSES:

Fayetteville State University
UNC Pembroke

Somewhere above Afghanistan, Iron Marine is returning home for a briefing with SBTDC...



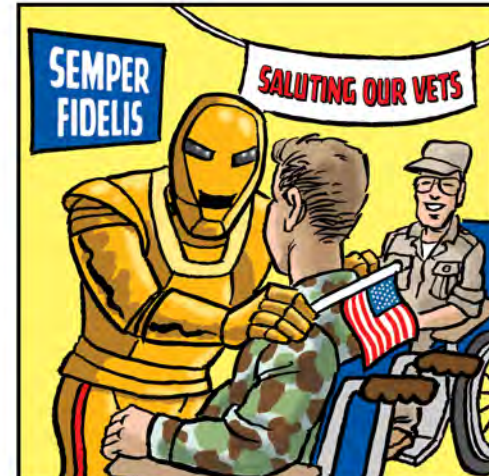
John Hunter is a full-time Marine who is fulfilling his dreams of running a chain of eco-friendly auto spas.



While still in Afghanistan he contacted the SBTDC to start making those dreams a reality.



John designed his custom, efficient auto spa and put it together by revitalizing a building purchased from the city of Charlotte.



Now he uses his auto spa to help push youths into successful futures and pay back the community with fund raisers.

WILMINGTON

GREEN CLEAN AUTO SPA

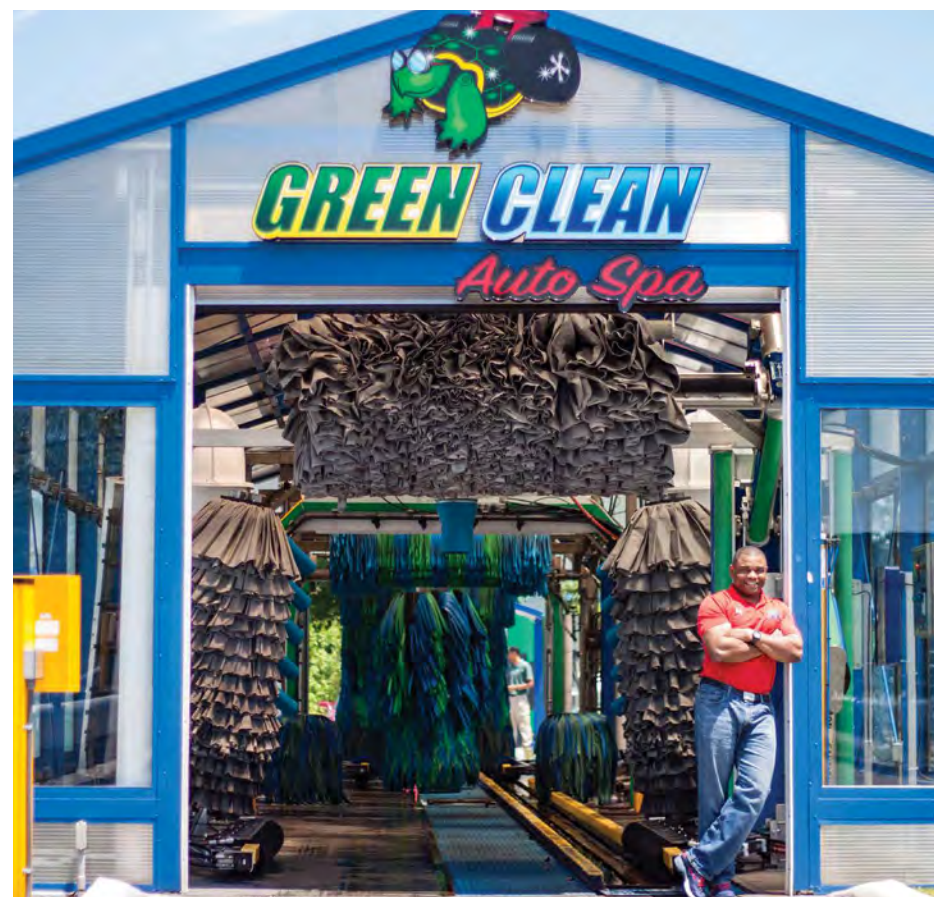
Jacksonville, NC

John Hunter

www.greencleanautospa.com

WHAT THEY DO

More than a car wash, this eco-friendly auto spa uses biodegradable chemicals, recycles their water, and maintains a focus on being good stewards of their environment and community. The tunnel is 80-feet long and packs a punch using a custom, efficient design with top-of-the-line equipment and chemicals.



UNDER THE CAPE John Hunter has been a Marine for more than twenty years, but now he also proudly claims ownership of the Green Clean Auto Spa. While studying construction at Auburn, he drove through a car wash and was suddenly struck by the technology and robotics, and how few employees were necessary. He was hooked and set out to learn everything he could. He traveled to Las Vegas for the car wash show and attended a car wash management course. Finally, in 2013 he called the SBTDC and made plans to make the dream a reality. John Hunter is a self-proclaimed doer. "You can't just wish and hope things happen, you have to position yourself to make it happen." And he has certainly made things happen.

SECOND IS THE BEST No one in the Jacksonville area had a car wash like this, and John was determined to be the first. Before leaving for Afghanistan for a deployment, he started talking to a car wash services vendor out of Georgia about his plans and brought him to North Carolina to survey the area, but at some point during his tour, John lost touch with him. When he returned home from deployment, he found a sign reading "Car Wash Coming Soon" on the very piece of land he was working on with the vendor. He had been cut out by the vendor who brought in another investor. He was backstabbed and crushed, and came close to giving up. Instead, he rose to the challenge and purchased a run down car wash just down the street from his now competitors. He operated that car wash while working with the SBTDC to come up with the funding for the renovation. Applying for a bank loan took over a year and his first attempt was denied. The bank was not very familiar with the process and when they learned about the other car wash opening, they turned him down. His persistence continued and he started over with a new lender—a preferred lender of the SBA. "With the first bank it felt like they just wanted to watch me jump through hoops, but with the new bank it was smooth sailing."



JUST LIKE LEGOS John sat down with his SBTDC counselor to crunch some numbers. He was ready to build a brand new facility, but his counselor pushed instead for a retrofit. John eventually purchased a building from the city of Charlotte and describes putting it together like blocks of Legos. He expanded the existing building from 53 feet to 81 feet, saving tens of thousands of dollars. "I didn't want to hear it when Robin said I needed to find an existing site, but it was smart. If I had been stubborn and built something new, I wouldn't be here."

Within a few months, they opened for business and John admits to being nervous those first few days. He remembers thinking it would be one of those "if you build it, they will come" situations, but it was not. When they first opened up, they would only get a few cars and a full staff on payroll. But, within several months they were in the black. Now, a year later, they are number one on Yelp, Facebook and Google. He plans to open more in the future. His plans are aggressive and the competition is fierce, but that is what he loves about it – not having a huge budget but still being able to out think the competition. As a full-time Marine, John necessarily spends much of his time away from his budding business, but he is confident in his employees. "If you give people the tools for success, then they'll make it happen. You just have to educate them and empower them."

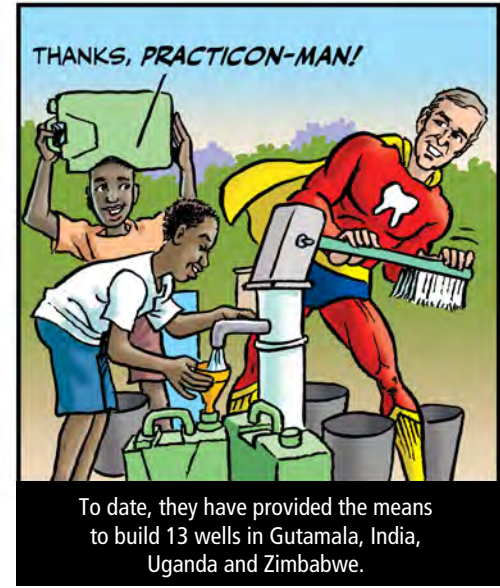
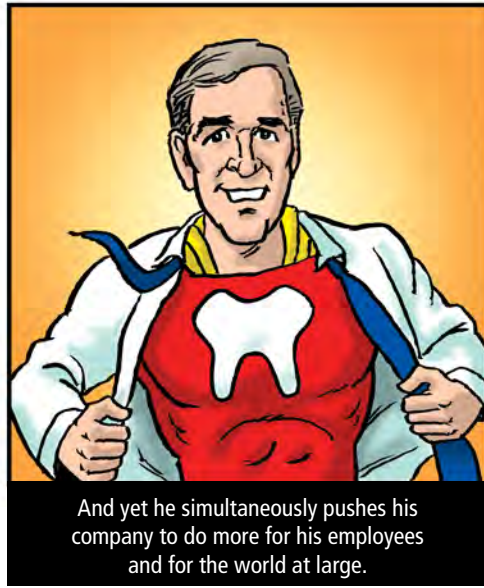
HOW THEY'RE HEROES John is an avid believer in community involvement and believes whole-heartedly that the community is the reason for his success. The Auto Spa runs a fundraising promotion for non-profits, as well as organizations like school sports teams. During the promotion, non-profits receive 50% of the profits of each wash and other organizations earn 25%. So far, they have helped Active Hero, an organization helping veterans with PTSD, Ainsleys Angels, Carobell Inc. and many others.

I DIDN'T WANT TO HEAR IT WHEN MY COUNSELOR SAID I NEEDED TO FIND AN EXISTING SITE, BUT IT WAS SMART. IF I HAD BEEN STUBBORN AND BUILT SOMETHING NEW, I WOULDN'T BE HERE



HOST CAMPUS:

University of North Carolina at Wilmington



GREENVILLE

PRACTICON

Greenville, NC

Scott Griffin and
Chikako Massey

www.practicon.com

WHAT THEY DO

Founded in 1982, Practicon finds and develops innovative products for the dental industry. Their primary market is in private-practicing dentists across the United States and Canada, but they also have sales divisions for dental and hygiene schools, wholesaling their proprietary products to other dental product distributors, and government sales. Their latest 244-page catalog introduces more than 250 new products. Most are procured from other vendors, but Practicon's research and development team is ramping up with 18-20 projects in development right now. Practicon currently employs 63 individuals, and for two years in a row, it has been named one of the Top 20 Small Businesses to Work For by Business North Carolina.



UNDER THE CAPE Ann Page Griffin moved next door to a pediatric dentist, Dr. Jasper Lewis, Jr. and as the two chatted over the hedge, they imagined the combination of her education background and his pediatric dentistry. She started working with Jasper in 1980 and by 1982, her work had grown to the point that she needed to separate from the dental practice and incorporate. She needed tools and resources and found none on the market, so they began developing their own, which is how the first catalog was born.

Scott Griffin graduated from Wake Forest and went on to receive his MBA from ECU in 1984. He worked for a company in Charlotte for one year before being faced with a choice. He had a job offer in Dallas, or he could come back to Greenville and help turn Practicon into a fully-fledged business. He took a chance and they jumped into business – an educator and a student fresh from grad school who had never really had a job. They did not know exactly what they were doing, but they did it well because 35 years later they are going strong and are well respected in the industry.

GAINING A GOVERNMENT FOOTHOLD About three years ago, Scott hired Chikako Massey in New Business Development. Shortly thereafter, he handed her the challenge of doing business with the government with the instructions to figure out how to get it done. They had tried several times before to jump the hurdles involved with Government Procurement, but they did not have the resources to make much headway. Chikako's persistent and diligent spirit was what they had been missing. Scott has worked with the SBTDC for nearly 30 years and introduced Chikako to SBTDC business counselor, Ariana Billingsley. Ariana sat down with Chikako at the initial stage and gave her a crash course in government business which was a crucial launching point for Chikako to really move forward into government contracting. Chikako attended the SBTDC-PTAC event Marketplace in Durham, making an important contact, which led to a signed contract. "All of our successful contracts from that



client are a result of Ariana's suggestion that I attend Marketplace." Ariana also helped walk Chikako through registering for HUB Zone Certification and paired Practicon with an MBA student from the Kenan Institute. He provided all the legwork for working with the federal government internationally. Overall, Scott believes the government procurement aspect of the business has added about 5% growth, and that is in just two years.

THE BUYER'S CLUB Another thing that Scott worked on with the SBTDC was the Buyer's Club, essentially a loyalty program. They worked with an MBA team, which surveyed customers and came up with the components to make the program successful. Today it is known as Premier Customers and has 13,000 members, generating 80% of the revenue of their core customer base. "We were introduced to that team through the SBTDC, and it will have a major impact on our revenue for years to come."

TO THE RESCUE Practicon is a believer in using its success for good. For every sale of one of their SmileGoods toothbrushes, a portion of the sale goes to Cause Life, which establishes clean water wells in impoverished areas all over the world. To date, Practicon has provided the means to build thirteen wells in Guatemala, India, Uganda and Zimbabwe. Closer to home, the company has an annual push to contribute a minimum of 650 hours of community service. They met that goal before the year was half over. They are also working on

100% participation in at least one hour of community service, whether it is with Give Kids a Smile, an annual event that they contribute to; Meals on Wheels; or anything the employee is interested in.

Scott himself is on the board of Third Street Educational Center and Eastern Carolina Vocational Center. He's also set up a We Care Fund at work where employees can deduct from their payroll. If anyone has some sort of life struggle they can draw from the Fund. He even took all the employees to Disney World recently when they hit their goals.

WHEN WE NEED SOMETHING, THE SBTDC FINDS
THE PEOPLE AND RESOURCES TO BUILD A BRIDGE
SO WE CAN GET WHERE WE WANT TO GO.

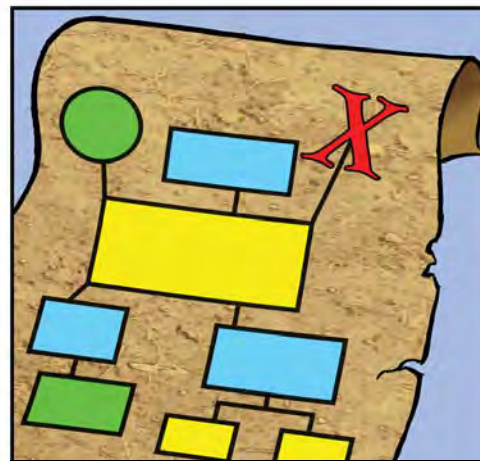




Danielle is trying to process orders but the computer simply won't cooperate.



The computer explodes in a flash of chaos and frustration.



Danielle receives a treasure map. If she follows the directions exactly, she'll end up with a functioning network of computers.



Success! Danielle has happy computers that talk to one another, making her job easier and improving her productivity.

ELIZABETH CITY

BAKER'S SOUTHERN TRADITIONS

Roxobel, NC

Danielle Baker

www.bakerspeanuts.com

WHAT THEY DO

They are a specialty peanut processing company. Raw peanuts from 75-acres of the family farm come in and candies and peanut-snacks go out to wholesale and retail customers. They invest in quality peanuts from the beginning and they keep tabs from planting all the way through harvesting, the grading process, and the shelving process in order to ensure they are starting with the best. They are currently processing 3,000 to 4,000 peanuts a week that are transformed into products like the Carolina Cajun Peanut, the simple Lightly Salted Blister Fried Peanut, and, new last year, is a Sea Salt Caramel Bark and a Dark Chocolate Bark. You can find Bakers' Peanuts in Harris-Teeter, Lowe's Foods, Publix, and Kroger as well as specialty shops across North Carolina.



UNDER THE CAPE Danielle married into the Baker family and quickly took up the farmer lifestyle, keeping books for the Baker Family Farm. As their children got older, Danielle toyed with the idea of taking a crop they were already growing, adding value to it, and selling it straight to the consumer. In 2006, she started selling a few things to see how viable the business was, and it continued to grow until 2013 when she finally took on Bakers' Southern Traditions full-time. Danielle is passionate about sharing agriculture with the world. "We're constantly asked about peanuts growing on trees, and if you're not connected to it then you really don't know." She loves helping people make those connections.

PLANT THE SEED AND WATCH IT GROW

When Danielle first started out, they were processing about 4,000 pounds of peanuts a year and now they are doing that every week. Her first customers were people she met at shows and festivals before eventually getting some permanent spots on shelves at specialty shops across the state. Two years ago, Danielle also picked up a distributor and can be found in more than 550 grocery stores across the state, but she is careful not to lose touch with her smaller retail shops. Her growth continues to climb as new retailers are requesting her peanuts, and sales are up about ten to fifteen percent year-over-year.

GETTING TECHNICAL As a small business owner without much background in manufacturing, Danielle has worn all the hats, even when some of them did not quite fit. She has since taken a step back to prioritize where her focus should be, hired people to help and is taking advantage of resources like the SBTDC. Her counselor has taken on a support role by helping with operations and technology issues. Jaime conducted a technology assessment of their space and presented them with a flow chart detailing

how their technology is currently working, what they need from their computer systems and how to get there. He provided a wiring diagram, suggested necessary materials and provided a list of potential contractors. "Jaime helped us tremendously with our IT issues. He came in, explained how to resolve them and got us going in the right direction, and

that's been incredible because there is nothing more frustrating than trying to make your computer work." She is now working with her counselors to set financial goals for the future and developing human resource strategies.

SEEING THE FUTURE Although Danielle and her team could be selling more, they simply cannot meet demand because of space constraints. She is also ready to move several of her team from part-time to full-time, but her cook staff has to stop work so chocolate in the candy will set properly. As a result of a collaborative effort between The Support Center and the SBTDC, she has received a \$224,000 loan from the Support Center as well as a \$100,000 building re-use grant. However, as a result of complications and delays, they have been waiting for their move-in date for nearly a year. Danielle is hesitant to

give a likely date now, but her fingers are crossed it will not be much longer.

THE HERO QUOTIENT When Danielle realized that she was ready to move to a new facility and started scanning real estate for potential new locations, she knew that her business model was not keeping her in Roxobel, a town in Bertie County with a population of 227. She could go to Raleigh or Charlotte and still buy her peanuts from the family farm. But she felt that the town and its people had been good to her and she hopes that she can do something positive for the people in her area in return. "I feel like that would be a little of me being able to give back," she says. And so she stays and currently employs ten people from her community.



I'M TRYING TO WEAR ALL THESE DIFFERENT HATS
AND FIGURE IT OUT ON MY OWN, BUT THERE'S
NO NEED TO REINVENT THE WHEEL IF THERE'S
SOMEONE WHO CAN STEP UP AND HELP



HOST CAMPUS:
Elizabeth City State University

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

WITH OVER 30 YEARS OF BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH CLIENTS, MANY OF THESE INSPIRATIONAL PEOPLE HAVE CONTINUED TO MAKE OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENTS AND REACH NEW HEIGHTS. WE WOULD LIKE TO RECOGNIZE JUST A FEW OF THESE.

TRINITY FROZEN FOODS

TRINITY FROZEN FOODS IS A SWEET POTATO PROCESSING FACILITY IN PEMBROKE, NC. SINCE THEY APPEARED IN OUR 2015 ANNUAL REPORT, THEY HAVE APPEARED ON AN EPISODE OF "UNWRAPPED 2.0," SHOWING OFF HOW THEY PRODUCE THEIR SWEET POTATO FRIES. THEY HAVE BEGUN EXPORTING TO ISRAEL, DUBAI, EUROPE AND THE UK. THE COMPANY HAS ALSO INCREASED PRODUCTION AND NOW EMPLOYS MORE THAN 100 PEOPLE WITH \$7.5 MILLION IN SALES IN 2016. FOR 2017 THEY PROJECTED OVER \$10 MILLION AND THEY HAVE PLANS IN THE WORKS FOR A FUTURE EXPANSION THAT WOULD ADD AN ADDITIONAL 50 JOBS AND DOUBLE THEIR OUTPUT.

FIRST FLIGHT

IN OUR 2014-2015 ANNUAL REPORT, FIRST FLIGHT WAS ELIZABETH CITY'S SUCCESS STORY AFTER RAISING THE NECESSARY CAPITAL TO OPEN AN AERIAL ADVENTURE PARK IN NAGS HEAD. THEY HAVE AN OBSTACLE COURSE 12-50 FEET IN THE AIR USING CABLES, ROPE, WOOD, BUOYS, BARRELS AND OTHER MATERIALS TO CHALLENGE AND ENTERTAIN THEIR GUESTS. THAT FIRST YEAR THEY EXCEEDED EXPECTATIONS WITH OVER \$750,000 IN GROSS RECEIPTS. SINCE THEN, THEY HAVE ACQUIRED ANOTHER \$500,000 IN FINANCING AND HAVE OPENED A SECOND LOCATION IN COROLLA WITH THEIR BUSINESS PARTNERS, CREATING ANOTHER 25 JOBS IN NORTH CAROLINA.





FLS ENERGY

IN OUR 2011-2012 ANNUAL REPORT, GROSS PROFITS FOR FLS ENERGY INCREASED FROM \$8.1 MILLION TO \$18 MILLION AND THEY EXPECTED TO HIRE ANOTHER 30 EMPLOYEES AS A RESULT OF WORKING WITH THE SBTDC ON SEVERAL FINANCING PROJECTS. SINCE THEN, FLS HAS GROWN TO THE POINT OF BEING ATTRACTIVE ENOUGH FOR PURCHASE BY CYPRESS CREEK RENEWABLES, A CALIFORNIA-BASED SOLAR COMPANY. AT THE TIME OF THE PURCHASE, FLS WAS NORTH CAROLINA'S THIRD LARGEST SOLAR DEVELOPER AND HAD 75 EMPLOYEES. CYPRUS CREEK WILL RETAIN THE ASHEVILLE OFFICE AND THE FLS MANAGEMENT TEAM AND STAFF

GARRIS GRADING & PAVING

"ANGELA GARRIS WAS BORN TO BE A LEADER," WAS HOW HER SUCCESS STORY IN THE 2010-2011 ANNUAL REPORT BEGAN. BACK THEN, SHE HAD JUST PURCHASED HER ASPHALT PLANT AND HAD RECEIVED A LOAN TO GET IT UP AND RUNNING. SHE HAD 11 EMPLOYEES AND HAD JUST HIT HER FIRST MILLION IN REVENUE. TODAY, GARRIS' LEADERSHIP ABILITIES HAVE REALLY STARTED TO SHINE. SHE'S UP TO 23 EMPLOYEES AND \$6.3 MILLION IN SALES REVENUE. SHE WAS NOMINATED FOR THE NC BUSINESS WOMAN OF THE YEAR IN 2013 AND HAS PAINTED HER PLANT AND EQUIPMENT HOT PINK TO SYMBOLIZE THIS WOMAN-OWNED BUSINESS.





THESE
NUMBERS PACK
A PUNCH!

IMPACT

\$228,595,421

The SBTDC is to clients what spinach is to Popeye. We are the catalyst that allows these superheroes to reach their potential and accomplish incredible feats of bravery and strength. Below is the hard evidence of what we accomplished together in 2016.

contracts from federal, state & local agencies and prime contractors

\$123,861,431

in capital obtained by clients including \$10.5 million in SBA loans, \$19million in SBIR/STTR awards, and \$40 million in Export financing

54,484

hours of counseling

4,524

clients who worked with the SBTDC

2,431

jobs created and retained by clients working with the SBTDC

99

new businesses were started

630

graduate and undergraduate students participated in internship programs as a source of real world experience.

25,333

hours contributed by students for SBTDC clients

12.9%

increased revenue by companies helped by the SBTDC. The average North Carolina Business increased employment growth by just 3.9%

\$2.51

the amount generated in new tax revenues for every \$1.00 invested in SBTDC program

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The Small Business and Technology Development Center (SBTDC) is funded in part through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration. All opinions, conclusions or recommendations expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the SBA.

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THANKS!

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