

Shelburne business tour aims to spark youth interest

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SHELBURNE FALLS — The Shelburne Falls Area Business Association and several of its member businesses will host the "Young Entrepreneurs Society" on a day-long field trip to Shelburne Falls businesses July 18.

A dozen students and two instructors participating in a two-week YES Biz Camp will meet with Shelburne Falls banks, businesses and government officials to learn the nuts and bolts of starting one's own business enterprise.

First they'll meet with Bank of Western Massachusetts branch manager Jody Ryan to learn about setting up checking and savings accounts and establishing credit histories. From there, they'll move on to meet with Shelburne Town Clerk Beverly Neeley to learn how to register a business, file for appropriate permits and licenses and discuss signage and zoning requirements.

Next they'll meet with Greenfield Savings Bank's certified public accountant Jonathan George to learn about tax issues for individu-

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als, employees, sole proprietors and business partnerships. Lunch at Subway of Shelburne Falls will also provide information from franchise owner Todd Shute about his business, start-up experience and Subway's \$1,000 grant program for young entrepreneurs. Finally, the group will return to Greenfield Savings Bank to compare bank services options with Branch Manager Karen Laudon.

"We are pleased to be able to assist YES in bringing this exciting program to Shelburne Falls and west county," said SFABA Executive Director Andrew Baker. "We hope

this will be the start of new efforts to teach young people in our area how to start and run their own businesses."

The field trip to Shelburne Falls is part of the curriculum of YES Biz Camp's two-week summer intensive camp program, designed to teach entrepreneurial skills to high-school-age students from across Franklin County. The camp is co-sponsored by the Hilltown CDC and is based in Plainfield.

The summer camp is one of a number of programs being developed by YES for budding young entrepreneurs across Franklin County. The Young Entrepreneurs Society was started in Orange in 1998 as part of the Orange Revitalization Partnership in an effort to help area at-risk youth develop greater economic self-sufficiency.

YES director Tim Cohen-Mitchell trained as an instructor in the curriculum developed by the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE). Graduates of the program have gone on to establish a number of successful businesses, including custodial and promotions businesses and a teen dance club.

Building on this successful pilot project, Cohen-Mitchell is now in the process of expanding the YES program and curriculum to include students from all across Franklin County. He is working in several regional schools and collaborating with the Hilltown CDC in offering a summer camp curriculum as well.

The Hilltown CDC-sponsored Biz Camp is one of a number of after school, summer and in-school programs being developed by the YES Regional Coordinating Committee, which includes sixteen area agencies, schools and organizations. It is supported by the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts.

"We've been very inspired by the high level of community support in the work of helping young people develop essential entrepreneurial and employment skills," said Cohen-Mitchell.

The Hilltown CDC-sponsored Biz Camp will hold its commencement ceremony at the Mohawk Trail Regional High School auditorium July 20 at 4 p.m., preceded by student business plan presentations from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. The public is invited to attend. YES is also sponsoring a second two-week business and employment skills camp, BizVenture, at Greenfield Community College from July 30 to August 10. There are still spaces available for young people aged 13 to 19. To register, contact Maria Burge at (413) 774-5005.

For more information about the Young Entrepreneurs Society, contact Tim Cohen-Mitchell at (978) 544-1869 or yes-cafi@yahoo.com.