

Entrepreneurs Complete Course

ORANGE — Franklin County will soon learn about a custom entertainment service, administrative services for small businesses, a new protein product and programs and services for outdoor recreation and wood products.

These were the entrepreneurs who presented their business plans on recently before a banker, business people and community leaders, who came to hear about these up-and-coming businesses at a celebration of entrepreneurship.

The presentations were the culmination of a twelve week NxLevel Entrepreneurial Training Course offered by the Franklin County CDC and held at the Young Entrepreneurs Society, YES Business Center on South Main Street in Orange.

"We are so pleased with the results of everyone's effort, they clearly understand what is needed to go forward with their businesses," said Amy Shapiro, the CDC's Technical Assistance Program Manager.

Banknorth Manager, Deborah Fifield said, "Their presentations showed they put a lot of work and thought into their business plans."

"These entrepreneurs know they can greatly increase their chances of success by preparing a business plan and researching aspects of their business." Kate Hayes, Massachusetts State Coordinator of the NxLevel Program, who attended the event said "a recent survey of NxLevel participants in our region shows that the percentage still in business after 3 years was significantly higher than people who did not take the course."

Many of these businesses will start as sole proprietors. Some will remain small while others hope to become future employers in the region.

Many of the course participants expressed surprise at how much they learned over the 12-week period. They conducted research into their industry, their target customers and the local and regional markets. They learned how to develop spreadsheets projections for the growth of their business and make decisions based on their mission statements as well as their financial realities. Some even changed the nature of their business when they learned more about the details of the operation.

The NxLevel course will be offered in Orange and in Greenfield beginning in October. In Orange on Thursdays, beginning October 7th from 6-9pm at Banknorth. In Greenfield on Tuesdays, beginning October 5th from 6-9pm at the FCCDC. Register by calling the Technical Assistance Program at 413-774-7204 ext. 117.

The FCCDC located at 324 Wells Street in Greenfield, also provides technical assistance and loans to small businesses in Franklin County and operates a 36,000 sq. ft. small business incubator and a shared use commercial kitchen.

The CDC is celebrating its 25th year. is a membership organization that relies on the involvement and support of Franklin County residents. To become a member or for more information about the CDC, call 413-774-7204 or visit the CDC website at www.fccdc.org.