

10-14-2016

## Business Innovation Group (BIG) News

Georgia Southern University

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### Recommended Citation

Georgia Southern University, "Business Innovation Group (BIG) News" (2016). *Business Innovation Group News*. 23.  
<https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/cob-big-news/23>

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# Helping People Recover with Disaster Relief

October 14, 2016



## My experience with the SBA ODA

**-Andi Wilson**

The Small Business Administration Office of Disaster Assistance (SBA ODA) seeks to provide low-interest disaster recovery loans to businesses of any size, homeowners, renters and private nonprofit organizations. The purpose of these programs is to provide bridge funding that covers any gap between what a disaster survivor needs to recover and what they receive from other sources, including insurance and available granting institutions.

I have been on the reservist list for the SBA ODA since August of 2013, and August 2016 marks my first activation. All hands were called in for extensive flooding in Louisiana due to heavy rains. Twenty-one parishes were included in the presidential disaster declaration and the difference between total destruction and dry land came down to mere inches.

My job as a reservist is to meet with disaster survivors face-to-face and discuss the financial options available to them through the SBA. If they are found viable in the field, I will help them apply for the program or programs that best suit their needs. For disaster relief, most people think of FEMA, which is reasonable, since they are the largest disaster recovery agency. SBA ODA works in tandem with FEMA, state officials, nonprofit organizations like the Red Cross, and even other federal agencies to better serve survivors all in one location called a Disaster Recovery Center (DRC).

The main goal of each DRC is to meet the needs of disaster survivors; to provide the most help possible with the resources available. Perhaps the most valuable resources provided are time and empathy. Yes, people need funds to get back on their feet, but even more than that, most of the people that sat down with me wanted to be heard. They wanted to tell me about the treasures that were lost.

One woman realized, as we were talking, that in this flood she lost the love letter her husband wrote her in his final days more than a decade earlier. She did not qualify for a loan, but she hugged me before leaving, thankful anyway for having someone listen.

Business is about people, which is sometimes easy to forget. Working as a reservist for the business end of the government brings unique perspective. I am grateful and lucky to be able to serve.



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Tags: [Andi Wilson](#), [Disaster Relief](#), [SBA](#), [Small business assistance](#)

## **BIG Researcher Spotlight**

October 14, 2016



### **Dr. Rafael Quirino**

#### Making Plastics out of Vegetable Oil

Renewable resources are proving to be immensely useful in a society looking for cheaper, faster and better materials, and are the focus of research for Georgia Southern's Rafael Quirino, Ph.D.

Quirino is assistant professor of Organic Chemistry at Georgia Southern, where he conducts original research focused on the utility of renewable molecules and bio-based thermosetting materials — plastics that will not melt — for everyday use.

In his research, Quirino has found a way to make these valuable materials from vegetable oils, which he combines with tiny tubes of carbon atoms called carbon nanotubes, or CNTs. These CNTs can be used to combine smaller molecules into larger, chainlike molecules, which can be used in a variety of ways previously only possible with petroleum-based methods.

Quirino says his passion for the chemistry of vegetable oils began as an undergraduate student, and he appreciates using his lab as a place to pass on his passion and knowledge to the undergraduates at Georgia Southern.

"It is very rewarding when you deal with interested students that honestly want to learn what you have to teach," he said. "The feeling of being able to help someone develop his or her perception of a subject is very good. Personally, I feel accomplished when I feel like I am at least partially responsible for helping students grasp a subject they initially thought was very hard or unsurmountable. It's nice to hear students saying, 'Oh, that actually isn't that hard.' It gives me the impression that I was successful in passing the knowledge on."

Quirino obtained his Bachelor of Science in Chemistry and a Master of Science in Physical Chemistry from the University of Brasilia, Brazil. He earned his Ph.D. in Chemistry and did his post-doctoral work in materials science at Iowa State University.

Businesses seeking expert consulting in the use of CNTs, or the fields of renewable molecules, thermoplastic resin or thermosetting resin may contact BIG for further information.

## Congratulations 2016 Pallet Challenge Winners

October 14, 2016

### **Pallet Challenge**

On Oct. 1, the Center for Sustainability and BIG hosted the second annual Pallet Challenge as part of GreenFest. Sixteen teams displayed their creations made of at least 75 percent upcycled pallets.

There were some creative entries in this year's challenge. The Jenkins County High School team, Egzsclly, created a Flinstone's car without using any power tools. The competition was tough, but the judges decided on the winners. Thanks to everyone who participated and a special thanks to our wonderful judges for the competition.

Here are the winners of this year's Pallet Challenge:



First Place – Dry Marsh – Pete Sessa with impressively crafted fishing stool and wooden fish.



Second Place – Brent Tharp with a beautiful variety of victorian garden projects.



Third Place – Woodmade Statesboro – Stan Akins and family with a lovely painted Eagle Nation planter table.



People's Choice – the D'Arcangelo Dominators –

Micah and Emory with their Falcon race car.



# Welcome BIG Graduate Assistants!

October 14, 2016

## **Morgan Millar**

Morgan Millar is a Masters of Accounting student at Georgia Southern University. She is originally from Woodstock, Georgia, but has lived all over the country — in Florida, New York and Massachusetts. In her free time, she enjoys running and playing with her dog. Millar is currently working as a graduate assistant for the Business Innovation Group (BIG). She hopes to gain experience in all of the different things BIG has to offer while working here. After graduating with her master's degree, she hopes to gain her CPA license. After achieving that, Millar would like to work in the audit department of a medium-sized firm.

## **Eminah Quintyne**

Eminah Quintyne was born in Manhattan, New York, and grew up in Houston, Texas. Currently she is attending Georgia Southern University, studying public health policy and management in the Master's of Public Health (MPH) program, and studying nutrition and food science to become a registered dietitian. Excited to kick off the fall at BIG, Eminah says her late grandfather inspires her motto:

“Think big enough!”

With an interest in creating low-carbohydrate bread and pasta products, she wants to be a business owner one day, helping people to enjoy carbohydrates without negative consequences. She works with the business advisor at BIG, assisting with entrepreneurship events, communications and grant proposals.

## **Amanda Wynn**

Amanda Wynn is currently an MBA student at Georgia Southern University, a weather forecaster in the U.S. Air Force Reserves and a weather observer at the Savannah International Airport. Her interests include do-it-yourself projects, recreational painting and spending quality time with her family. At BIG, Amanda works as a graduate assistant at the Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC). The VBOC provides counseling and guidance to veterans interested in entrepreneurship and business development. During her time at the VBOC, Amanda hopes to make a difference in the lives of veterans as they pursue their goals of establishing or expanding their businesses.

# Eagle FastPitch Competition

October 14, 2016

## *Eagle FastPitch* Fall 2016

[Applications are now open](#) for the Eagle FastPitch competition. Finalists in Eagle FastPitch will compete to see who can deliver the best elevator pitch to judges in just three minutes. The competition provides a unique opportunity for enterprising students to hone their selling skills.

Eagle FastPitch originally launched in November 2009 and expanded over the years with the addition of new sponsors and collaborators to become a regional FastPitch competition held in Savannah each spring. BIG re-launched the local event last fall to showcase the entrepreneurial talent of students across Georgia Southern's campus. Students who participate and are interested in launching a new business or gaining venture capital will have a leg up on the regional competition.

Eagle FastPitch is FREE and open to all Georgia Southern students. Twelve finalists will be chosen and will work with mentors and coaches who will help them prepare in the two weeks leading up to the competition. The deadline to apply is Oct. 31. Eagle FastPitch will take place on Nov. 17 at 3 p.m. in the Whitaker Black Box Theater on West Main St. in Downtown Statesboro. Finalists will deliver a three-minute pitch of their innovative enterprise to a panel of local community leaders, investors and academic professionals. Pitches will be judged based on the idea, impact, implementation, presentation, structure and delivery of the pitch. Prize packages are still being determined.

We need your help to make this event a success so we can continue to keep it FREE to participants as we grow. Sponsorships help us offset costs associated with event set-up, food and prizes. We are also looking for partners who are willing to mentor our startups by volunteering consulting hours.

If you are available and interested in getting involved in this amazing event for students, please contact Suzanne Hallman at [shallman@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:shallman@georgiasouthern.edu) or 912-478-5586.

## VBOC Update October

October 14, 2016



The Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC) has been very busy with the arrival of Director Jeremy Horstman and Business Advisor Jeff Smith.

Horstman and Smith have been touring all around Georgia and South Carolina getting to know both center clients and resource partners such as the offices of the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), Soldier For Life Center (SFLC) and Transition Assistance Program (TAP) for all of the Armed Services.

At the SLFC, VBOC staff attended Boots-to-Business (B2B) seminars. These seminars are part of TAP, where members and their spouses and families can receive training and information on starting their own small businesses. They can also learn what resources are available to them through the VBOC and its resource partners, which include the SBDC, SFLC, Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) and Women's Business Centers (WBC). Upon completion of this eight-module program, veterans and families are eligible to enroll in a free, eight-week curriculum offered by the Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) of Syracuse University.

Horstman and Smith also attended a B2B Reboot program in Atlanta at the Fernbank Museum. Reboots are similar to B2B seminars, but are targeted at veterans and their family members who have already transitioned out of the service. This program was conducted by the IVMF and attended by over 30 potential or current small business owners. During the event, Horstman and Smith conducted outreach and joined in a panel discussion concerning all of the resources available to veterans.

This month, the VBOC also welcomed Amanda Wynn, graduate assistant, to its staff. Wynn is currently an MBA student at Georgia Southern University, a weather forecaster in the U.S. Air Force Reserves and a weather observer at the Savannah International Airport. During her time at the VBOC, Amanda hopes to make a difference in the lives of Veterans as they pursue their goals of establishing or expanding their business.

About the VBOC: The VBOC Program is a grant-funded program under the auspices of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). It is designed to provide entrepreneurial development services such as business training, counseling and mentoring, and referrals for eligible veterans owning or considering starting a small business. The SBA has 19 organizations participating in this cooperative agreement and serving as Veterans Business Outreach Centers. To register for counseling, veterans and their family member should visit our website and select the “request counseling” link at: <http://parker.georgiasouthern.edu/vboc/>

About the Boots to Business Program: Boots to Business is an entrepreneurial education and training program offered by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) as part of the Department of Defense’s Transition Assistance Program (TAP). The curriculum continuum includes steps for evaluating business concepts, the foundational knowledge required to develop a business plan and information on SBA resources available to help access start-up capital and additional technical assistance. For more information on B2B or the Reboot program visit [www.boots2business.org](http://www.boots2business.org) or contact your local TAP.