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## Business Innovation Group (BIG) News

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# BIG Launches Youth Entrepreneurship Program

*August 24, 2017*



## **Feature Highlight**

By Eminah Quintyne, Feature Writer

STATESBORO — Georgia Southern University’s Business Innovation Group, in partnership with Work Source Coastal Georgia, launched a week-long summer camp called the Youth Entrepreneurship Program (YEP) to educate youth about self-employment as a career path.

Through a series of workshops and experiential learning models, participants learned how to develop their business ideas into successful products or services through application-based activities in which they learned by doing.

Real-world education and training are the bedrock of YEP, which seeks to engage students and teach them how to think and how to develop an entrepreneurial approach to business ideas, and then give them activities that allow them to use what they are learning. Participants in the program are students in need of educational support and skills-based growth.

“It’s important to support youth who experience barriers because some of the simple things that we as adults may not have experienced and think are unfathomable are a reality for these students,” said Marilyn Creech-Harris, career facilitator for WorkSource Coastal Youth. “Something as simple as being able to communicate with employers and speak and project one’s self; having informed conversations about the job market and what is acceptable and expected on a job; being consistent in your work performance and attendance. When you have youth who may have never been given chores, they lack insight on how important it is to do things with excellence and efficiency.”

Students attended a five-day workshop that guided them from their business ideas to customer discovery, pitching their business, product prototypes with AutoCAD software or 3D printers, advice on raising capital, business infrastructure and their final investor pitch.

Student Andre Grant-Bathey, a new high school graduate, pitched a business idea called Termo-gnat. His product seeks to eliminate gnats and mosquitoes through dryer sheets and a face and body lotion — both of which have active ingredients that ward off pests from your skin and your clothes.

“The best part was living the college experience for a few days, and meeting new people, said Grant-Bathey. “I have learned about what it takes to become a business entrepreneur. I came for the experience and to gather more information about running a business.”

In addition to their training, each YEP participant received a Samsung Galaxy tablet, and meals and transportation were provided. The five-day camp gave students 42 hours of training and development they wouldn't have received anywhere else.

“ The final pitch ceremony was a great opportunity for students to show-case what they learned, for the others it was a seed that was planted for the future,” said Creech-Harris.

Work Source Coastal Georgia of one of 19 local workforce development offices throughout the state, and encompasses 10 counties in the region including Bulloch, Camden, Chatham, Effingham, Glynn, Liberty, Long, McIntosh and Screven. Their work is the result of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, signed by President Barack Obama in July 2014.

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# VBOC

*August 24, 2017*



The Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC), a part of the Small Business Administration (SBA), is designed to provide entrepreneurial development services such as business training, counseling and resource partner referrals to transitioning service members, veterans, National Guard & Reserve members and military spouses interested in starting or growing a small business.

August marks the one-year anniversary of the launch of the VBOC office, which provides a full-time focus on veterans. Under the leadership of VBOC Director Jeremy Horstman and Business Advisor Jeff Smith, the VBOC registered over 200 clients and attended training and seminars serving almost 1,000 veterans. They also assisted in the creation of 17 businesses, with over 30 jobs created or retained. Finally, they helped veteran clients obtain over \$350,000 in SBA guaranteed financing.

By effectively managing their budget, and due to the growing client base and travel schedule, the VBOC hired two additional temporary business advisors, John Myers and Amanda Wynn. Myers has an extensive background in business, sales and marketing. Wynn started with the VBOC as a graduate assistant, and has become such a valuable member of the team that the VBOC hired her as a part-time advisor. The VBOC hopes to make these positions permanent.

Notable this month the Cain family of Brooklet, Georgia, will open their business, Cain's Dairy Barn, which sells ice cream and coffee. Amanda Cain reached out to the VBOC in June of 2017 to get help in launching the business. After conversations with the VBOC team, the Cains quickly moved forward with their business concept, invested some personal funds and obtained a small loan to begin operations. They intend to have two part-time employees working in the store.

The VBOC director and three business advisors will attend four Boots to Business sessions at military bases in Georgia and South Carolina during the month of August. These entrepreneurial education sessions provide transitioning service members or retired service members with knowledge of the steps for evaluating business concepts, the foundation required to develop a business plan and information on SBA resources available to help access start-up capital or additional technical assistance.

The VBOC also conducted its first Boots-to-Business "Reboot" event at the Georgia Veterans Education and Career Training Resource (VECTR) facility in Warner Robbins, Georgia, on Aug. 7-8. The VBOC collaborated with SCORE mentors and the SBA to offer this training. Reboots are targeted at veterans who have already transitioned out of the Armed Services. Turnout was fantastic, and provided a great opportunity to meet and train veterans and work with SBA resource partners.

# Quarterly Survey Results Suggest ‘Georgia CEO’ Readers Remain Optimistic

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The results of the 2017 second quarter (Q2) *Georgia CEO* survey suggest that Georgia business leaders’ confidence levels have returned to close to Q4 of 2016 levels.

The purpose of the survey is to better understand how general business conditions are impacting *Georgia CEO* subscribers on a quarterly basis. *Georgia CEO* partners with the Bureau of Business Research and Economic Development (BBRED), a member of the Georgia Southern University College of Business, to prepare, distribute and analyze the survey.

In Q2 of 2017, survey participants showed an increase in confidence in hiring by businesses and in their own employment prospects. Looking ahead to Q3, participants noted about the same level of confidence as was exhibited in the Q2 survey responses.

“It appears that an increase in demand for goods and services is starting to lead to more hiring and a brighter picture for the labor market,” said Ben McKay, research specialist at BBRED.

When asked directly for their outlook on Georgia business conditions, 47 percent believe conditions are improving, and 46 percent view conditions as unchanged. This remains a positive outlook from previous surveys conducted this year, since the surveys reported high levels of optimism.

McKay says, looking forward, general business conditions will be better over the next three months. Factors such as interest rate increases, access to credit and cost of labor are not impacting the views of survey respondents. Volume of business and sales are hovering around the 50 percent mark, while financial health remains steady.

Looking back over the past three months, 43 percent of respondents viewed hiring by their firm as favorable, an increase from 36 percent in the Q1 survey. Participants also expect an increase in their own employment prospects, from 37 percent in Q1 to 45 percent in Q2. Combining hiring and employment, participants could be feeling the effects of an improving statewide job market. Also noted in this survey’s responses are potential restraints on feelings regarding government policy and a shortage of skilled labor; however, increasing demand seems to be driving the surge in optimism.

A convenience sampling technique was used for this study and the questionnaire was emailed to subscribers of each of nine *Georgia CEO* daily newsletters. *Georgia CEO* publishes a newsletter in Albany, Athens, Augusta, Columbus, Middle Georgia, Newnan, Savannah and Valdosta. The survey was open from July 6, 2017, through July 17, 2017, and 195 valid responses were collected.

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## SBDC Welcomes New Consultant

August 24, 2017



The University of Georgia Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Georgia Southern University has a new consultant. Valerie Cote joined the organization on July 1 and has been making her way through her initial onboarding, training and mentoring with other representatives from the SBDC network. In the fall, she will begin consulting with clients in the Statesboro area on a full-time basis.

Cote has deep roots at Georgia Southern. She received her MBA from the University in 2015 and previously worked for the University as an accountant during 2012 and 2013. She is excited about returning to the Georgia Southern family and being part of the SBDC statewide network.

Cote brings a wealth of experience and knowledge about small business operation and growth to her new role as a consultant. Her experience at the University and in the private sector will be invaluable to the small business owners in Bulloch County and the surrounding area. Please join the entire SBDC organization in welcoming her back to Georgia Southern, the SBDC and the Business Innovation Group.