



THE NEW “BIG” BUSINESS

SMALL ENTERPRISE IS AN ECONOMIC GIANT

Local small businesses are making big strides in the local economy, and the entrepreneurs behind them are getting a boost from the huge variety of resources offered through the Wake Forest Area Chamber of Commerce.

The number of small firms in Wake Forest has more than tripled in the last 12 years, jumping from representing only eight percent of companies in the town in 2000 to 28 percent in 2012. This growth has been facilitated, in part, by the increasing number of tools and resources now available to entrepreneurs in Wake County, including free mentorships, round table discussion groups and open networking events.

Three years ago, SCORE, a non-profit association dedicated to helping startups get off the ground and grow, began offering free one-hour consultations at the chamber of commerce’s office. The chamber is one of eight locations SCORE uses in Wake County. The meetings are by appointment only and take place on the first Wednesday of every month between 4:00 and 6:00 p.m.

“Meeting one-on-one with people who already knew a lot about business was very helpful,” says Tracey Klingel, owner of RightTime KiDS – Wake

Forest, a drop-in daycare franchise Klingel has run since early 2011. She participated in several SCORE consultations at the chamber last year while establishing the center.

“It was nice just to bounce ideas off other business people and get feedback,” she explains.

Klingel and other small business owners in Wake Forest also rely on the chamber’s CrossTalk meetings, a periodic symposium aimed at sharing and solving problems, member to member.

“CrossTalk is by far my favorite [chamber] event,” says Carina Veverka of Kona Ice of Raleigh, a tropical shaved ice company she has co-owned for nearly three years. “The CrossTalk meetings let you delve deep into business issues that you may face.”

In addition to SCORE and CrossTalk, the chamber offers First Friday Networking (FFN), which is a structured breakfast event. The popular Business After Hours, held on the third Thursday of each month at various locations throughout the Wake Forest business community, continues to be the signature networking event in the area.

No matter the size, industry or need, the chamber works to be the go-to resource for starting, growing or sustaining business. ■ *By Ryan Newhouse*

Above: Friendly faces greet customers at Village Pharmacy.

Right: Wake Forest has a dynamic combination of local businesses and business resources.

A. SCORE consultation session at the chamber. **B.** RightTime KiDS daycare. **C.** Mixin’ It Up, a catering company. **D.** Frozen treat stand Kona Ice. **E.** Wake Forest Drug, a local pharmacy. **F.** Elena Davis and Jamaica Singletary, the graphic design team at Galanova Design. **G.** Wake Forest Jewelers. **H.** Jennifer Ray of Redwood Productions, a design agency. **I.** Julie Dudley of Silver Pearl Bookkeeping. **J.** HealthFirst Pharmacy.