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Big ideas for small business

Workforce Renewal class draws big numbers

By Jason Evans

LIBERTY — When the economy recovers, Pickens County residents will be there, ready to launch small businesses and, in many, cases, fulfill dreams.

Earlier this month, Clemson University's FastTrac Entrepreneur training class began meeting at Liberty's Rosewood Center.

FastTrac is a coalition of education and business groups aimed at helping entrepreneurs create, manage and grow a successful business.

The class pairs up residents who have dreams of being their own boss with teachers and experienced businesspeople who have the knowledge residents need to get their ideas off the ground.

The free class — over a \$1,000 value — is part of Pickens County's Workforce Renewal program, and is funded by state and county funding.

"It's your tax dollars at work," said Will Culler, who teaches the course.

More than 20 people have signed up for the 10-week session that meets on Tuesday nights. Another class meets on Wednesday evenings.

"This is the largest class, by far, of any FastTrac class that's, been taught in the state of South Carolina," Culler said.

Over the remaining 7 weeks of the course, students will learn how to research business idea, including marketing research, develop and evaluate a business plan for their small business, discover the importance of networking, learn how to administer payroll and benefits packages for their future employees and discover how e-commerce is becoming an important business tool in a digital world.

Those lessons will be highlighted by guest speakers from the business world who will share their own experiences and tips.

One important lesson the class will teach is whether the life of small business owners, with its hectic schedules, stress and lack of a financial safety net — is for them.

As part of the Workforce Renewal Program — the county's effort to revitalize the local economy in preparing for a national economic recovery — those who complete the FastTrac program will receive \$50 from the county.