

# Jefferson Small Business News

February 19, 2015

*This newsletter – sponsored by the **Jefferson County Small Business Development Program (SBDP)** - is for businesses and entrepreneurs in Monticello & Jefferson County, FL ... and others interested in promoting good business for and within Jefferson County.*

## **Free Workshops for Jefferson Businesses**

Keeping up with “professional development” is an important part of small business success. Training programs can help small biz owners and employees learn valuable skills, build knowledge in your field, find out about news and issues affecting your industry, learn success strategies and more.

Jefferson County hosts periodic workshops to assist local businesses on topics of interest. See page 3 for news on our March events.

## **What Do YOU Want for Our County?**



Jefferson County is one of many small communities that wants and needs new jobs and new business growth. Help us help make that happen by responding to the survey on Pages 7 – 8. Tell us what kinds of new businesses you'd like to see here ... and what kinds of goods and services you want to see available, as a consumer and for the community -- whether as new businesses or things that existing businesses can do to expand their offerings.

Fill out the last two pages of this newsletter and mail in your response by March 11 or complete the survey online in the Feedback section of [JeffersonMeansBusiness.com](http://JeffersonMeansBusiness.com) (under the “More” tab). If by mail, send to Small Business, Jefferson County Courthouse, Courthouse Circle, Monticello, FL, 32344.

## **Timely Tax Tips for Small Biz**

Tis the season to get your tax act together, whether you file as a corporation March 15, a nonprofit May 15 or as a small business on your personal Return on April 15. See page 2 for tips from varied sources to help you get the job done right. And be sure to set up your process now to make preparing Returns for 2016 even easier.

## **Agriculture Vital to Local Economy**

Jefferson County has been a part of two important workshops on the concerns of and services to local and regional farmers and others in agriculture. Find out more on Page 4 ... and why it's important to you even if you're not in agriculture.

**Jefferson County Small Business Development Program**

## Tax Tips to Help Small Businesses

*Highlights of tips from several timely sources follow with links for how to find out more.*

In "Top Small Businesses Tax Tips for 2016" (January 28, 2016, <http://www.hiscox.com/small-business-insurance/blog/top-small-businesses-tax-tips-for-2016/>) professionals from CAN Capital emphasize the importance of **leveraging tax prep tools**. They point out that "there are plenty of resources available to help you figure out which records and information to gather, understand tax guidelines for your business, and complete your filings on time." As one example, a tax organizer or worksheet can make organizing your information easier and accounting firms and assorted Websites offer them for free. Bankrate.com has free online tax calculators available as another helpful tool.

They also stress: "always remember that the IRS offers a wealth of information and resources for filing small business taxes." At [irs.gov](http://irs.gov) "you can find small business tax forms, instructions for taking allowable deductions such as the home office deduction, and an array of additional information and resources in the **IRS Small Business Tax Center**."

Avoid common mistakes – like not **taking legitimate deductions**. "Some business owners let their fear of the IRS keep them from taking deductions, which leads them to pay more in taxes than they owe.", they note, adding that "if the deduction is valid, and you can substantiate it, you should take advantage of it." On that they also say to be sure to **know your write offs**, including those that sometimes get overlooked -- home office deductions, startup costs, inventory, furniture and equipment, mileage, telephone charges (including cell phones if you use yours for your business), retirement contributions, travel, meals, entertainment & gifts and applicable insurance premiums. "When in doubt, you can always check with the IRS and/or your tax consultant."

In "**How Credit Cards Help With Tax Preparation**" Kari Lockett of the Huffington Post (<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/news/tax-preparation-tips/>) tells readers that you can avoid costly errors and unwanted stress, plus spot more deductions and pay less to tax preparers by being more organized, through using credit card statements and year-end summaries available from credit card companies. She advises: "if you use credit cards for most of your tax-deductible expenditures you can take advantage of online or printed account summaries to help you identify and track your expenses. The summaries are professionally formatted, easy to read, and are generally archived in your online account for instant retrieval. You can also use these summaries and account statements all year long as a tool to help design and manage your budget." This can also be an effective way of tracking employee expenditures, she adds.

In "**Little-Known Tax Tips for Small-Business Owners**", Turbo Tax experts reveal that charitable donors can give stocks instead of cash and count the deduction at current value rather than purchase price.

A Blog for [www.businessnewsdaily.com](http://www.businessnewsdaily.com), "**Small Business Taxes: Everything You Need to Know for 2016**", flags tax extenders such as: "Two important tax breaks for small business have been extended: Section 179 and bonus depreciation. Section 179 allows businesses to deduct the full price of any qualifying equipment or software purchased or leased during the year. The tax-extension bill makes permanent the \$500,000 maximum deduction for new and used equipment that was purchased or leased in 2015. Bonus depreciation, which was extended through 2017, allows business owners to depreciate 50 percent of the cost of new equipment purchased in 2015. The two tax incentives can be used together." They add that the U.S. Small Business Administration maintains a guide on navigating the tax code and staying up to date on your tax responsibilities as a business owner. See [SBA.gov](http://SBA.gov).

## **Local Workshops Scheduled to Support Jefferson Businesses**

Small business is the heart of our local economy. Jefferson County recognizes the need to support new business growth while keeping existing businesses in operation. The following workshops have been scheduled to assist small businesses in Jefferson County. Stay tuned to our Website for others ... and access detailed presenter slides from our January event on "**How to Get Your Small Business Funded**".

### **Grants & Loans for Business Energy Improvements March 3, 2016 -- 6:00 - 7:30 PM at County Annex**

The USDA's Rural Development Office and Natural Resources Conservation Service will conduct an Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy Workshop for the benefit of Jefferson County businesses. The primary focus will be to inform local small businesses of grant opportunities available to purchase energy efficient and renewable energy equipment. Such installations will help businesses cut operational costs while also benefiting the environment. The use of renewable energy also provides an energy security measure for farmers and others.

The USDA provides grants for 25% of total project costs for businesses of wide variety. They can help interested parties in applying for such funds. They also offer local agricultural producers technical and operating assistance.

In addition, the USDA - NRCS has grant opportunities to provide energy efficient financing for construction, equipment and energy audits for local agricultural producers. Money is available now.

Helping businesses get and save money helps keep business strong and resilient.

### **Business Permitting, Zoning & Land Use Requirements March 9, 2016 – 6:30 – 8:00 PM at County Annex**

Whether you're a beauty shop, bed & breakfast, construction contractor, retail sales outlet, restaurant, farmer or a wide variety of other types of businesses, the codes of local governments apply to you. This workshop will provide timely information for businesses operating in Jefferson County or planning to start a business here.

The County adopted a new land use code in late 2015 and parts of it relate directly to agriculture and other small businesses throughout the County. The County's planning and land use attorney and advisor, Scott Shirley, will explain what local small businesses need to know about the code and about small business permits.

In addition, City Clerk Emily Anderson will discuss City planning, zoning and permitting requirements, including those for the historic district. Both will be available to answer participant questions. The SBDP will also report on available business support services and resources.

Reserve your space for these free events by emailing [smallbusiness@jeffersoncountyfl.gov](mailto:smallbusiness@jeffersoncountyfl.gov) or calling 363-3753.

*The Jefferson County Annex is located at 435 West Walnut Street (behind Building A of the old high school, at Water Street) and the events will be held in the County Commission chambers.*

**Sponsored by: Jefferson County Small Business Development Program**

## **Agriculture Vital to Local Economy** Thanks to Jefferson Agriculture Businesses



Agriculture is a vital part of our local economy. Always has been. But farmers and others in agriculture, especially smaller scale operations, face special needs and challenges in keeping their businesses vibrant. Whether you're in agriculture as a business or not, this article contains info relevant to you.

The Jefferson Small Business Development Program (SBDP) took part in an educational forum held last month to assist North Florida farmers. The event drew over 100 participants and featured Congresswoman Gwen Graham (as host), US Department of Agriculture Deputy Secretary Harden, FAMU officials and a panel of area farmers.

Harden stated strongly at the start that **"1% of the population feeds the 99% of the rest of us."** Yet, she commented, the 99% doesn't think about, care about or invest in the future of agriculture. "We're fortunate to be food-independent as a country", she said. But she voiced concern about the decline in agriculture as a career path, stressing the need to get young people, women, minorities and veterans more involved in farming. **Buy Local Farm Products... Available In Wide Variety**

USDA has a role to revitalize rural communities plus a range of resources to help. Agency staff was on hand after the event to provide literature and support on a variety of topics. It was also announced that the agency had just designated North Florida as a "StrikeForce" area. Launched in 2010, "more than 1,500 StrikeForce partnerships have already helped USDA support nearly 190,000 projects and invest \$23.5 billion in high-poverty areas in rural America", according to the USDA. The agency concentrates support resources in these designated areas.

Announced as part of the event too was the of a USDA micro-loan program for farmers. It provides loans of up to \$50,000. The application process is now easier and collateral requirements have been made easier as well. Land can also now be used for collateral.

On February 16, Northwest Florida Farm Credit hosted a regional **Veterans & Small Farmers Workshop** including presentations by the US Department of Agriculture (NRCS and Farm Service Administration), University of Florida, UF Extension Office, Florida A&M, Farm Bureau and Farm Credit with resources for small farmers and veterans. SBDP also spoke about our services and availability to support local farmers and veteran-owned businesses. Congresswoman Graham made the opening remarks.

Numerous resources, insights, ideas and other information were provided to equip, support and inspire farmers and entrepreneurs with interest in agriculture as an avocation. The SBDP is preparing an article to capture "take-aways" from the event to assist the local community. Watch for it soon at

JeffersonMeansBusiness.com (under the Blog tab). **We're All In This Together**

"Farming is a risk. You take a chance every time you plant a seed in the ground."

*Thank our local farmers for taking that risk so we all can eat & enjoy other necessities of our lives.*

**"You must plan to be successful. It doesn't just happen." Farm Credit leader**

## Jefferson County Small Business Development Program



Jefferson County understands the importance of small businesses to our local community and economy. That's why the County sponsors the Small Business Development Program (SBDP). The SBDP assists individuals seeking to create, expand or improve upon a business in the county. Our goals are to support the creation of new jobs for local residents, keep current jobs in place by helping existing businesses be strong, ensure the availability of needed goods and services for those who live here and contribute to the kind of economy that will sustain our community long-term.

### One-on-One Support

From shopkeepers to in-keepers ... consultants to construction contractors ... health care providers to mail order marketers ... restauranteurs to farmers ... and other businesses of wide variety, the SBDP is here to support the success of local businesses. We offer a diverse range of services of uncommon scope and quality for a program of our size. Professional support services are provided at no charge to individuals and companies with a business idea or plan and a commitment to their business goals.

Our services include: help in evaluating business concepts and plans; assistance with Business Plan development; financial evaluations and planning; support with lender requests; market analysis; marketing plans and strategy; location assistance; strategic communications; operational improvements; and other varied support. Our services are tailored to the needs of individual businesses. We also support nonprofit organizations that help build the local economy.

### Business Training Services



Professional development is an important part of keeping businesses sharp and strong while also helping entrepreneurs prepare for launching their new businesses. In the past year the SBDP has presented six training events, planned for others in the coming months and created dozens of reports to assist local entrepreneurs on specific topics related to their business ventures. Workshop examples range from How to Get Your Small Business Funded and Social Media Marketing for Small Businesses ... to Home-Based Business Needs & Solutions ... How to Get & Stay Motivated and Effective ... and Understanding Local Permitting & Land Use Policies Affecting Small Business.

See schedule of events at [JeffersonMeansBusiness.com](http://JeffersonMeansBusiness.com).



## Community Awareness & Outreach

Accomplishing our goals depends on reaching out to and connecting with community members and particularly those in the business sector. The SBDP does so in a number of ways that, at the same time, add value for local businesses, such as: an informative newsletter (available in print and downloadable) ... our Website and Blog ... a Facebook page and You Tube channel ... guest columns on timely topics in the Monticello News/Jefferson Journal ... regular announcements in the

Chamber of Commerce newsletter ... speaking engagements at local forums ... and participation in regular and special local events.

*To get on our email/ mailing list, sign onto our Website Home page or contact us by email or phone.*

## Solutions Focus



We help clearly identify your business needs and viable options for addressing them.

Our focus is on finding meaningful solutions for your business success.

Crafting effective strategies for implementing the solutions is part of what we do as well ... and we stick with you in making sure that your business goals and plans become reality.

## Accessibility of Services

We go the extra mile to be there for your needs. Appointments are available in person, by phone and online. For online meetings, we set it up and all you need is a computer or mobile device. If your business or job keeps you from meeting during regular business hours, we'll adapt our schedule to yours. Where appropriate and helpful we also schedule appointments at local business establishments and are happy to provide feedback on business operations through an on-site review.

Video highlights of our program and services appear on our Website. Confidentiality of client information is also respected.

**We look forward to hearing from you!**

**Contact us at: 363-3753 or [smallbusiness@jeffersoncountyfl.gov](mailto:smallbusiness@jeffersoncountyfl.gov)**

**Check out our Website at [JeffersonMeansBusiness.com](http://JeffersonMeansBusiness.com)**

## Jefferson County Public Survey: Growing Businesses to Meet Community Needs

Thanks for taking time to complete this survey. We welcome answers to any & all questions. The results will be used to help meet the needs of local businesses, residents & the community as a whole.

### 1. Are you a current resident of Jefferson County?

- Yes  No  No but I'm moving here

### 2. What kinds of goods and services (or what kinds of businesses) would you like to see available in Monticello and Jefferson County – either to you as a consumer or as a way of building the local economy (or both)? *Feel free to use additional page.*

### 3. Which goods/services do you now drive to Tallahassee or another close-by city for because you can't get what you want or need locally?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Groceries         | <input type="checkbox"/> Restaurants                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gasoline          | <input type="checkbox"/> Movies or other entertainment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clothing          | <input type="checkbox"/> Sports events or recreation   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health care       | <input type="checkbox"/> Educational programs          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Beauty & fitness  | <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural activities           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Building supplies | <input type="checkbox"/> Department & discount stores  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pet supplies      |  |

The above are examples. What others apply to you?

### 4. Would you be more likely to spend your shopping dollars here if these goods or services were accessible locally?

- Yes  No  Don't Know

Comments:

**5. What tends to motivate you most in deciding whether to travel to make purchases or to buy locally?**

- |                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Availability | <input type="checkbox"/> Volume   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Quality      | <input type="checkbox"/> Value of My Time (no travel required)          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Price        | <input type="checkbox"/> Cost of Gas (if I travel)                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Type/Choices | <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation Goals (save energy/cut pollution) |

Comments:

**6. What would you guess you spend per month, on average, on purchases outside of Jefferson County that you'd spend here if the goods/services were available here (for goods/services that a new or current local business could probably provide)?**

- |                                      |                                      |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$1 - 50    | <input type="checkbox"/> \$201 - 350 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 - 100  | <input type="checkbox"/> \$351 - 500 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$101 - 200 | <input type="checkbox"/> Over \$500  |

Comments:

**7. Any other feedback you care to offer to help business growth, consumer choice and our local economy?**

**Survey conducted by Jefferson County Small Business Development Program**  
Prefer to complete online? Go to [www.JeffersonMeansBusiness.com](http://www.JeffersonMeansBusiness.com) ("More" tab and Feedback link).  
Provide your email and/or physical address and we'll be happy to add you to our mailing list.



