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Press Release

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MCC SMALL BUSINESS CENTER RECEIVES GRANT FOR NEW PROGRAM Business Incubator Will Train Entrepreneurs and Stimulate Local Economy

WILLIAMSTON – For many people thinking of starting a new business, few opportunities exist to learn first-hand how to market, operate, or expand the business without placing substantial capital at risk. However, that will soon change.

Martin Community College's Small Business Center (SBC), in partnership with Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College (A-B Tech), was recently granted \$7,250 towards the establishment of a Small Business Micro Incubator program called "Living Your Dream" that will expose SBC clients to actual work practices, principles, and problems in an established business.

Martin CC will partner with A-B Tech to design and administer the program, provide clients, mentors, and future training sites. Business mentors will be selected based on a formalized credentialing process. Participating clients will be screened to ensure they are committed to pursuing a career in one of the two hospitality/tourism business models available through the program – a bed and breakfast in Martin County or a restaurant in the Asheville area.

"The goals of this project are to provide real-life experiences for clients who are considering starting a small business, while providing income to existing North Carolina businesses and stimulating growth in the hospitality/tourism industry in North Carolina," said Georgette Chilton, MCC Small Business Center director.

Chloe Tuttle, owner and operator of Big Mill Bed and Breakfast, will serve as the business mentor for those wanting to open a bed and breakfast. She has already been certified by Vocation Vacations as a mentor, meeting their criteria for passion, experience, and web presence, among other qualities. As such she has experience at teaching prospective operators about marketing, networking, finding their unique niche, budgeting, website design, photography and other subjects critical to success.

The new program will also include the development of a process that can be replicated across all colleges in the North Carolina Community College System. "Living Your Dream" will be designed so additional businesses such as agri-tourism, retail, or event planning can be added to the variety of training sites.

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