

Start Smart Workshops for Would-Be Entrepreneurs

Local News

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KENNEWICK, Wash. - If your New Year's resolution is to start your own business, a visit to the Tri-Cities could help.

"Start Smart" is a one-time, three-hour workshop held monthly in Kennewick to give entrepreneurs the basic information they need to launch a business idea in Washington. LoAnn Ayers, manager of the BusinessLINKS program at Washington State University-Tri-Cities, says it's a collaboration between the school, local chambers of commerce and economic development groups.

Participants so far have ranged from a 10-year-old with an idea for a mobile phone app to folks older than 70 who aren't interested in retiring, says Ayers.

"We use the structure of a business plan, but we really concentrate on having them have a solid feel for their idea. Who will buy from them? How often? How much are they willing to pay? How will they compete? Who is the competition - what are they doing well, what are they doing not well?"

Ayers says people at the workshops have a lot of questions about how to finance a business and the government regulations they'll have to follow. And what about the economy? She's convinced there's never a bad time to start a good business.

"Sometimes, the challenging economies create opportunity that smart people can leverage to make money. And the reverse is true; I've seen lots of smart people waste money on ideas that they had a real passion for but they didn't really fully explore or think through."

Ayers says the \$25 fee covers attendance for two at the workshop, and people are urged to bring a friend, business partner or spouse. She says each person tends to hear different points, and it's important to have that extra support and feedback.

The next Start Smart workshop is Monday, and you don't have to live in the Tri-Cities to attend. Pre-registration is required at 509-372-7606 or tricity.wsu.edu/links. Other workshop dates are Feb. 11 and March 11. The course is taught at Tri-Cities Business & Visitor Center, 7130 W. Grandridge Blvd., Kennewick. - Chris Thomas