

# Entrepreneurial Happenings

Haywood Community College

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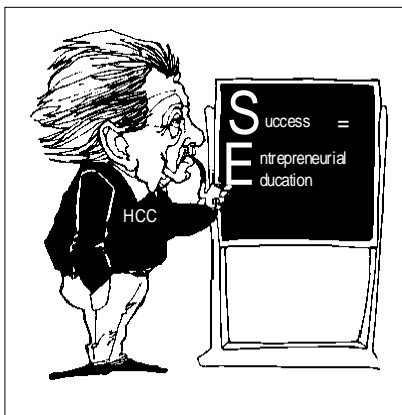
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*Entrepreneurs are those who see opportunities that others do not and marshal the resources to capitalize on them.*

## FutureWork Creating a Competitive Workforce Advantage

Efforts to build a better Haywood County economy are moving forward under a project called FutureWork that promotes workforce skills as a tool for economic development. FutureWork, a collaboration by Haywood County JobLink, Haywood Community College, and other county leaders, hosted a forum in June involving a cross-section of county and regional leaders. The resulting consensus was that developing a competitive workforce is a major priority for creating jobs. "We believe that education and training are imperative for increasing productivity and competitiveness," said Darrell Douglas, corporate vice president of human resources at Blue Ridge Paper Products.

Since the forum, three working groups have formed and met to address employer and employee needs, training and education, and building a community alliance. The teams are evaluating issues, challenges, opportunities and goals. Meetings will continue into the fall, with the objective of providing a vision and plan for developing a competitive workforce advantage. "The leadership within these teams is committed to FutureWork as a way to help develop better paying jobs for current and future generations," said Kirk Smith with HCC's Regional High Technology Center.



In the fall, a second forum will be held to present the overall plan to the community and build understanding and awareness of the issues. Long-range plans include implementation of a process that will link workforce preparation with economic development. Interested members of the community are urged to get involved. For more information, please visit [www.future-work.org](http://www.future-work.org) or contact Kirk Smith at 452-1411, ext. 239.



## Spotlight on Success



*Laura Inman (right) and her daughter, Dayna Truitt, excel at choosing unique and fashionable merchandise for Lakes Uniforms. From a Disney theme scrub shirt such as shown in the photo to such specialty items as the tiger stethoscope cover, the store is sure to have something to fit most professionals' uniform needs.*

Photo and story by  
Debbie Davis

Gone are the days when nurses and medical professionals wore only white uniforms. Today, many medical professionals choose comfortable pants and colorful printed tops as their uniforms of choice. Styles and prints are as varied as the colors in a color wheel and many are theme-oriented. From cartoon characters to motorcycles, birds or butterflies, local professionals can now choose uniforms that reflect their personalities and individual style at **Lakes Uniforms** in west Waynesville.

For the past five years, Laura Inman, owner of Lakes

*(continued on page 2)*

## FutureWork Who is Involved?

Representatives from the following:

Haywood Regional Medical Center  
Employment Security Commission  
JobLink  
Long's Chapel  
Haywood Board of Education  
Blue Ridge Paper Corporation  
Enterprise Mountaineer  
HVO  
United Community Bank  
Downtown Waynesville Assoc.  
NC Dept. of Commerce  
Advantage West  
Chimney Rock Park  
Haywood EDC  
Haywood Community College  
QSI Data Systems  
Haywood County Commissioners  
Associated Packaging  
Haywood Chamber of Commerce  
Haywood County Schools  
and more...



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## Lakes Uniforms

Uniforms, has provided uniforms to many medical offices and facilities in Western North Carolina and the surrounding areas. "I worked in nursing for 18 years. I knew that local health-care professionals were having problems finding a good selection of uniforms. I wanted to take care of that by providing them with a nice store and a good selection of uniforms from which to choose."

According to Inman, having the vision was the easy part. "I had never owned a retail business; I had no clue where to begin. And I didn't know where to go to get the help I needed."

Inman decided to attend a Small Business Fair at Haywood Community College, where she met Sharron Bleyl, Small Business Center director. "Sharron was a lifesaver for me. She was very helpful and guided me through the first steps I needed to take," Inman said. Bleyl also suggested that Inman attend some of the free seminars sponsored by the Small Business Center. She attended five seminars and said she found the information invaluable in pointing her in the right direction.

The Center provides budding entrepreneurs like Inman with the knowledge and resources needed to make informed decisions concerning their business ventures. A resource library of print, audio, and video materials is also available for loan. The Small Business Center is located at the Regional High Technology Center.

Within a year of opening, Lakes Uniforms expanded. In July, the store celebrated 5 years of business. It can be listed as a "survivor." In a time when many new

businesses experience difficulties within the first few years, owner Inman and her daughter, Dayna Truitt, have found the right focus and mix to make their store a success. "I feel like I am now providing a service and helping area professionals look their best." According to Inman, 98% of work places let professionals choose a variety of scrub tops.

Inman and Truitt attend the Professional Apparel Association show once a year where they get to see the new lines first-hand. "We hand-pick everything that goes into our store. New merchandise arrives daily," said Truitt. "Chain stores have no choice in what they offer, but we can pick and choose. The store deals with over 16 vendors so that we can offer the best selection available." Selections change in the store on a seasonal basis and include such items as scrubs, lab coats, novelty items, medical accessories, shoes, hose, and socks. They carry men's clothing as well as women's and some children's. According to Inman, they have a size to fit most anyone—from xs–5x.

When asked what they liked most about running the store, Inman and Truitt said they enjoyed the buying, but most of all they loved the people they meet. "We believe in customer service and treating people well."

Because of this commitment, Lakes Uniforms' reputation has spread. A lot of people just drop by the store to see the new selections and to say hello. The store at 1906 South Main Street, Waynesville, is centrally located within Lakes Uniform's service area.

Inman and Truitt also travel to local hospitals and area doctors' offices where they take "on site" special group orders. According to Inman, about 25% of their business can be attributed to these "on-site" sales. They have plans to expand these sales and hope to one day sponsor a uniform fashion show for nursing students at Western Carolina University.

Looking back over the strides she has made in the past five years, Inman said, "Owning your own business is hard work. I didn't realize it was so difficult. It takes time to grow. Patience, getting the information you need at the start—like I got at the Small Business Center—and staying focused on your goal will help make your business a success."

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**Please visit the SBC website at [sbc.haywood.edu](http://sbc.haywood.edu) to view the fall schedule.**

**More entrepreneurial news?  
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