

THE VOICE

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Hot off the Press

The IRS says if you are self-employed or an employee, and you use a portion of your home for business, you may be able to take a home office deduction.

Generally, in order to claim a business deduction for your home, you must use part of your home exclusively and regularly: as your principal place of business, as a place to meet or deal with clients or customers in the normal course of business, or any connection with your trade or business where the business portion of your home is separate, not attached to your home.

For more information, see IRS Publication 585, available at www.irs.gov. Or call 1-800/829-3676.

Helping small businesses **start, grow and succeed.**



Your Small Business Resource

Will Harris III Receives SBA Small Business Person Of Year Award for Georgia

Will Harris III, Georgia's 2011 Small Business Person of the Year, was among winners from the 50 states and U.S. territories who were honored at the U.S. Small Business Administration's National Small Business Week events May 18-20 in Washington, D.C.

Under the theme, "Empowering Entrepreneurs," a series of events and educational forums marked the 58th anniversary of the agency and the 48th annual proclamation of National Small Business Week.

Harris is owner and president of White Oak Pastures, one of the largest producers of organic, grass-fed beef in the country. Harris has taken his family farm in Early County, Georgia, passed down over five generations, and coupled it with modern technology to meet the growing demand for grass-fed beef.

White Oak Pastures today has 40 non-family employees and is the largest certified organic farm in Georgia. Its grass-fed beef is available in Whole Food Market stores as well as Publix Supermarkets in five states.

"Will Harris and White Oak Pastures serve as a



Will Harris in front of the construction of his new USDA inspection plant for White Oak Pastures' free-range poultry. The plant is set to start operations this fall and employ about 25 workers.

prime example of how innovation, coupled with opportunity, can transform a business or entire industry," said SBA Georgia District Director Terri Denison. Denison joined Harris and his family in Washington for the week's programs.

In addition to Harris, the SBA has presented four other statewide awards to Georgia recipients. They were C. Rankin Hobbs, CEO of KaMin LLC, Georgia Small Business Exporter of the Year; William Haley, Manager of the Supplier Diversity Program at American Family Life Assurance Co. (Aflac), Women in Business Champion; Darron M. Burnette, Executive VP of Sea Island Bank, Financial Services

Champion of the Year; and Gary A. Cross, Director, Metro Atlanta Home-Based Chamber of Commerce, the Home-Based Business Champion of the Year.

As one of only two, on-farm USDA inspected grass-fed beef processing plants in the nation, White Oak Pastures was already distinctive. But it became even more so with the installation last year of the largest solar barn in the Southeast. This facility has 50,000 watts of electrical capacity and turns sunlight directly into energy for the processing plant.

A few months ago, Harris broke ground for a new USDA-inspected poultry plant to process his other free-range (See Page 6.)

DISASTER RECOVERY

SBA Opens DCRs for Tornado Victims in the Southeast

SBA Disaster Recovery Centers (DCRs) were operating in a dozen Georgia cities shortly after a series of devastating tornadoes and “straight line” winds struck communities and rural areas of mostly the northern part of the state on Wednesday, April 27.

Fifteen people died in Georgia from the storms that day, eight of them in Ringgold, a town of nearly 3,000 located 17 miles south of Chattanooga. At least 16 buildings in the town “evaporated,” said Catoosa County Sheriff Phil Summers as he surveyed destruction the day after the tragedy. He estimated about 50 percent of the town’s business district was wiped out, including two filling stations, two fast-food restaurants and several motels.

The Georgia destruction was only part of the havoc that a series of tornadoes caused that day as the storms roared first through other parts of the Southeast, leaving at least 250 dead in Alabama, 34 in Mississippi, and the same number in Tennessee. About 148 devastating twisters left at least 340 people dead in 13 states along the paths of the storms, with over a billion dollars in damage. It was one of the worst outbreaks of tornadoes in U.S. History.

Shortly after the storms, President Obama signed major disaster declarations for Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi that set in motion federal aid, including SBA assistance, to help the states recover from the disaster. The declarations make federal assistance available to people who suffered personal property damages or losses and for public facilities such as schools, fire stations and libraries. People located in the declared disaster area may apply for long-term, low-interest SBA loans to repair or replace small businesses and other property damaged by the storm. Small business owners may also apply for an SBA working capital loan to relieve the economic injury caused by the disaster. Limits on SBA Disaster Loans can go up to \$2 million. A week after the storms, disaster victims could apply for SBA assistance at 52 DCRs set up in the four southeastern states.

There were 25 primary Georgia counties under the President’s disaster declaration.

(See Page 3)



SBA Administrator Mills joined Smithville Mayor Greg Kennedy to inspect destruction in the small Mississippi town of less than 900.

Score Starts its 4th SimpleSTEPS™ Class in Atlanta

-Five Workshops Focus on Business Start Ups-

SCORE Atlanta, a non-profit resource partner of the U.S. Small Business Administration, has started its fourth series of SimpleSTEPS™ workshops in Atlanta with a class of nine local entrepreneurs. The workshop series is divided into five modules that offer professional training in the basics of starting a successful business. The introductory module is free and focuses on testing a business idea and identifying the key factors that impact a start-up business. There is a fee of \$125 for the entire course with the other four modules covering the Business Concept, Marketing Plan, Financial Projections as well as Funding Sources and Next Steps for the start-up.

The free introductory workshop focuses on the basics of testing your business idea and identifying the key factors that may influence start-up success. This first module gives an overview of the skills and tools needed when deciding to start a business. In this module, a person will learn about the most profitable form for their new business, and the fundamentals of formation, organization, marketing, cash flow and funding sources.

The second three-hour module focuses on the business concept and step-by-step guidance in researching your idea, market, and competition. At the end of the Business Concept module, a person can identify a target market, describe their products and services, and collect key competitive information to support a final business plan.

The third program module covers the marketing plan and includes pricing strategies, and different marketing strategies.

The fourth module uses exercises to help better understand financial concepts. This module reviews sales and prices, financial risks and rewards, true start-up costs, and ongoing operating expenses. It uses a financial model to forecast sales revenue and other pro-forma financial data.

The fifth module offers information on how to finance your small business. The module covers sources of funds, use of commercial credit, banking relations, ratio analysis, and monthly preparation and review of financial statements. A bank loan officer will give an inside view of how a banker assesses the merits of business plans and loan application. For information on the next class, which starts on June 10, contact Nadiya Merchant at Nadiya@pioneerservices.net.

LENDING UPDATE

Top Georgia SBA Lenders for First half of FY 2011

7(a) Lender Rankings - October 2010-March 2011

(Number of Loans)			(Total Dollar Amount)		
Branch Banking & Trust Co.	56 Loans	(1)	Metro City Bank	\$61.4 million	(1)
Cornerstone Bank	47 Loans	(2)	Cornerstone Bank	\$50.9 million	(2)
Metro City Bank	44 Loans	(3)	Live Oak Banking Co.	\$31.0 million	(3)
Superior financial Group, LLC	44 Loans	(3)	SunTrust Bank	\$29.0 million	(4)
Wells Fargo Bank	40 Loans	(4)	Fidelity Bank	\$27.7 million	(5)
SunTrust Bank	38 Loans	(5)	First Intercontinental Bank	\$25.0 million	(6)
First Financial Bank	37 Loans	(6)	First Financial Bank	\$23.6 million	(7)
Fidelity Bank	32 Loans	(7)	Embassy National Bank	\$23.3 million	(8)
First Intercontinental Bank	27 Loans	(8)	Quantum National Bank	\$18.1 million	(9)
JP Morgan Chase Bank	26 Loans	(9)	Bank of Atlanta	\$13.6 million	(10)

504 Loan Program - Georgia CDC Rankings

Georgia Resource Capital Inc.	27 Loan	(1)	Georgia Resource Capital Inc.	\$23.3 million	(1)
Florida Bus. Development Corp.	17 Loans	(2)	Capital Partners Cert. Dev. Co.	\$10.1 million	(2)
CSRA Local Development Corp.	16 Loans	(3)	Florida Bus. Development Corp.	\$6.5 million	(3)
Small Bus. Access Partners Inc.	13 Loans	(4)	CSRA Local Development Corp.	\$6.3 million	(4)
Capital Partners Cert. Dev. Co.	11 Loans	(5)	Small Bus. Assistance Corp.	\$5.4 million	(5)
Small Bus. Assistance Corp.	11 Loans	(5)	Small Bus. Access Partners Inc.	\$4.8 million	(6)
Georgia Certified Dev. Corp.	7 Loans	(6)	Georgia Certified Dev. Corp.	\$3.6 million	(7)
Coastal Area District Dev. Authority	5 Loans	(7)	Southern Development Council	\$3.1 million	(8)
Georgia Small Business Lender Inc.	4 Loans	(8)	Coastal Area District Authority Inc.	\$1.5 million	(9)
Southern Development Council	4 Loans	(8)	Georgia Small Business Lender Inc.	\$1.4 million	(10)

Georgia has 25 Counties in Disaster Declaration

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The counties are Bartow, Catoosa, Cherokee, Coweta, Dade, Floyd, Gordon, Greene, Habersham, Harris, Heard, Lamar, Lumpkin, Meriwether, Monroe, Morgan, Newton, Pickens, Polk, Rabun, Spalding, Troup, Upson, Walker and White.

A few days after the storms, SBA Administrator Karen Mills joined other officials for a damage survey in Alabama and Mississippi. In Smithville, Mills joined Mayor Greg Kennedy to inspect damaged in the town where 15 citizens died in a storm that packed winds of over 200 miles per hour. In Alabama, more

than 3,000 workers had filed for unemployment compensation because the tornadoes knocked them out of work.

The University of Alabama was spared a direct hit, but classes were canceled for the rest of the school year for its 30,000 students and 5,000 faculty members. The tornadoes killed three Alabama students.

Mills pointed out that over 75 SBA staff members had been activated to man the DCRs in Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia and Tennessee. "As always, we will be there until the job is done, and we will get it done right," she declared. For details on the SBA loan application process, go to: <http://www.sba.gov/content/applying-disaster-loan>.

Roz L. Alford Appointed To National Women's Business Council

Roz L. Alford, co-owner of Norcross-based ASAP Solutions Group, LLC, has been appointed to the National Women's Business Council, a nonpartisan federal advisory group that provides advice and recommendations to the President, Congress, and the SBA. Her term is for three years.

Alford founded ASAP Solutions in 1989. The firm works with clients on various contract matters. It posted revenues of \$73.7 million in 2010.



WHITE HOUSE INITIATIVE

Marie Johns Chairs Local 'Startup America' Event

As part of the White House's "Startup America" initiative, SBA Deputy Administrator Marie Johns and other senior federal officials visited Atlanta on May 2 to meet with entrepreneurs and hear directly from them on ideas for reducing barriers and unneeded regulation that could impact small business development.

In addition to Ms. Johns, officials taking part in the program included Associate Administrator of Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs Michael Fitzpatrick; Deputy Director of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office Teresa Rae; and Michael Robertson, Chief of Staff, General Services Administration (GSA).

"The Startup America initiative will support startups and entrepreneurs, giving them the tools and resources to grow America's economy and win the future," said Johns. Using input from the initiative's roundtables and public participation, the Obama Administration will produce a report highlighting ideas to streamline regulations affecting small business.

The event attracted over 100 small business owners at the Georgia Tech Global Learning Center in midtown Atlanta. Those who could not attend the event can submit their ideas for reducing barriers to:

www.reducingbarriers.ideascale.com.



From left, are Georgia Tech President G.P. "Bud" Peterson; SBA Georgia District Director Terri Denison; SBA Deputy Administrator Marie Johns; and Cassius Butts, SBA Southeast Regional Administrator.



Cassius Butts Appointed SBA Southeast Regional Administrator

Cassius Butts of Atlanta has been appointed the SBA Regional Administrator to oversee the agency's programs and services in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee.

"Both the SBA and small businesses in the Southeast region will benefit greatly from Cassius' experience promoting and communicating government initiatives throughout the region," said SBA Administrator Karen Mills in announcing his appointment.

Butts began his career in public service 10 years ago as a

Presidential Management Fellow with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Prior to his SBA appointment, Butts was one of three chiefs responsible for sales and management of HUD properties within the region.

Since 2005, Butts has been associated with CB Consulting Group LLC as a principal consultant.

Butts earned a BA Degree from Morehouse College and a Master's Degree in Public Administration from Clark Atlanta University. (Butts is pictured at left with Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed, a longtime friend.)

SMALL BUSINESS ASSISTANCE

SBA Microloan Helps Bring Solar to Marines at Parris Island

Georgia small businesses are continuing to search out the SBA Microloan Program to fulfill critical needs for working capital or pieces of equipment to support their operations.

The expansion of the agency's Microloan program got a boost last September when President Obama signed into law the Small Business Jobs Act. The Jobs Act permanently increased the agency's microloan limit from \$35,000 to \$50,000, thereby adding to the assistance entrepreneurs can get for start-up costs or expansion of existing small businesses.

New data shows the state's five SBA Microlenders benefited a wide range of small businesses last year, with over 100 loans worth nearly \$2 million going to support small businesses.

Access to Capital for Entrepreneurs (ACE) in Cleveland, Georgia is one of the agency's most active microlenders. Last year, SolarFlex Technologies LLL got a \$27,000 SBA-funded microloan from ACE that the company used for its subcontract to build a federal solar facility. The system was installed at a new barracks complex at the Marine Corp Recruiting Depot on Parris Island, South Carolina.

Athens-based SolarFlex built the \$800,000 solar complex on a 14,000 square-foot parking deck roof next to one of the new barracks at Parris Island. The 79,000-watt system was completed last March on time, over a 9-month design and build-out schedule, according to Bill Snapp, company owner.

"That loan was critical to our cash-flow situation at the time," said Snapp. "We could get only a limited amount of business credit...but we needed cash to buy the rest of the materials for the job."

Snapp sees his company's completion of the Marine contract, all done with American-made parts and components, as opening the gates for future work for his 7-man team of electricians and solar installers.



Mark Williams, an installer for SolarFlex, stands in front of the solar system the company built at the Marine Barracks on Parris Island, South Carolina.



Ken and Carol Mitchell, owners of MBA Waste Services LLC, look over plans for their 8-acre recycling complex in Union City, Georgia. It will be the first permitted recovery facility for construction materials within 250 miles of Atlanta. Set to open this fall, the complex was financed with a \$2 million SBA 504 Economic Development Loan.

"We are bidding currently on federal solar facilities at Ft. Stewart, Georgia; Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery and at Eglin Air Force in the Panhandle of Florida," he said. "We are also talking about co-marketing the company with one of the largest electrical contractors in South Carolina."

Snapp established SolarFlex four years ago.

The future for solar looks good based on requirements that 7.5 percent of the electricity used by the federal government will come from renewable energy by 2013.

Daniel McCray, owner of Complete Lawn Care in Savannah, got a \$5,000 microloan last year through the Small Business Assistance Corporation (SBAC) another SBA certified microlender. Although much smaller than the loan to SolarFlex, it was just as important to McCray who used his loan to repair and update a lot of his equipment.

McCray said much of his business comes from small maintenance contracts with the City of Savannah on landscaping around its public buildings and facilities. "With the slow economy, a lot of people will under-bid you," noted McCray who started his company 15 years ago. "This SBA microloan is helping me get back on my feet."

MORE GEORGIA NEWS

FOURTH 'E200' CLASS UNDERWAY AT THE DISTRICT

The SBA District Office has started its fourth management training class of small businesses under its Emerging 200 (e200) initiative.

The executive-level training program was expanded last year from the inner-city to all of the corporate limits of the City of Atlanta. The 6-month long initiative continues in nine other cities that have participated in the past.

The Atlanta firms taking part in the new e200 class are Accura Engineering & Consulting Services Inc.; Arke Systems; Banana Wind; CyQuest Business Solutions Inc.; eFortresses Inc.; Good Success Co., Inc.; Grecian Gyro Inc.; J Squared Plumbing Co., Inc.; M.L. King Dental Center; Reeves & Associates Consulting and Training Inc.; The Epsten Group Inc.; Total Maintenance Inc.; Servitodo LLC; Sol Construction LLC; and Vixio Technology LLC.

The small business owners and other company executives who

graduate from the 2011 program will produce a three-year strategic growth plan. These plans will be evaluated on October 24 by a panel of business professionals. The program is provided by SBA at no cost to the participants.

"The basic goal of the initiative is to help promising inner-city firms step up to the next level," said Terri Denison, SBA Georgia District Director.

The e200 program continues to be a collaboration of the Georgia District Office, the Atlanta Development Authority, Atlanta Workforce Development Agency, and the Atlanta Chapter of SCORE-Counselors to America's Small Business.

The program's three-hour training sessions are divided into four subject modules. These will cover Business Assessment, Finance, Marketing & Sales and Resources available for small business start-ups or expanding firms.

The objective of the program is to help participating firms accelerate growth, explore financing options and diversity their markets.



Russ Young, a professional business coach, explains the content of the 12-class e200 curriculum that runs through late October at the SBA Georgia District Office.

To date, more than half of the businesses that participate in e200 have seen an increase in revenue, and nearly two-thirds have created new jobs. The graduates have also secured over \$9 million in new financing for their firms.

Companies selected for the program have been in business for a minimum of three years and have annual sales of at least \$400,000.

GEORGIA HAS FIVE SBA SMALL BUSINESS WEEK AWARDS



Terri Denison, SBA Georgia District Director, presents the Exporter of the Year Award to Rankin Hobbs at the SBA Awards Luncheon in Atlanta.

(Continued from Page One)

chickens and turkeys. This facility is expected to be operational this fall.

Harris was nominated for his award by the University of Georgia Small Business Development Center (SBDC) in Albany.

Hobbs' company, KaMin, is based in Macon and is an exporter of kaolin clay which it mines and processes at three plant locations in middle Georgia. He has been an executive in the industrial minerals industry for 11 years.

Haley became manager of Aflac's Diversity program in 2003. The Columbus-based company's spending with minority-owned firms is over

10 percent of its annual expenditures.

Haley has worked with over 80 firms in Georgia helping with their certification as "women business enterprises."

Burnette, with over 28 years in banking, created in 2005 his bank's "Service Beyond Banking" series of training sessions for his bank's marketing area. Based in Statesboro, he has served on the Georgia SBDC Network Advisory Council since 2009.

Cross is the founder of the non-profit Metro Atlanta Home-based Business Chamber of Commerce. Cross, a resident of Morrow, regularly conducts educational and networking workshops for business owners. Cross spent 20 years in the hotel industry.