



3rd Annual Report on the WNC Region for Entrepreneurship & Business Assistance

An overview of entrepreneurship, supportive environments, and agencies for business creation, growth, and retention in the Western North Carolina (WNC).

Although our nation has economic concerns, WNC is experiencing growth. WNC has resources for business development, technical assistance, and training. These services increase sustainability, profitability, and promote a healthy business climate and a stable community.

Each professional in this report endeavors to support the thriving entrepreneurial spirit in WNC. Working in concert they are what our Western North Carolina community is all about.

**This report is brought to you by the
Minority Enterprise Development (MED) Week Committee of WNC, Inc.
P.O. Box 1744 Asheville, NC 28802
Visit our website at www.wncmedweek.org**

A-B Tech Center for Business and Technology Incubation (828) 254-1921 x 5850

1465 Sand Hill Road, Candler, NC 28715
www.abtech.edu/sbc

The Center for Business and Technology Incubation provides support services for local entrepreneurs through its Small Business, BioBusiness and Technology Commercialization Centers. Services provided include free one-to-one counseling for business owners or prospective owners to assist them in getting started or with a specific area of concern.

Counseling covers a variety of topics ranging from licensing and marketing to patents and trademarks. Additionally, the center offers a variety of resources and services to help businesses start and grow including business incubation which is designed to provide companies maximum flexibility while working closely with them to identify areas of improvement and to assist them in locating needed resources. The incubation program is generally for a period of two years for most companies to grow and then relocate into the surrounding community. During the 2008-09 year, over 350 clients received business counseling and over 150 seminars were offered.

AdvantageWest Economic Development Group (828) 687-7234

Blue Ridge Entrepreneurial Council – plewis@awnc.org
Certified Entrepreneurial Community Program – plewis@awnc.org
Blue Ridge Food Ventures – mlsurgi@awnc.org
134 Wright Brothers Way, Fletcher NC 28732
www.advantagewest.com

AdvantageWest Economic Development Group serves 23 western counties in North Carolina through a diverse program of work which includes entrepreneurship and small business through the following programs; Blue Ridge Entrepreneurial Council (BREC), Blue Ridge Food Ventures, and The Certified Entrepreneurial Community ProgramSM (CEC).

BREC supports entrepreneurs through education, mentoring, networking forums and access to capital through the **Advantage Opportunity Loan Fund**. **Blue Ridge Food Ventures** operates as a kitchen incubator on the campus of AB-Tech-Enka and provides assistance for users producing value-added products. The **Certified Entrepreneurial Community ProgramSM** is a community development program designed to take community leaders through a rigorous five-step process to ensure the necessary infrastructure is in place for entrepreneurial development thereby improving the overall business climate for existing industry as well.

Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce (828) 258-6116

Small Business & Entrepreneurship
36 Montford Ave., Asheville, NC 28801
chensley@ashevillechamber.org

The Small Business & Entrepreneurship Department of the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce provides marketing information and business orientation services to walk-in and call-in inquiries. This department also provides information and referrals to start-up or expanding businesses that are seeking support in all areas of business development. Additionally, Small Business & Entrepreneurship conducts business recognition programs such as the **Sky High Growth** and the **“We’re for Business” Awards**, and plans and facilitates educational programs and leadership development training classes for businesses. Small Business is also responsible for the Chamber’s Business Healthcare Roundtable, which meets routinely to study ways to facilitate more affordable group health care insurance for area businesses.

Asheville SCORE (828) 271-4786

Federal Bldg, 151 Patton Ave - RM 259, Asheville NC 28801-5007
www.ashevillescure.org

Asheville SCORE is a part of a national volunteer army of over 11,000 current and former business owners, executives and managers that provide totally free business counseling and mentoring. The 30 plus members of the local chapter also conduct low-cost seminars designed specifically to coach the small business owner to success. This potent combination guides the organization's thousands of clients, both start-ups and existing businesses, to rapid growth and success.

The SCORE members also provide free performance assessment services for those businesses that are trending toward possible difficulties or failure. After consultation with the business owner(s) to fully assess the issues, the SCORE Team will select those members who have the required experience and backgrounds, and form a team to dissect the troubled business' operational procedures, human resource concerns, marketing effectiveness and financial security. This turn-around service is also provided pro-bono, as none of the SCORE 11,000 volunteers receive compensation for their time other than that of seeing businesses succeed. This unique free & confidential service has led to SCORE being recognized as "Counselors to America's Small Business."

Asheville SCORE conducted 1,230 face-to-face counseling sessions this past year and conducted 30 business seminars with a total attendance of 350 entrepreneurs. All counseling sessions initially are held in the SCORE offices in the Federal building. Following face to face sessions may be held at a place of business, coffee shop or any other public location suitable to the client.

Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP) (828) 236-1282

729 Haywood Road, Asheville, NC 28806
www.AppalachianGrown.org

Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization located in Asheville and serving the southern Appalachian region. ASAP has a lengthy history of working on behalf of farmers and farmers' markets to help support their survival as an essential part of our economy and landscape.

In 2002, ASAP organized the Mountain Tailgate Market Association (MTMA), which has grown to include twelve farmers markets located in five counties. Each is a producer-only farmers market organized for the core purpose of selling farm products direct to consumers. In addition, ASAP promotes more than 40 other farmers markets and 250 farms in the southern Appalachian region in our Local Food Guide, a publication nationally recognized as a leading model of centralized farm marketing to promote local sales. Any farm with food to sell to the public, as well as local businesses seeking to source and sell locally-grown foods, are welcomed to contact ASAP and inquire about marketing support, including listing in the local food guide.

ASAP launched a new, central destination farmers market in Asheville, North Carolina, and employs the Market Manager and in 2008 launched the Asheville City Market on Saturday mornings 8am-1pm (April-December) and building on this success has opened the Asheville City Market South on Wednesdays 2-6pm through October. For more information, contact Mike McCreary, Market Manager, at (828) 348-0340 to inquire about the market.

ASAP provides business planning support for farms, including assistance with marketing plans, financial projections, and help with developing packaging and labeling. Staff can assist with packaging of loan or grant proposals. ASAP also works to get to know wholesale buyers throughout the region, and can assess farm operations and suggest likely "good matches" for sales outlets for their farm products.

Buncombe County Government (828) 250-4800

Finance / Purchasing Division
35 Woodfin Street, Asheville, NC 28801
www.buncombecounty.org

Buncombe County's Minority Outreach Plan works to provide minorities equal opportunity to participate in all aspects of County contracting and purchasing programs, including but not limited to, participation in procurement contracts for equipment, professional and other services contracts, and construction contracts. Buncombe County has a current verifiable goal of twelve percent (12%) for minority participation on building construction or repair projects, ten percent (10%) each for procurement, and services. The County posts bidding opportunities on its website and has instituted an electronic registration and bidding process to allow vendors to receive notification of opportunities to bid. The County notified 108 minorities of 30 bidding opportunities in FY09 via the electronic registration and bidding process.

Cherokee Business Development & The Sequoyah Fund (828) 497-1666

PO Box 1200, Cherokee, NC 28719
www.sequoyahfund.com

The mission of Cherokee Business Development and the Sequoyah Fund is to provide training, technical assistance and resources to support entrepreneurship, business start-up and expansion, and community development on the Qualla Boundary. Cherokee Business Development is a program for the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, Department of Planning and Development and Sequoyah Fund is an independent, non-profit Native American community development financial institution (CDFI).

Between 2001 and July 2009, the 2 organizations have provided training and technical assistance services to approximately 1500 individuals and approved 174 loans totaling \$6.2 million dollars. So far in 2009, there have been 24 loans for over \$800,000. Of these loans, 11 were for new businesses which consist of a grocery store, construction company, funeral home, 2 plumbing companies, bus company, Native American production company, tattoo parlor, jewelry sales, funding for a Native artist and money to research a new product.

Since 2001, businesses receiving assistance increased their annual incomes by anywhere from 3%-7% and created and retained an average of 2 jobs per loan. Further evidence of success is the excellent repayment record of borrowers. As of July 2009, Sequoyah Fund has 104 active loans, 70 loans that were paid off, and only 1 default loan. 98% of these loans were to minorities.

For technical assistance, Cherokee Business Development and Sequoyah Fund offer a full calendar of classes and trainings for business owners and community members interested in starting a business. Indianpreneurship, a business plan writing class with a Native emphasis, is held 2 times a year and has had approximately 40 graduates. In addition to Indianpreneurship, trainings include: Bio-Business, OSHA, Federal Procurement, Quickbooks, Basic Business Accounting, Retirement Planning for Small Business, and more.

Other areas of interest for Cherokee Business Development and Sequoyah Fund include financial literacy. The 2 organizations are actively involved in providing credit counseling to the community and establishing a program of entrepreneurship training in the Cherokee Central School system.

Cherokee Business Development has also been working diligently on becoming a Certified Entrepreneurial Community through AdvantageWest.

Handmade In America (828) 252-0121

125 South Lexington, Asheville, NC 28801
www.handmadeinamerica.org

The mission of HandMade in America is to grow handmade economies by creating tools, markets and partnerships that honor craft, cultural heritage and a spirit of community. Our programs impact children, craft artists, farmers, travelers, rural women entrepreneurs, the environment, and small towns throughout western North Carolina.

HandMade in America's Craft Across the Curriculum has served more than 300 elementary students during FY2008 in Buncombe County, Asheville, and Crossnore. More than 60 of these children are from low-income homes and approximately one-third of these students are from minority populations. The Appalachian Women Entrepreneurs program has provided business support and training to forty-five rural low-income women during FY2008 in Madison, Graham, Swain, Cherokee, Rutherford, and Ashe Counties; less than 10% are minorities.

Meet the Geeks

Learn more at www.meetthegeeks.net

Meet the Geeks (MTG) is a volunteer-driven organization that seeks to build and support the IT community throughout Western North Carolina. Since its founding in March 2005, it has established a successful series of networking events, created an online portal for local IT professionals, participated in recruiting and developing new IT business in the area, developed a series of classes on IT and business topics, and initiated efforts to build the regional IT community.

Meet the Geeks serves more than 400 members. The bi-monthly networking events regularly bring 40 - 50 IT professionals, business owners, educators and students together to socialize and make connections that result in new opportunities. Membership and the majority of our events are free and open to the public.

Mountain BizWorks (828) 253-2834

153 Lexington Avenue
Asheville, NC 28801
www.mountainbizworks.org

For twenty years, Mountain BizWorks has been in the hope business, the dream business, the opportunity business. The non-profit organization has been helping small business owners build the economy of Western North Carolina one business and one job at a time. Mountain BizWorks values serving all individuals who aspire to be entrepreneurs and they believe that people should be able to create a better life for themselves and their families through business ownership. Mountain BizWorks believes that successful businesses create long-term social benefits and economic prosperity, particularly in underserved communities. They value the dignity and work of each individual and encourage self-sufficiency, accountability, and cooperation. Furthermore, they value being a community that bridges the gap between entrepreneurs of varying incomes, geographies and ethnicities.

NCCCS BioNetwork (828) 254-1921 ex. 5842

Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College, Enka Campus
1459-C Sand Hill Road, Suite 208
Candler, NC 28715
www.ncbionetwork.org

NCCCS BioNetwork is a statewide initiative that connects community colleges across North Carolina, providing specialized training, curricula and equipment to develop a world-class workforce for the biotechnology, pharmaceutical and life sciences industries. All community colleges serving the pharmaceutical and biotechnology sector are part of the BioNetwork.

NC Dept of Commerce, Business & Industry Development Division (828) 654-9852

134 Wright Brothers Way

Fletcher NC 28732

cmesser@nccommerce.com

The North Carolina Department of Commerce is the state's leading economic development agency, working with local, regional, national, and international companies. The department's mission is to improve the economic well being and quality of life for all North Carolinians. The mission is carried out by recruiting new jobs and domestic and foreign investment; serving existing business and industry, including providing international trade assistance; encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation; marketing North Carolina and its brand; supporting workforce development; strengthening communities; and promoting tourism, film, and sports development. The department also provides data, statistics, information, and reports for state government and agencies which regulate commerce in the state. There are seven economic development regions throughout the state. The western regional office is located in Fletcher and serves 23 counties.

N.C. Lawyers for Entrepreneurs Assistance Program (NCLEAP) (800) 662-7407 ext. 342

8000 Weston Parkway

Cary, North Carolina 27513

www.ncbar.org/ncleap

NC LEAP provides pro bono, business legal assistance to income-eligible, low-wealth clients seeking to start or expand their businesses in North Carolina. NC LEAP services include creation of business entity (i.e. partnership, LLC, corporation etc), intellectual property assistance, contract drafting and negotiation including commercial leases, employment law issues, succession planning etc. NC LEAP provides its services through a network of business attorneys across the state and is sponsored by the Business Law Section and Corporate Counsel Sections of the North Carolina Bar Association. NC LEAP is partially funded by the Lenovo Hope Fund of the Triangle Community Foundation. NC LEAP started providing services June 4, 2007 in a limited nine county region and has since expanded to cover over 52 counties. In June 2008, NC LEAP officially began offering services to fifteen (15) counties in the western region of North Carolina. NC LEAP's launch to western NC took place in conjunction with our community partner, ABTECH Center for Business and Technology Incubation.

Office for Historically Underutilized Businesses (HUB Office) (919) 807-2330

N.C. Department of Administration

1336 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-1336

www.doa.state.nc.us/hub

The Office for Historically Underutilized Businesses' mission is to advocate increasing opportunities and promotes diversity and inclusion in state government procurement and contracting to increase the amount of goods and services, including construction, acquired by the State of North Carolina from historically underutilized businesses.

In August 2007, Governor Michael Easley signed into law, Senate Bill 320 (Ch. SL 2007-392) authorizing the Secretary of Administration to develop and administer a statewide uniform certification program for historically underutilized businesses with state departments, agencies and institutions and political subdivisions of the state. Implemented July 1st of this year, the impact of the statewide uniform certification program for historically underutilized businesses will be over 100% in the number of historically underutilized businesses (or HUBs) that will be available statewide for outreach.

For assistance locally to register as a HUB, contact the Minority Business Program at the Office of Economic Development at (828) 232-4566 or www.ashevillenc.gov/mpb.

Office of Economic Development

City of Asheville, 29 Haywood Street, Asheville, NC 28801

- Economic Development (828) 259-5433
- Downtown Urban Planning (828) 232-4502
- Minority Business Program (828-232-4566 or www.ashevillenc.gov/mbp)
- Real Estate Management (828) 259-5729
- **Main Contact: (828) 232-4500 or www.ashevillenc.gov/ed**

The mission of the City of Asheville Office of Economic Development is to promote the City's economic Development policies through linked and collaborative initiatives that leverage resources to create a vibrant and robust Asheville economy. Our organizational model is based on the following:

- **Recruitment** - we work in conjunction with the NC Dept. of Commerce, AdvantageWest, CarolinaWest and the Asheville Chamber/EDC in this area.
- **Retention and Expansion**—the same partners above are involved in this area with such successes as the recent Volvo expansion which included economic incentives from the City of Asheville.
- **Marketing**—this is an important aspect to the above two and we work with the Asheville Convention and Visitor Bureau and Tourism Development, AdvantageWest and CarolinaWest.
- **Technical Assistance & Education**—this is vital to the creation and sustainability of entrepreneurs in the region. The City of Asheville has the Minority Business Program which supports opportunities for contacting with the city along with training and development, along with that the region boasts all the business service providers.
- **Entrepreneurship**—our western North Carolina region has a wonderful business service providers network who work collaboratively to assist entrepreneurs. We participate in this network.
- **Financial Assistance / Access to Capital**—The city funds through federal grants to Mountain BizWorks annually for its programs and in addition, there is Self Help Credit Union, SBA, AdvantageWest and other financial institutions working to assist entrepreneurs in our region.
- **Workforce Development**—The City of Asheville supports with CAYLA (City of Asheville Youth Leadership Academy) providing work experience, training and college tuition support for attendees. In addition, the region has the Workforce Development Board / Job Link, ABTECH, UNCA, WCU and ASU working to educate in these areas with entrepreneurs and businesses.
- **Product Development**—our main role is the development of projects and initiatives that further City Council's strategic goals and objectives in four key focus areas: affordable, green, safe, and sustainable resulting a more vibrant and robust Asheville economy. Examples of such initiatives:

Understanding Lawful Employment Seminar: The Office of Economic Development partnered with various Area Service Providers a seminar to benefit small businesses and Human Resource staff in regards to E-Verify, the IMAGE Program, and I-9 Form. This seminar gave resources for business owners and human resource staff to ensure that they are providing lawful employment to citizens and information on completing the I-9 Form correctly. This seminar had participation of about seventy (70) business owners and human resource staff members around the community.

RENCI/UNCA Move to Downtown: The Office of Economic Development located, accommodated, and developed a location for the RENCi Engagement Site to move to the Downtown Asheville Area. This move assisted RENCi to be placed in a central location for policymakers to utilize. With their high tech equipment; RENCi has assist the City of Asheville with various modeling of flood plains and land usages.

Downtown Master Plan Adoption: The Office of Economic Development assisted and hosted various meetings with stakeholders, business owners, and residents of the Downtown area to complete the draft of the Downtown Master Plan. The Downtown Master Plan was adopted by City Council on May 26, 2009 and is now in the implementation process.

Classes Downtown offered by UNCA at the YMI Cultural Arts Center: The Office of Economic Development and the Parking Services Division of the Transportation Department is partnering with the University of North Carolina-Asheville providing parking for students and faculty attending select evening classes being held downtown at the YMI Cultural Center in the Eagle Market Street historic district.

Increasing Public Safety: Through the Economic Development Office's collaborative, City Council approved a telecommunications license agreement, resulting in a revenue increase of over \$30,000 per year. In addition, in the past twelve months, the development of new telecommunications license agreements has resulted in the receipt of over \$100,000. These funds will fully finance the relocation of city telecommunications equipment to the White Fawn tower, in efforts to improve and optimize public safety communications and to provide for additional cost savings.

Minority Business Outreach: In support of ARRA outreach, the Minority Business Program hosted an outreach meeting with the N.C. Department of Transportation for minority, woman, disadvantaged, and locally owned businesses to discuss what projects will be online for

In addition, the Office of Economic Development through the City of Asheville provides space in to the Asheville Downtown Association (www.ashevilledowntown.org) which is a non-profit, membership organization with a mission to promote and support quality economic, cultural and residential development in downtown and for the local manager for the U.S. Small Business Administration.

Self Help Credit Union (828) 253-5251

34 Wall St., Suite 704
Asheville, NC 28801
joyce@self-help.org

Founded in 1980, Self-Help Credit Union is a non-profit community development lender with the mission of helping individuals and families build wealth through ownership of a home or business.

Self-Help offers a wide range of lending programs for small business owners, from microloans of a few thousand dollars to larger loans of up to several million. Our lending programs are open to any borrower, but we specialize in lending to business owners who are people of color, women, rural residents, and/or low-wealth families and communities. We also have expertise in lending to nonprofits, childcare centers, charter schools and environmentally-oriented businesses. In addition, we fight predatory lending on a national scale, so that more people can achieve the financial security and sense of possibility that are at the heart of the American dream.

Funds for our lending come from deposits, grants, and other investments made by individuals and institutions across the U.S.

Southwestern Community College Small Business Center (828) 488-6413

447 College Drive
Sylva, NC 28779
www.southwesterncc.edu/swain/small-bus-ctr

The Small Business Center (SBC) supports the development of new businesses and the growth of existing businesses by being a community-based provider of training, counseling, and resource information. The SBC can provide free, confidential counseling services on an as-needed basis, serving as a sounding board for ideas and concerns you might have about your business. Our professional staff will help you find solutions to your challenging business questions, no matter how simple or complicated. For more information on services provided by the SBC at Southwestern Community College, as well as offices across the state, visit the Small Business Center Network website at www.sbcn.nc.gov.

Small Business & Technology Development Center (SBTDC) (828) 251-6025

68 Patton Avenue, Lower Lobby
Asheville, NC 28801-3312
www.sbtdc.org

In Western North Carolina, the Small Business and Technology Development Center (SBTDC) has six business professionals who provide comprehensive services for small to medium-sized enterprises. These counselors serve the 14 western counties of North Carolina through two convenient locations at Western Carolina University and downtown Asheville.

Most business owners or their managers come to us initially for confidential counseling to assess their business and develop a plan. Together, the counselor and company select tools to implement that plan -- financial analysis, market studies, focus groups, strategic needs assessments, government procurement assistance, and/or strategic planning retreats to name a few. Should funding be needed, the SBTDC is an approved technical assistance provider for the North Carolina Rural Fund, SBA Community Express Loan programs. For companies involved in scientific R&D, they can apply for SBIR and STTR grants.

As a program of the University System, the SBTDC strives to leverage the assets of area Universities to benefit businesses in WNC. Last year, over 50 students from WCU, UNCA, and Montreat were placed into applied learning projects designed to assist companies with large projects and provide a hands-on learning experience for students. In addition, the Western Center of the SBTDC continues to be engaged in statewide initiatives such as the Center of Innovation for Natural Biotechnology and Integrative Medicine and NC's Small Business Disaster Recovery Loans.

In addition, the SBTDC's Procurement Technical Assistance Center can aid those interested in working with local, state and federal government. PTAC counselors can help clients determine the suitability of government contracting, secure necessary registrations, enroll in procurement preference programs, research procurement histories, identify bid opportunities and prepare proposals.

Technology Commercialization Center (828) 254-1921 ext. 5856

1465 Sand Hill Rd, Candler, NC 28715
(Located in the A-B Tech Center for Business and Technology Incubation on the Enka campus)
spoland@abtech.edu or www.abtech.edu/sbc/tcc

The Technology Commercialization Center (TCC) implements a business development program for technology based companies that guides the management team in the deployment of a fundable and sustainable business. Coaching, training, and mentoring are provided with the purpose of client development in proven business practices and preparation for investor funding, should that be needed.

There is no charge for the TCC base program for A-B Tech incubator residents, those pursuing resident or affiliated status, or those companies located in Buncombe county. A comprehensive entrepreneurial management development training program complements the stage-based coaching and mentoring services.

We have worked with more than 60 companies in the past 2 years. We work with the management teams of these companies on day-to-day operational issues as well as strategic plans, business plans, partnerships, and mergers and acquisitions. We conduct monthly management training sessions that discuss general management issues common to all companies. We also bring local senior executives together monthly to review and provide guidance to client companies from mentors that have been successful running their own businesses.

U.S. Small Business Administration (828) 225-1844

29 Haywood Street
Asheville NC 28801
Michael.arriola@sba.gov

The U.S. Small Business Administration was formed over 50 years ago to help Americans start, develop and grow small businesses. An independent federal agency, the SBA accomplishes this through:

- Small business loan programs
- Federal contracting programs to enable small firms to gain access to federal procurement opportunities
- Counseling and training programs through sponsored or funded resources such as SCORE, the Small Business & Technology Development Center network, the Women's Business Center at Mountain BizWorks, and an array of online tools; and
- Advocacy on Capitol Hill, in which the SBA serves as the voice for small business in our nation's capitol.

The SBA's Alternate Work Site, or satellite office, has been situated in Asheville since February 2004, joining the other SBA satellite offices in Raleigh and Wilmington and the SBA's district office, or state headquarters, in Charlotte. Mike Arriola is Senior Area Manager in Asheville and staffs the one-person office which serves the 22 counties of western NC. As an SBA officer, Mike's objective is to further the SBA's mission of helping small businesses start, develop and grow by:

- Increasing SBA loans to startups and existing small businesses in the region by working with lenders and loan applicants on SBA loan options and applications;
- Outreach throughout western North Carolina to inform the public about available SBA programs and services for their business use; and
- Assistance with other SBA programs, including federal government contracting, surety bonding, and others.

For the twelve-month period ended June 30, 2009, your SBA in western North Carolina helped 120 small businesses start, develop and grow through various loan programs, with the total financing amounting to \$38.2 million. Of the total small businesses assisted, 24 percent were woman-owned and 17 percent were minority-owned.

The above results signify a decline from the prior twelve months, when your SBA helped 182 small businesses with financing. However, in terms of the dollar amount of capital, loans to small businesses dipped only slightly, from \$41.3 million in the prior year, for a modest decline of 8 percent.

US Department of Labor Women's Bureau (828) 505-1547

151 Patton Ave Room 168

Asheville, NC 28801

www.dol.gov/wb

The U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau, established by Congress in 1920, is the only federal agency mandated to represent the needs of wage-earning women in the public policy process. The Mission of the Women's Bureau is: To improve the status of wage-earning women, improve their working conditions, increase their efficiency, and advance their opportunities for profitable employment.

For 89 years, it has been meeting that mandate -- identifying the issues working women care about most and vigorously pioneering research and remedies to address them. Today's Department of Labor represents the workforce of the 21st Century. The Women's Bureau, through its Strengthening the Family Initiatives – Better Jobs! Better Earnings! Better Living! and Value-Added Supporters!, will continue to prepare women for tomorrow's jobs. The Bureau promotes an environment that is responsive to the demands and challenges of the 21st Century workforce. More than ever, it is vital to ensure opportunities for American women to achieve their potential in the workplace.

The Women's Bureau is headquartered in Washington, DC and has 10 regional offices located in metropolitan cities throughout the country. Regional offices service multiple states within their respective regions and each regional office is staffed with only 3 staff persons. The regional office for Region IV is located in Atlanta, Georgia with an alternative work site established in Asheville in 2005. Region IV serves the 8 Southeastern states of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, N. Carolina, S. Carolina and Tennessee.

This 2009 Update to the WNC Report Card brought to you by:

MED Week Committee of WNC Board of Directors

* * *

Brenda Mills, Chair - [City of Asheville](#)

Sharon Oxendine, Vice Chair - [Mountain BizWorks](#)

Hope Huskey, Treasurer - [Cherokee Business Development Center](#)

Carol Hensley, Secretary - [Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce](#)

Joyce Harrison - [Self-Help Credit Union](#)

Annice Brown - [Small Business & Technology Development Center](#)

Adrienne Gordon - [Small Business & Technology Development Center](#)

Jill Sparks - [A-B Tech Small Business Center](#)

The 2009 MED Week Committee gratefully acknowledges the support of all our wonderful sponsors and supporters.

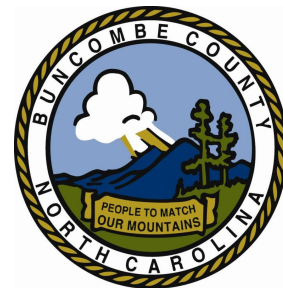
Platinum Sponsors:



RENAISSANCE.
ASHEVILLE HOTEL



Gold Supporters:



Silver Supporters:

AdvantageWest
Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce
Harrah's Cherokee Casino
Progress Energy
Self-Help Credit Union
Volvo Construction

Bronze Supporters:

AT & T North Carolina
Carol Goins, Attorney at Law
First Citizens Bank
Small Business & Technology Development Center (SBTDC)