

- Thursday, May 5, 2011 — ADVOCATE-NEWS

Micro-loan program available for businesses

Submitted by West Company

Attention City of Fort Bragg residents. West Company, Mendocino County's Small Business Development Center and Women's Business Center, is offering micro-loans to qualifying business people located within the city of Fort Bragg. A micro-loan is a business loan that ranges from \$5,000-\$15,000. It is intended to support low-income small business owners when they are trying to start up or grow their business.

All businesses that would like to participate have to have less than five employees including the owner. They must also be located within the city limits of Fort Bragg and income qualify.

West Company is one of the original microenterprise development organizations operating in the US. Now in its 21st year, West Company is a leader in the microenterprise field because of its capacity to create and deliver services to fit the needs of small local businesses and aspiring entrepreneurs.

For more information, visit our website at www.west-company.org or call 964-7571.

Seize the future

By Heather Gurewitz
WBC director, West Company

Looking at the way things stand today, it can be discouraging, for both existing and start-up businesses. But, it's time to turn things around and start looking at the possibilities of tomorrow for our local industries. Most consultants will tell you that you need to plan for two years in the future, if you are going to be where you need to be in the marketplace. Yet, with things changing so fast, how do you know what the market will look like two years from now? Market trends, of course.

In the age of information, anyone can get online and look up data and statistics, but taking those numbers and turning them into something useful takes the finesse of a marketing expert like Rieva Lesonsky who will speak in Fort Bragg on Wednesday, May 11, from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. at the C.V. Starr Center. This workshop, sponsored by the City of Fort Bragg Community Development Block Grant Program, will focus on three main areas: travel, weddings and luxury products.

These three industries are key drivers in our post-logging/fishing economy and knowing what they will look like in years to come is essential. Travel and wedding businesses include lodging, dining, health and beauty and tourism businesses. Luxury products include wine, gourmet food, fine artwork, handmade jewelry and other high end products made locally. Rieva will be talking about what the future markets for these products and services will look like and give ideas on how to position for them.

West Company exists to help cultivate success in local business and create jobs, and in order for a business to become successful it is imperative to know what is coming up and plan for it. Failure to plan for the future will only leave your business stranded in the past. And, of course, as the Small Business Development Center, West Company doesn't just provide seminars to help you get the information you need, but also provides no-cost consulting to help you act on what you learn. Seize the future — it will be here sooner than you think.