

RI Developmental Disabilities Council Shares Self Employment Stories; Leads to Maine Adopting Business Startup Program

RIDDC & Maine Office of Aging & Disability Services hosted webinars on how self-employment makes a difference for people living with developmental disabilities



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[/EINPresswire.com/](https://EINPresswire.com/) -- What began in

2017 in RI as a small pilot for people with developmental disabilities for a real opportunity to develop a small business based on their interests and abilities has become a viable national model that the state of Maine is eager to adopt. The [RI Developmental Disabilities Council](#) in partnership with the [Maine Office of Aging and Disability Services](#) recently hosted two free webinars on self-employment with guests, families, members of state and private agencies serving individuals with disabilities from the state of Maine attending. Clearly, the personal stories of the small business owners' successes made the point that self-employment can be an excellent opportunity for people with disabilities to spend time working on something meaningful to them, increase self-esteem and build positive financial futures.

The RI Self Employment program consists of eight online webinars on business development startup, coupled with staff and peer support and technical support by industry professionals in finance, marketing, and business plans and more. In addition, the program continues supporting the aspiring business owners by assisting their direct sales efforts at local area marketplaces, by offering weekly online networking sessions for continuing education and group problem solving, adding the new business entry into a free online directory hosted on the RIDDC website, and also by offering mini grants to the entrepreneurs to pay for their business start-up costs.

Five RI business owners presented their respective employment stories during the two sessions: Cheetah Greetings, an online business featuring greeting cards, notecards, customized buttons/pins, both traditional and personalized designs; Red White and Brew/The Budding Violet a combined coffeehouse with muffins, pastries, and calzones along with a unique gift shop filled with items from local artists, including shop owners from the RI DD Council's self-employment project ; Double B Photography, a nature, landscape and wildlife photography business selling prints, notecards, mousepads, coasters, etc.; Rebecca's G Cards, an online greeting card

business for all occasions “bringing Smiles Every Day”; and Mr. C’s Old Thyme Scents, featuring unique scents for candles, wax melts, room sprays and carpet sprinkles.

A variety of businesses, as individual as the personalities, passions and skills of their owners, creates an opportunity for each to grow personally. This, in addition to the inherent value of entrepreneurship, underscores the importance to the state of demonstrating that entrepreneurs with disabilities are contributing to local economies as well as improving their own individual futures.

“The self-employment project funded by the [RI State Department of Labor and Training \(DLT\)](#) enabled us to create this ‘small business incubator.’ Our new small business launches now total one hundred and forty, and there are more potential businesses in each new series of classes that we launch,” notes Sue Babin. “All of our staff members, industry professionals and support people - parents, guardians, agencies, etc. involved with this project are always thrilled to see the pride, excitement and energy expressed by the entrepreneurs. They’re doing the things that they genuinely enjoy doing, and we are committed to supporting their talents and their efforts.”

“These presentations were just wonderful and so inspiring. We are looking forward to all the work together and learning from you, the people running their own businesses, and all the great work happening. We are so appreciative of RI’s guidance and support,” stated Lisa D. Sturtevant, Community and Employment Services Manager, Maine Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Aging and Disability Services.

The presentations made by the entrepreneurs and their supportive family members or guardians, were so inspiring, and are the kickoff for the State of Maine to begin the process of replicating the model created in RI within their own State. Program director, Sue Babin, will be continuing to assist staff and providers in Maine to develop their business training curriculum and other ongoing support services within the next few months with a target date of early Fall to start up a self-employment project.

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ABOUT RIDDC

The Rhode Island Developmental Disabilities Council (RIDDC) believes that people with developmental disabilities should fully participate in community life. Men, women, and children should be able to enjoy family life. Children and adolescents should go to school. Adults should work. All should have decent homes, have friends, and live as independently as possible. For more information, visit www.riddc.org.

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