

RI Developmental Disabilities Council to present Self Employment Webinar; Invites Nat'l Down Syndrome Soc. to Networking

NDSS and RIDDC Partner to Promote Self-Employment

WARWICK, RI, UNITED STATES,
December 3, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/

-- National Down Syndrome Society
Invites RI Developmental Disabilities
Council to present Self Employment

Business Project Webinar; RIDDC invites NDSS to Small Business Owners Network Meeting



The [National Down Syndrome Society \(NDSS\)](#) has invited [The Rhode Island Developmental Disability Council \(RIDDC\)](#) to present an overview of its Self-Employment Business Incubator Project. The Council will also spotlight a graduate who is currently a small business owner during this upcoming free webinar scheduled Thursday, December 5 at 1pm EST ([register here](#)). In addition, the RIDDC has invited all attendees of the NDSS webinar to join its online "Entrepreneur's Forum" networking and business development session on December 5 and 12, 3-4pm. Both programs are free and open to the public.

Ryan Rotondo, NDSS program director, invited RIDDC Special Projects Director, Sue Babin, to present information on the eight-class business series, ongoing supports available for entrepreneurs as well as the personal benefits of small business ownership. Katie Lowe, proprietor of Cheetah Greetings, along with her mother, Claudia Lowe, will share their start-up journey and Katie's five-year success story of becoming a DJ and creating personalized, special occasion greeting cards, notecards, and customized pins.

Now in its 7th year, and with more than 150 new business owners, the RI Self-Employment Business Incubator Project is funded by the RI State Department of Labor and Training's (DLT) "Real Jobs RI" initiative. It focuses on the steps of the business start-up process and includes identifying your business team, target market, writing an elevator pitch, determining key marketing strategies, financial and accounting strategies, and developing a business plan. Each class is a two hour session, followed by homework provided by the business instructors. Additionally, program staff meet, evaluate, and support the entrepreneurs' progress, and assign one-on-one business professionals to provide technical assistance and consulting.

According to Ms. Babin, there are several unique features to this entrepreneurship training program:

- funding from the RI State Department of Labor and Training (DLT),
- the hiring of business professionals as instructors for the project's curriculum,
- support to community DD agencies on business development to assist entrepreneurs,
- mini grants for each entrepreneur to purchase necessary equipment, supplies, etc. for their business,
- a statewide "Speakers Bureau" promoting self-employment,
- information and funding for entrepreneurs to participate in local trade/vendor shows to sell their products/services,
- assistance with development of logos and business cards; Facebook, Instagram, etc. accounts; and identifying specific selling platforms for each entrepreneur,
- and most importantly the ongoing support to small business owners through a weekly Entrepreneur's Forum and other necessary supports.

These components make a huge difference in the lives of the participants.

Claudia Lowe, who provides support for her daughter's business as well as staff support for the business classes, the individual participants and weekly networking meetings, says, "Katie loves to make people happy, and she loves making the cards and customized pins with her staff. The classes helped her launch and grow her business, and she feels good about her accomplishments."

"We are pleased to present this program to the National Downs Syndrome Society and aspiring entrepreneurs from around the country! Whether people start a business or not, it's all useful information and experiences, including working with a team, speaking in public, and communicating with people about your business - it's problem solving and thinking creatively. People gain and significantly increase their self-esteem, we've seen it. RI's self-employment program has progressed in seven years from what was a little-known option for employment for people with disabilities to one which is prominent statewide and nationally recognized as a model for other States."

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About The Rhode Island Developmental Disabilities Council (RIDDC)

The RI Department of Labor and Training (DLT) and "Real Jobs RI" has provided funding to the RI Developmental Disabilities Council (RIDDC) since 2018 to administer Self Employment Business Project and organize the ongoing business development support people with disabilities need to successfully start up or grow a small business.

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