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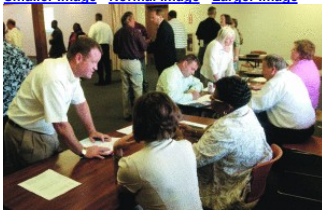
Thursday, August 12, 2010



## Fair opens eyes to contracting process

Event paired businesses with state and federal agencies

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Business owner Alex Brosky, standing left, talks with vendors Wednesday at the Government Contracting and Information Fair sponsored by Rep. Brett Guthrie's office and held at Colvin Community Center.



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By MARTY FINLEY

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"Work smart, not hard."

Those words spoken by Rebecca Vanover served as a mantra for the government contracting and information fair held Wednesday by U.S. Rep. Brett Guthrie, R-Bowling Green, at the Colvin Community Center in Radcliff.

Guthrie started organizing the fair in January after repeated requests from small businesses looking to reap the benefits of economic growth in the region spurred by the Base Realignment and Closure Initiative.

The fair was an introduction for some to military and government contracts, pairing businesses with state and federal agencies which contract for services.

Vanover, a regional small business development specialist with the Government Services Administration, told a small crowd the key is to network properly and market your business in an effective manner.

"Start positioning yourself," she told the crowd. "Do your homework."

Vanover said even if a small business is not ready to present a proposal to the GSA for a contract, it should be immersed in the literature and methods in which to pursue one as preparation. Drafting a sample proposal also is helpful, she said.

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JoDeen Cuffe, assistant director of the Office of Small Business for the Mission & Installation Contracting Command Center at Fort Knox, said finding the right people is the biggest challenge when pursuing military and government contracts.

"It seems arduous and scary, but it's simple and easy if you contact the right people," she said.

Cuffe said businesses must be willing to market themselves, take chances and follow through on their promises. They also need to be informed.

"There are no dumb questions," she said. "There are some dumb mistakes if you don't ask questions."

Guthrie said the government is set to spend \$3 trillion this year and bureaucracy is put into place to make sure the money is appropriated correctly. Unfortunately, this same bureaucracy can be cumbersome for small businesses wanting to enter the contracting market.

Guthrie said he was pleased with the turnout and had received positive feedback. The congressman has held multiple fairs in the area since being elected and said he looks for opportunities to bring people together on issues in which government directly affects people's lives.

Courtney Yopp Norris, a Guthrie spokeswoman, estimated about 90 people attended the fair.

Debbie Hill, owner of the Closet Gallery in Bowling Green, said the fair was an aid in her search for contract work.

"I'm very green to this," Hill said. "It's all new to me."

Hill specializes in custom furniture and storage units and said she could envision pursuing contracts for work in college dormitories.

Cuffe said people often are wary when the government says it is here to help, but she said everyone involved with the fair wants small businesses to succeed.

"You guys are the backbone of the nation," she said.

**Marty Finley can be reached at (270) 505-1762.**

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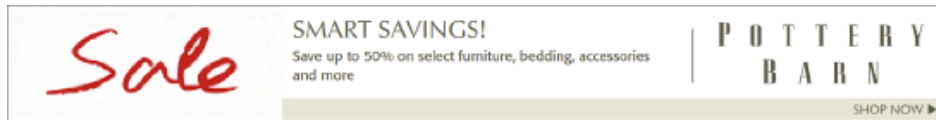
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