

Reaching Out

A publication of Southern Good Faith Fund

Asset Builders

Business Development Center

Career Pathways

Public Policy

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Welcome!

Welcome to our fall edition of the Southern Good Faith Fund (SGFF) participant newsletter. Whether you are a participant in Asset Builders, Business Development Center, Career Pathways, or Saving for Entrepreneurship, Education, and Downpayment (SEED), this newsletter offers great information about the wealth of products and services offered at SGFF.

Don't miss the great article on page 3 about working with a credit counselor and if you are a small business owner, you'll be interested in the article on page 6 about the great new health benefit program called ARHealthNet. Enjoy!

Make A Great First Impression

Whether you're meeting prospective in-laws, trying to nail a job interview, or just mingling with new acquaintances, first impressions are everything. Etiquette expert Alex J. Packer, Ph.D., tells us how to make that first impression really count.

1. **Stay Positive.** Be honest, but don't bare all. No gossip, no self-deprecating remarks and don't offer up advice without being asked. Keep smiling.

2. **Think ahead.** Learn as much as possible before the introductions are made. Find out some tidbits about the person or organization. Be specific, flattering, and sincere.
3. **Ask questions.** Don't talk about yourself too much. It's important to keep the focus on the people you're meeting, so ask them questions about themselves or the organization.

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Before You File For Bankruptcy

The lure of a fresh start has led many people to consider the bankruptcy option. However, the new, stricter bankruptcy rules have made it more difficult to achieve that clean slate. So, before taking such drastic measures, consider the following as options for getting your debt under control.

1. **Devise a battle plan.** Consider all of your debt. First look at your secured

debts. These are debts such as your house and car. What are they costing monthly and consider the interest rates. You should also examine your mandatory costs such as utilities, phone, groceries, insurance, etc. Credit card debt should be considered as well. How much do you owe and what is the interest rate on each card? Finally, look at expenses. These

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Bankruptcy, continued from page 1

include, cable, gym memberships, entertainment, etc.

After getting all debt and expenditures before you, now see where you can cut some expenses. Prioritizing is a must. You need shelter, electricity, food, transportation and health insurance. Everything else can be negotiated.

2. **Go on a cash diet.** Agree to a set amount of expendable cash for the week, just like an allowance. No matter the circumstance, you get no more allowance than what is allocated. This will help you tremendously in your efforts to cut costs and save money.
3. **Get the family involved.** Turn saving into a game for the children in the family. Have the children go through the paper looking for coupons and specials on the things that they like.
4. **Sell assets.** Look to items that have cash value, but not sentimental value. Check the closets, garage, and attic for antiques, clothes, and collectibles. After cashing in on these expendable items, don't just spend the money, apply it toward your debt.
5. **Go for consumer counseling.** Find a trained and preferably free credit counselor that can help you look at your financial situation and draft a budget. A counselor can also help you to negotiate a payment plan with your creditors. Southern Good Faith Fund offers free credit counseling—give us a call!
6. **Negotiate with your credit lenders.** Negotiation works better if your account has not gone to collections. Lowering the interest rate or payment, or doing away with interest temporarily, can give you enough time to recover. If the account has gone to collection, a settlement option may be negotiated.

7. **Get a second or part-time job.** This does not have to be a permanent solution. To be able to shore up your finances and pay off debt more quickly may be worth the time and effort it takes.

The bankruptcy option is one that can be long lasting and have adverse affects on your ability to acquire assets.

Careful consideration should be given before choosing this option. A little

hard work and discipline may be a better alternative. Taking responsibility for your past financial mistakes and devising a plan for your future finances may be far more rewarding than surrendering to bankruptcy.

Excerpts taken from the article *8 Steps to Take Before Bankruptcy*, by Dana Dratch with Bankrate.com.

Upcoming IDA Classes

Pine Bluff

Classes are held at 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. at the Southern Good Faith Fund office, 2304 W. 29th Ave.

*Free child care at the 6 p.m. class in Pine Bluff on Aug. 13, Sept. 13, Sept. 24, Oct. 18, Oct. 25, Oct. 29, Nov. 19, and Dec. 6.

August

- 2 Information Meeting
- 7 Money Management (10a)
- 13* Spending as a Habit—Saving as a Goal
- 24 Financial Services (10a)

September

- 5 Information Meeting
- 13* Credit Management
- 18 Renting, Leasing, Buying (10a)
- 24* AST-Education

October

- 1 Information Meeting
- 9 AST-Home Ownership (10a)
- 18* AST-Home Repair
- 25* Money Management
- 29* Client Appreciation Night

November

- 5 Information Meeting
- 16 Spending as a Habit—Saving as a Goal (10a)
- 19* Financial Services
- 29 Credit Management (10a)

December

- 6* Renting, Leasing, Buying

Helena-West Helena

Classes are held at 10 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. (unless otherwise noted) at First Bank of the Delta, 502 Cherry St.

August

- 14 Information Meeting
- 16 Money Management (10a)
- 20 Spending as a Habit—Saving as a Goal
- 28 Financial Services (10a)

September

- 6 SEED Event (6p)
- 10 Information Meeting
- 11 Credit Management (10a)
- 17 Renting, Leasing, or Buying
- 25 AST-Education (10a)

October

- 9 Information Meeting
- 15 AST-Home Ownership (10a)
- 23 AST-Home Repair
- 29 Money Management

November

- 6 Information Meeting
- 12 Spending as a Habit—Saving as a Goal (10a)
- 13 Client Appreciation (6p)
- 20 Financial Services (10a)
- 27 Credit Management

December

- 10 Renting, Leasing, Buying

(AST—Asset Specific Training)

Working With A Credit Counselor Proves To Be An Asset

An Asset Builders IDA participant who was saving to purchase a home was referred to Southern Good Faith Fund's credit counselor to work on her credit issues. She made an appointment to talk with the credit counselor but failed to follow-up after the first session because she was not prepared to go through the step-by-step procedure of getting her credit straight. After numerous contacts by the credit counselor, the participant stated she was working on the credit by herself. This was in June of 2006.

However, trying to do it alone did not work. During the second quarter of 2007, the participant scheduled another appointment with the credit counselor and this time came prepared to do what it takes to work on her credit. She realized that she needed the help of

a qualified credit counselor if she is going to achieve her dream of home-ownership. She continued to arrive for her appointments on time and with more than everything that she needed to bring in hand.

Our credit counselor helped the participant work out a budget that fit her

needs, determine the total amount of debt she owed, and come up with an amount she can pay each month toward her debt while satisfying her household expenses as well. This participant is well on her way to achieving her dream of home ownership.

Want To Learn More About Your Credit?

Attend one of our upcoming "Understanding Your Credit" workshops. You'll understand the importance of getting and maintaining good credit and learn how to read your credit report, dispute errors, and steps to prevent identity theft. Best of all, it's FREE. To register call:

Pine Bluff

September 13 and November 29
870.535.6233 ext. 13

Helena-West Helena

September 11 and November 27
870.816.1120 or 870.816.1126

Public Policy

Southern Good Faith Fund Asked To Help Design Program To Help Families Save For College

Mike Leach, Director of Southern Good Faith Fund's Public Policy program, has been appointed by Governor Mike Beebe to a committee that will help design a state program to help lower-income Arkansas families save money for college.

Arkansas in its establishment of the Aspiring Scholars Matching Grant Program.

Aspiring Scholars, a key part of Southern Good Faith Fund's 2007 legislative package, is a pilot program designed to encourage and enable

tax-free earnings to pay for allowable college expenses. The investment earnings from 529 savings accounts are not subject to federal or state income taxes.

Aspiring Scholars will provide state funds to match the savings deposits lower-income families make into 529 accounts. The funding source for Aspiring Scholars will be fees the state collects from administration of 529 accounts. Aspiring Scholars represents a key step toward a long-term goal—making college possible for every Arkansan.

Aspiring Scholars represents a key step toward a long-term goal—making college possible for every Arkansan.

Leach on August 3 was appointed by the governor to serve on the Aspiring Scholars Matching Grant Program advisory committee. This three-member committee will advise the state of

lower-income families to participate in Arkansas' 529 college savings plan.

Congress in the mid-1990s authorized 529 college savings plans to enable contributions to a savings account with

savings

WILD ABOUT SAVINGS



SEED Activity

Use the picture hints to help you figure out the answers to the Money in the Bank Quiz. You might even want to ask a grown up to lend a hand. Once you complete the quiz, bring it in to Mindy for a SPECIAL PRIZE!

SEED Event!
 Make plans to attend the next SEED Event
 September 6 at 6 p.m.
 Our theme is "On the Road to College."
 Call Mindy for details at 870.816.1104.

SEED (Saving for Education, Entrepreneurship, and Downpayment) is an initiative that opens a long-term asset-building accounts when a child is 3 or 4 years old. The accounts teach good habits of saving money for the future—a college education. 75 children in Phillips County are enrolled in this test program.

Circle the correct answer and take your completed quiz to Mindy and get a special prize!

Bartering was

- a) when the baker and the shoe-maker would trade bread for shoes.
- b) a circus act
- c) a summer holiday
- d) a special magic ring



Five pennies make

- a) a dollar
- b) a nickel
- c) a jingle
- d) a fortune



Different coins are

- a) all the same size and color
- b) square and red
- c) round and blue
- d) different sizes and colors



A teller is:

- a) a big gossip
- b) the person at the bank who keeps track of your money
- c) the newscaster on the radio
- d) the part of the phone you talk into



There are 2 different kinds of money...

- a) pebbles and twigs
- b) rocks and leaves
- c) coins and paper money
- d) flowers and pictures



A savings account is

- a) where the bank keeps your money
- b) a special kind of piggy bank
- c) a place to put your shoes
- d) a bunch of grapes



Saving for Education, Entrepreneurship, and Downpayment (SEED) is led by nationally renowned partners—CFED, the Center for Social Development, the Initiative on Financial Security of The Aspen Institute, the New America Foundation, the University of Kansas School of Social Welfare, and community partners nationwide.

Employability Certificate – The Job Club

In Helena-West Helena, Career Consultant Deborah Gentry works with students to receive an employability certificate as part of Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas' Job Club. The group meets for five days each month to work on completing applications, looking for jobs, work planning, and more. After completing the five-day course, students work individually in the lab for 10 hours a week on building reading, writing, and language skills, raising their TABE score, or getting their GED. Specific requirements to receive the certificate include:

- 8th grade level or above in reading, math, and language of the level D TABE
- Kuder or Careerscope assessment
- Updated Resume

- Department of Workforce Services Application on File
- Typing 20 Words per Minute
- Basic Computer Literacy Curriculum 85% on post test
- Minimum of 12 hours of job readiness training

For more information contact Deborah Gentry in Helena-West Helena at 870.338.8438.

Impression, continued from page 1

4. **Don't panic.** Everyone gets nervous meeting people for the first time. But if you're prepared, it's easy to get over the nerves. Remember you're in good company; they're trying to make a great first impression on you too.

What's Stopping You?

Step out of your comfort zone and get on the path to a new career! The Career Pathways program at Southern Good Faith Fund will help you every step of the way. Consider a career in:

- Behavioral Health
- Business
- Early Childhood Education
- Education
- EMT/Paramedic
- Industrial Maintenance
- Manufacturing
- Nursing and Allied Health
- Welding

So what's stopping you? Give us a call today!

In Pine Bluff call 870.535.6233 in Helena-West Helena call 870.338.3279

SEARK Calendar

Late Registration	Aug. 23-28
Classes Begin	Aug. 27
Last Day to Add Classes	Aug. 30
Mid-Semester Exams	Oct. 17-23
CAAP Exams	Oct.30- Nov.1
Pre-Registration for 2008 Spring Semester	Nov. 12-15
Final Exams	Dec. 5-11
Graduation	Dec. 14

For more information at Southeast Arkansas College contact Lisa Ponder at 543.5999.

PCCUA Calendar

Late Registration	Aug. 20-22
Classes Begin	Aug. 20
CAAP Exam	Oct. 14
Spring Registration	Nov. 5
Final Exams	Dec. 4-10

Compass Test

PCCUA will administer the COMPASS test free of charge to all first-time students and to all students enrolling in college-level English and mathematics courses.

The test will be given weekly prior to registration, and during the regular registration period, Monday thru Friday 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

For more information contact Zelda Simes at 372.3279.

Transfer Guarantee

PCCUA offers a guarantee that associate of arts courses will transfer to another college or university or they will refund class fees. To take advantage of this guarantee, you must see your advisor two weeks before registration for the semester you want the guaranteed. In Helena-West Helena, call the advisement center at 870.338.6474.

Nursing Assistant Class

Pine Bluff

Oct 30- Dec 22

For more information contact Melissa Young at 870.535.6233 ext. 24.

Working Families Are Reaping the Benefits of ARHealthNet

Big health benefits come in small packages

Already small business owners are singing the praises of ARHealthNet, an affordable health insurance program, and employees are reaping the benefits. Nellie Burnett is just one of them.

After attending the BDC's Woman-to-Woman Mentoring program, Nellie opened Babes in Toyland Day Care at 1120 West 5th Avenue in Pine Bluff. She currently has 50 children and six employees.

"Health insurance is the one thing that our industry cannot offer at an affordable rate to its employees," explains Burnett. "The cost is too high. As a result, it is difficult to retain our employees, and our turnover is extremely high."

"Even as the owner of the business, the private health insurance I carried was extremely expensive. I am very grateful for the staff of Southern Good Faith



that this great benefit will help with retention," says Burnett.

ARHealthNet is a new insurance program that helps qualified small businesses with low-income workers provide an affordable package of health care benefits to their employees. There are several great features of the program as follows:

- No waiting period upon initial enrollment
- Benefits are available regardless of any pre-existing medical conditions
- Seven inpatient days per year
- Two major outpatient services per year, including emergency room and major services performed in the office
- Six physician office visits per year
- Two prescriptions per month
- Maximum annual benefit of \$100,000
- Renewable each 12 months

All types of businesses are eligible if the business has between 2 and 500 employees and has not provided health insurance in the past year.

Call one of the participating agents today and get your business enrolled or visit www.ARHealthNet.com for an agent in your area.

For me especially, this program is great because it provides affordable coverage for medication I take. My plan is to offer ARHealthNet to my employees as I hire them with the hope that this great benefit will help with retention

—Nellie Burnett

Fund's Business Development Center for emphasizing that I check in with the ARHealthNet health insurance program. It is extremely affordable and one of my staff and myself are now enrolled. For me especially, this program is great because it provides affordable coverage for medication I take. Also, the documentation required is very little which makes it easy to enroll. My plan is to offer ARHealthNet to my employees as I hire them with the hope

Pine Bluff

Buster Crook
William H. Crook Insurance
& Financial Services
Pine Bluff 870.534.5200

Sharen Lightsey
Numbers 2 Numbers
Pine Bluff 870.536.4464

Mack Milner
Milner Insurance
Pine Bluff 870.534.2823

Helena-West Helena

Scooter Gabbie
Farm Bureau
Helena-West Helena
870.572.4099

Bev Hargraves
Hargraves Insurance Agency
Helena-West Helena
870.338.3425

Marianna

Stephanie Foreman
Foreman Benefits Plus
Marianna 870.295.2633

West Memphis

Jason Owens
West Memphis 870.739.4436

Richard Reid
West Memphis 870.733.9999

Tress Spurlock
West Memphis 870.739.4436

Forrest City

Frank Adams
Forrest City 870.633.4112

William Baxter
Forrest City 870.633.4112

Ronnie Killingsworth
Forrest City 870.633.4112

Ellis Mills
Forrest City 870.633.4112

The ARHealthNet health insurance program is a partnership with the federal government, the state government, and private businesses to offer health benefits to uninsured workers.

BDC is partially funded by the U.S. Small Business Administration's Office of Women's Business Ownership (OWBO) under Cooperative Agreement Number (SBAHQ-04-W-0032). The Office of Women's Business Ownership is established to help women become full partners in economic development through small business ownership. The Women's Business Ownership homepage is: www.wbconline.gov. BDC is a public-private partnership of the U.S. Small Business Administration and Southern Good Faith Fund, a non-profit affiliate of Southern Bancorp. SBA's cooperation does not constitute or imply its endorsement of any opinions, products, and/or services. Reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities will be made if requested at least two weeks in advance. Contact Miriam Karanja, 2304 W. 29th Ave., Pine Bluff, AR 71603 or call 870.535.6233. All SBA programs provided on a nondiscriminatory basis.

How Did You Hear About Us?

By Kevin Stirtz

*Kevin Stirtz is "The Smart Marketing Guy." He helps people get more customers without spending a fortune. Get a free copy of his book **MARKETING FOR SMART PEOPLE** at www.StirtzGroup.com.*

One of the best things you can do for your business is to ask new customers how they found out about you. If you make decisions about how to promote your business, then obviously you want to know how your customers find out about your business.

In the meantime, here are some tips to make your local marketing work better and to help you monitor it.

1. Establish a budget and commit to it. Consider this as important as your rent or payroll. Don't make it a low priority unless your revenue and profitability are low priorities.
2. Decide what you want to say and whom you want to say it to. Keep the message simple, clear, and concise.
3. Decide if you want to increase awareness for your brand or if you want a direct response. These are two DIFFERENT goals and they require different tools and strategies.
4. Remember your goal is EXPOSURE. You want to expose your market to your message as often as you can within your established budget. So spend your marketing dollars to buy this exposure as effectively as you can.
5. Stick to it for a reasonable amount of time. Don't quit after a couple months. Give it time to work.
6. Get feedback from customers, friends, business associates, employees. Try to find out WHO is seeing your message and HOW they are

seeing it. Always be willing to tweak and tune it as you go, based on feedback.

7. Watch your revenue and your new customer activity. Does it go up or down as you implement this marketing?

Remember, the key to getting more customers is to let more people know

who you are, what you can do for them and why they should consider doing business with you. Focus your resources on making sure your potential customers know you and remember you. Then they will consider doing business with you.

Upcoming Training At The Business Development Center

Get the complete schedule on our Web site at www.southernngff.org

First Step™ FastTrac® How to Start a Successful Small Business

Training starts September 6 in Pine Bluff and Forrest City

How to Start a Small Business

September 14, October 12, November 9, and December 4 in Pine Bluff

Understanding Your Credit

September 13 and November 29 in Pine Bluff and September 11 and November 27 in Helena-West Helena

Child Care Licensing Requirements Workshop

September 27, October 25, and November 15 in Pine Bluff and monthly in Forrest City. Call Pat Scott at 870.816.1120 for dates and details

Developing and Enforcing Child Care Policies and Procedures

October 17 in Pine Bluff

It's All About Me (Back by popular demand!)

November 1 in Pine Bluff

How to Obtain a Small Business Loan

October 25 in West Memphis and November 28 in Pine Bluff

Budgeting & Money Management

October 29 in Helena-West Helena

Understanding Small Business Taxes

December 4 in Helena-West Helena

Computer Training

October 11, 18, 25, and November 1 in Helena-West Helena

To learn more about these classes and others, give us a call at 870.535.6233 or visit our Web site at www.southernngff.org.

Special
Discounts
for IDA
Participants!

It's Never Too Late

It's never too late to do something that will change your life. Consider:

- **Go to college**
- **Pursue a new career**
- **Save money**
- **Start a business**
- **Take a workshop to improve your skills**
- **Buy a home**

Southern Good Faith Fund can help you with any of these. Give us a call today!

Offices

Pine Bluff

Asset Builders
Business Development Center
Career Pathways

2304 W. 29th Avenue
Pine Bluff, AR 71603
870.535.6233

Helena-West Helena

Asset Builders
502 Cherry Street
Helena-West Helena, AR 72342
870.816.1104

Business Development Center
502 Cherry Street
Helena-West Helena, AR 72342
870.816.1120

Career Pathways
P.O. Box 514
1000 Campus Dr., T & I Building
Helena-West Helena, AR 72342
870.338.3279

Little Rock

Public Policy
1400 W. Markham, Suite 400
Little Rock, AR 72201
501.661.0322

Web Site

For more information
please visit us at:
<http://www.southernngff.org>



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Pine Bluff, AR 71603

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