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CEDC Announces Investments in Expanding County Businesses

Hudson, NY – The Columbia Economic Development Corporation (CEDC) today announced approval of financial support for two expanding county businesses through the organization’s MicroLoan Program.

“As the economy struggles to recover, supporting existing businesses as they diversify and expand, or enabling them to remain here, is more important than ever,” stated CEDC Executive Director Kenneth J. Flood.

“Through our business retention and expansion programs, CEDC ensures that the needs of local businesses are being heard, and that we are doing everything possible to assist. These efforts help improve the business climate, help to make local businesses remain competitive, increase employment and help stabilize the county’s economy.”

CEDC approved SBA MicroLoans for: Dirtworx of Germantown (\$35,000) and McDaris Fine Art of Hudson (\$15,000). The MicroLoan Program, funded through the U.S. Small Business Administration, provides loans of up to \$35,000 to qualified start-up and existing businesses. Funds may be used for working capital, or to purchase equipment, inventory, supplies or furniture.

About the Companies

Dirtworx is a sole proprietorship owned and operated by Al Schulze of Germantown. In operation since 2009, This successful lawn and landscape business is expanding with the purchase of a tri-axle dump truck which will run full-time to service local contractors and commercial businesses. Al Schulze is a U.S. Marine Corp. veteran, having served in Desert Storm from 1988 to 1992.

McDaris Fine Art, located on the corner of 7th and Warren Street in the City of Hudson, owner Wendy McDaris is expanding her fine art gallery to include home furnishings and lighting. Called *Art at Home*, this business concept allows art to be viewed in a home setting, with furniture and lighting that mimic a residence. The furniture is the work of Jackie Thomas, a well-known businessman in Hudson, and the lighting is designed and manufactured by Lou Blass, well-known among interior designers internationally.

According to Martha Lane of CEDC, “Wendy McDaris and Al Schulze each had accumulated a wealth of experience in their fields before venturing out on their own. In the case of McDaris Fine Art, the owner worked and taught in the arts her entire life. In addition, she completed the MicroBusiness Seminar and developed a business plan before applying for a loan. With Dirtworx, Al Schulze had been running a small lawn and landscape business for several years before moving into the trucking business. His experience operating a small business convinced him, and CEDC’s loan committee, that he could be successful on a larger scale.”

“Working with CEDC has proven to be more than just financial assistance I really feel that they partnered with me to help my company grow and succeed,” stated Al Schulze.

Wendy McDaris added, “Because I took advantage of the MicroBusiness Seminar organized by Martha Lane at CEDC, I've gained invaluable knowledge about current business practices. In consultation with Brian Zweig, one of the course instructors, I was able to put together a viable business plan based on an innovative new model for my gallery. This new plan was essential in obtaining financial assistance to effect new developments. Many, many thanks, CEDC!!!”

About Columbia Economic Development Corporation

Columbia Economic Development Corporation (CEDC) is the lead economic development organization for Columbia County, New York. Our mission is to strengthen the area’s tax base through economic development and job creation, to assist businesses locate and expand within the County, and to promote Columbia County as a premier spot to live and work.

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