

Chamber breakfast moved to Jan. 17 **Put on your thinking caps - topic is: “How can we improve Bluffton?”**

Due to the unpredictable weather this week the Bluffton Area Chamber of Commerce moved its Jan. 10 breakfast to Friday, Jan. 17.

We have an important program this month and we hope as many members can attend as possible. Our program's focus is “How can we improve Bluffton?”

Here's how it works:

We have several announcements and introductions to make. Once we get into the program portion of the meeting we will split into smaller groups. Each group will tackle these questions, and eventually will report back to the larger group.

- *What can we do to attract more shopper downtown/and what can we do to make Bluffton a “destination?”*
- *What is Bluffton missing?*
- *What's the greatest community need that the chamber can assist in?*
- *What additional benefits should the chamber provide for its members?*

These topics may be refined by Jan. 17, but you get the idea.

We invite members to submit additional questions to address, or to phrase the above questions in a more defined manner. Send suggestions to: blufftonchamber@gmail.com.

Additional meeting information will be sent next week. We will start collection RSVPs later this week.

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**Application information for the 2014 Bluffton Center for Entrepreneur's
2014 Ropp Triplett Business Plan Competition -**

- First prize \$5,000 in business start-up costs and 1-year BCE client program membership
- Second prize \$1,000 in business start-up costs and 1-year BCE client program membership
- Third prize 1-year BCE client program membership

Please pass this information along to persons in the community who may be interested in entering this competition

\$5,000 will go to winner of BCE Ropp Triplett Business Plan Competition

Bluffton Center for Entrepreneurs has announced prize money and seminar dates its Ropp Triplett Business Plan Competition.

First place prize is \$5,000 in business start-up costs and a one-year BCE client program membership. Second place is \$1,000 in start-up costs and a one-year BCE client program membership. Third place is a one-year BCE client program membership.

This is BCE's fifth business plan competition and it recognizes the late Ropp Triplett, long-time Bluffton industrial leader and entrepreneur.

"The contest is open to start-up businesses and emerging businesses that are less than three years old. The competition teaches entrepreneurs to write a business plan that will help them improve their existing business or to successfully start a new one," said Brendon Matthews, BCE board president.

The competition will be explained in greater detail at the Jan. 17 Bluffton Area Chamber of Commerce breakfast.

Kathy Keller, director, Small Business Development Center (SBDC), Lima, instructs all seminars. Each takes place at Bluffton University from 6 to 8 p.m. on the following evenings:

Jan. 16: "Launch Your Business Right (free)
Jan. 23: "So You Want to be an Entrepreneur" (fees and applications are due)
Jan. 30: "Planning to Start a Business"
Feb. 6: "Developing Your Business Idea"
Feb. 13: "Testing Your Business Idea and Getting it to Market"
Feb. 20: "Accounting for Your Business"
Feb. 27: "Financing Your Business"
March 13: "Final Pitch Dress Rehearsal (business plan due)
March 15: Final pitches

To enter the competition, contestants must complete an entry form and submit a \$150 application fee. The fee for college student to enter is \$75. The deadline to enter the contest is Thursday, Jan. 23.

For a copy of the entry form and additional information contact BCE at 419-369-2985 or e-mail blufftonchamber@gmail.com. Material is also available at www.blufftonentrepreneurs.com.

About BCE

The Bluffton Center for Entrepreneurs is a not-for-profit business incubator offering support services and professional guidance to entrepreneurs and small businesses in Allen, Hancock, Hardin and Putnam counties.

2014 Ropp Triplett Business Plan Competition

Application information

CONTACT:

Fred Steiner, 419-369-2985
blufftonchamber@gmail.com
154 N. Main St., Bluffton, OH 45817 (Bluffton town hall)

The Bluffton Center For Entrepreneurs (BCE)

is a not-for-profit business support center offering professional assistance and customized programs to entrepreneurs and small businesses in Allen, Hancock, Hardin and Putnam counties.

The BCE 2014 Ropp Triplett Business Plan Competition

is open to startups and emerging businesses in our four county area.

Grand Prize \$5,000 in startup costs

1-year BCE client program membership

Second Prize \$1,000 in start up costs

1– year BCE client program membership

Third Prize 1-year BCE client program membership

Major competition sponsors will be announced soon.

R.S.V.P. & APPLICATIONS ARE NECESSARY

Competition Goals:

- Spur local entrepreneurs to put their ideas into action
- Teach participants to write a business plan that will help start a new business or improve an existing one
- Give financial support to three new businesses
- Create new jobs in northwest Ohio

BCE Mission Statement

The Bluffton Center for Entrepreneurs is a not-for-profit business support center offering professional assistance to entrepreneurs and small business in Allen, Hancock, Hardin and Putnam counties. BCE clients receive customized mentoring, make more connections with the business community, and gain valuable resources, including affordable office space, access to Bluffton University interns and work groups and promotion as BCE clients.

Enrollment

Contest participation includes enrollment in a seven-session course designed to help you create a complete business plan suitable for presentation to lenders or investors. Participation at all seven seminars is strongly recommended, but not required for entry to the competition.

Rules and Regulations

- 1) Only start-up (not yet operational) and emerging businesses (less than three years old) may apply. Award winners from the BCE 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 Business Plan Competition may not apply.
- 2) Residency Requirement: existing business location, or start-up company's intended location, must be in one of the following four counties Allen, Hancock, Hardin, and Putnam.
- 3) Your business concept must be original work that you are able to fully disclose to the judges.
- 4) Your business plan must disclose how you will use the award to launch or grow your business. The prize money will be disbursed as reimbursements for legitimate business expenses or as payments of the business's vendor invoices.
- 5) The completed entry form with an attached overview of your concept and check for \$150.00 (payable to BCE), or \$75 for students, must be submitted to the BCE office or postmarked by Thursday, Jan. 23, 2014.
- 6) Three copies of completed business plan must be received by the BCE staff on or before Wednesday, March 12, 2014.

Judging Criteria

- 1) Projected returns on investment (25%)
- 2) Degree and sustainability of competitive advantage (25%)
- 3) Problem and appropriateness of the proposed solution (20%)
- 4) Pricing justification (15%)
- 5) Overall market size and likely share (10%)
- 6) Strength of the management team (5%)

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Will there be a confidentiality agreement?

A: No. The nature of the competition and involvement of staff, reviewers, judges, and other participants prevents BCE from guaranteeing confidentiality. However, we will limit distribution of the final business plans to judges and the BCE Executive Director.

Q: Are there restrictions on the type of business or service I provide?

A: No. We will accept business plans in any legal business category.

Bluffton Area Chamber of Commerce Board:

Larry Hoffman, president; Tammy Whitlow secretary, Aphaphanh Nussbaum, Adam Stedke, Jamie Mehaffie, Derek Dukes, Mark Alliman, Bob Inniger, Doug Luginbill, Sally Siferd, Branden Fortman, Phil Zimmerly. Fred Steiner, CEO.

Bluffton Area Chamber of Commerce, PO Box 142, Bluffton, OH 45817;
blufftonchamber@gmail.com; Phone: 419-369-2985 www.explorebluffton.com

PLEASE SHARE THIS WITH SOMEONE WHO IS NOT CURRENT A CHAMBER MEMBER



2014 Bluffton Area Chamber of Commerce membership form

Company name:

Contact person:

Address:

Phone:

Website:

E-mail:

(Please provide names and e-mail addresses of as many employees or organization members on the back of this form. They will receive our chamber newsletters.)

Make checks payable to:

Bluffton Area Chamber of Commerce, PO 142, Bluffton, OH 45817

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|--|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual membership | \$50 |
| <i>(Anyone person interested in our community may become a chamber member)</i> | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sole proprietor or club/organization | \$50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business with 1 to 10 employees | \$80 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business with 11 to 20 employees | \$120 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business with 21 or more employees | \$235 |

Additional option:

- Voluntary support of Promote Bluffton Fund \$ _____

Used for media advertising and marketing of Bluffton events not covered in the chamber's budget. Supporters are recognized during chamber breakfasts.

- Your Bluffton chamber membership covers a 12-month period from the date you become a new member.
- Your Bluffton chamber membership may be tax deductible as a business expense, but not as a charitable expense.