

CBI NEWS

The
Center
for
Business
and
Industry



UNIVERSAL COMPANIES THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIP

Every business card at Universal Companies has "Experience the Power of Partnership" printed on the back. Marti Morenings never says, "I did." She says, "We did." In a culture sometimes characterized by corporate greed and executive arrogance, Marti exhibits a new model for CEOs—modesty and generosity. The latest success that she attributes to partnering is the completion of a new \$5 million corporate headquarters, training facility and state-of-the-art distribution center in Washington County's Oak Park.

Starting as an entrepreneur 22 years ago, Marti explains that she took some hard knocks trying to do things on her own. "I quickly learned to build win-win relationships." Marti is CEO of Universal Companies, Inc., the leading international distributor of equipment, products, and supplies to the spa and skincare industry. When developing products and marketing materials, Marti always tries to envision what will make her customers more successful as small business owners. "We serve thousands of entrepreneurs just like us. We understand what will help them with their business success."

"The results of a customer survey two years ago helped us recognize that it is the combining force of synergy created among our vendors, customers and associates that has pushed this company forward," Marti explains. "We look for quality and innovations in our vendors. We are a distribution center, so vendors are critical for our success. We have incentives for our finance department to pay vendors on time."

Gary McConnell, former Universal board member who is now the company's President, described the ultimate vendor experience training program. Twenty vendors were invited to attend the Open House for the company's new facility in September. On the second day, the staff provided an overview of the company, its values, model benefits and Human Resources policies, and had the vendors meet department heads. The sessions were held in a suite at the Bristol Motor Speedway. As the day ended, Gary asked the vendors if they would like to ride in a race car. He had contracted



Marti Morenings and Gary McConnell

with a driving school to take the vendor representatives for a ride with a professional driver. But, not just ride. They were actually given the opportunity to drive a race car under the lights at Bristol—and take home an in-car video to document the experience. The ride was memorable, but the total of the experience was not about the driving, Gary explains. "It is about making them part of the organization." As a result, one vendor made a commitment for Universal to carry its products exclusively. Another asked for details about the company's benefits plan. He wanted to offer the same benefits to his own employees.

Universal employees are considered associates. The company offers them above average wages, a pleasant working environment and career opportunities. Marti explains, "We expect a lot. They have to believe they are part of the partnership with vendors and customers. We treat associates the way we want them to treat customers."

Planning for the new facility began in early 2000. Jim Tilley, Director of the Virginia Highlands Small Business Development Center, reviewed the company's business plan, analyzed financial projections and endorsed the company's loan applications to purchase the 13.5 acres adjacent to the former Westinghouse plant in Oak Park.

Continued on next page

We're on the web:
www.vhcc.edu/cbi

Brenda Legge, *Director*,
(276) 739-2417

Melinda Leland, *Workforce
Development Coordinator*,
(276) 739-2548

Vota Thomas, *Administrative
Assistant*, (276) 739-2430

Jimmy Bowman, *Instructional
Information Technologist*,
(276) 739-2497

Kelley Hale, *Educational
Support Specialist*,
(276) 739-2533

Contact the Center for
Business and Industry at
Virginia Highlands
Community College for
customized training.

276-739-2548

Universal Company continued

One of the first obstacles encountered was the inadequacy of the water pressure to meet fire suppression standards for the warehouse. Russell Owens, Chairman of the Washington County Industrial Development Authority, states, "The story here is the cooperation among all the elements needed to bring this project together." With the support of Christy Parker, Assistant County Administrator, a proposal was submitted to the Virginia Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission. The Commission approved a \$582,980 Economic Development Grant for a Fire Suppression System at Oak Park. Additional financing was structured through the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, the Governor's Opportunity Funds, and the Washington County Board of Supervisors. The outcomes for the county will be the creation of new jobs as the company continues to expand and the growth of the tax base. "The improvements to Oak Park and the model facility built by Universal will be a real catalyst to bring other prospects to the area," explains Russell.

The Workforce Services Division of the Virginia Department of Business Assistance has played a key role in the hiring and training of new employees and the upgrading of skills for current employees. The new design layout of the warehouse and the new technology for phones and computers required that warehouse and information technology employees be retrained. The sales force was also retrained for internet sales and to educate them about new product lines.

The company has coordinated recruitment through the Virginia Employment Commission and has targeted the hiring of some low income residents through a program with the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission, according to Dedra Helbert, Director of Human Resources. Shannon Blevins, Project Manager with Workforce Services, designed and delivered training programs for interviewing and selection, *FISH!* philosophy of customer service, and a Train the Trainer program for manufacturing and customer service associates. The department is also producing a video that will be used for employee training and for information sharing with vendors and customers.

The lobby of the new Universal Companies facility transforms the industrial park into the tranquil ambiance of a resort spa. The spacious lobby, soft lighting, architectural drawings of the Roman baths, original artwork based on those drawings, and the rippling of the water fountain alert a visitor that this is not an ordinary business. The training area is fully equipped as a spa with equipment and products for instructing customers from all over the country. Universal's move to the new facility will foster growth in sales and in education and consulting services, powered by partnerships.

LEARN IT ONLINE: CBI PARTNERS WITH ELEMENT K

In an effort to bring more training opportunities to you, the Center for Business & Industry at Virginia Highlands Community College has partnered with Element K® to bring you an alternative to classroom learning; it's called e-learning. Element K's Learn it Online Program is an e-learning solution featuring online courses in many technical areas:

- **Desktop Applications:**
Word, Excel, Access, PowerPoint, Outlook
- **Web Design and Media:**
Dreamweaver, Photoshop, Director, After Effects, Flash
- **Project Management:**
Microsoft Projects, Project Cost Management, Project Time Management
- **Programming and Web Development:**
Oracle, XML, Java, C++, SQL
- **Network and Operating Systems:**
A+, Network+, Windows 2000, and Windows NT, Exchange Server, Linux, i-Net+
- **Project Management:**
Microsoft Projects, Project Cost Management, Project Time Management
- **Workplace Safety Courses:**
Confined Spaces, Environmental Management, Industrial Ergonomics, Sexual Harassment, Violence in the Workplace and more
- **Business Management Skills:**
Leadership Basics, Delegating, Effective Communications, Motivating Employees, Conflict Resolution and more



Do you have one or two employees that need some advanced computer training?

Try Online learning!



Do you have a new supervisor that needs some training in how to motivate employees?

Try Online learning!

To see what is available, visit the CBI web-site, www.vhcc.edu/cbi and then click on "Learn It Online".

NEW TECHNOLOGY ALLOWS VHCC STUDENTS TO ENROLL ONLINE

Students at Virginia Highlands Community College may now register for classes, pay tuition, obtain a transcript, and receive grades via the Internet thanks to new state-of-the-art technology. Payment by MasterCard or Visa can be made on the Web (<http://www.vhcc.edu/myvhcc>) at the time of enrollment. The new PeopleSoft student information system is accessible on any computer equipped with an Internet connection. All 23 member colleges of the Virginia Community College System are adopting the new student information system.

If you have questions regarding on-line enrollment, go to MyVHCC at www.vhcc.edu and review the tutorial (Student Resources, then tutorial) or click on the help button and send a message.

MEET OUR FACUTLY

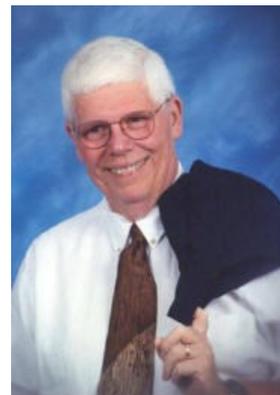
It is a pleasure to introduce another of our Center for Business and Industry adjunct faculty members, **Dr. Garland D. Wiggs** of Wytheville, VA. "Dr. Gar" also serves as an Adjunct Professor Of Management And Marketing in the College of Business & Economics of Radford University.

Prior to moving to the New River Valley in 1992, **Dr. Gar** served as CEO and Principal Consultant of **Association Educational Services, Inc.**, a training and consulting firm located in Falls Church, VA. His clients include numerous national and regional professional and trade associations representing fiduciary, manufacturing, health care, construction, printing industries, and governmental agencies throughout the USA.

During his long and distinguished professional career, **Dr. Gar** designed and conducted more than 150 one and two day continuing professional education workshops and seminars for supervisors and managers, training officers and human resources development specialists in banking, manufacturing, engineering, health care and other subject-matter experts at: **George Washington University, Southern Methodist University, San Jose State University, University of Maryland, University of Cincinnati, Temple University, University of Pittsburgh, University of Houston, Pacific Lutheran University, University of Denver, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, University of Connecticut, New Hampshire College in San Juan, PR and the Business Assistance Center of Radford University** in addition to a wide variety of business and government organizational clients.

Recently, Dr. Gar designed and conducted with **Keith Thompson** of the Manufacturing Technology Center at Wytheville Community College, a two-day Employee Involvement Council Seminar for EI Council members and a one-day Employee Involvement Skills Training Workshop for team members. He has also recently conducted a Training of Trainers Refresher Seminar for first-line supervisors as a follow-up to his two-day Training of Trainers workshop for the same participants in early 2002 and designed and conducted two-1/2-day Performance Appraisal Workshops for 20 supervisors and managers.

Dr. Gar's areas of special expertise and professional interests include: strategic planning, quality awareness in manufacturing and retail services, technical training design, documentation, course/program evaluations, human resources management and supervisory leadership skills training.



Dr. Garland Wiggs

KROLL WINS NATIONAL AWARD

Jim Kroll was named the 2003 winner of the prestigious Emerson Climate Technologies Award by the Refrigeration Service Engineers Society at their annual conference in Nashville on October 2. Jim is an instructor of VHCCs nationally recognized Air Conditioning, Refrigeration, and Heating program.

The award is presented each year to a vocational instructor or school for providing exceptional high quality programs during the past year. Additional points are given to those instructors who produce graduates who are in high demand, who have a good rapport with students, and who stay up to date by attending seminars provided by factories, universities and others who specialize in the field. Additional information about the HVAC program may be found at <http://www.vhcc.edu/setdiv/Faculty/jkroll2.htm>.

GOVERNOR'S INITIATIVES

Governor Mark Warner has announced three initiatives toward creating a better, more coordinated workforce development system: Career Readiness Certificate, Race to GED, and Streamline Workforce Services. Review his proposals at www.governor.virginia.gov/Initiatives/Ed4Life/WorkforceDev.htm.

SBDC NETWORK

The Virginia Small Business Development Center (SBDC) network has 28 centers across Virginia. The SBDCs provide professional business counseling, training and information resources to help strengthen small businesses. The professional staff help with business planning, marketing, financial analysis, access to capital, business start-up and other specialized services as requested. Additional information is available at www.virginiasbdc.org or by calling the VHSBDC at 276 739-2474. The local center is located in the Instructional building on the campus of Virginia Highlands Community College.

VIRGINIA HIGHLANDS SMALL BUSINESS INCUBATOR

After six years in the planning process, the Ground-Breaking Ceremony for the new, 40,000 square-foot business incubator facility was held on October 24. This economic development initiative is a joint venture of the Town of Abingdon, City of Bristol, and County of Washington, and is operated by the Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator, Inc., a Virginia 501(c)(3) corporation.

Located in the Stone Mill Business and Technology Park adjacent to the Virginia Highlands Community College campus, this facility has space for up to thirty-seven new and growing technology, manufacturing and service businesses. Amenities offered to the tenants include full fiber-optic telecommunications and Internet capability, conference and meeting rooms, and use of a variety of shared office and audio-visual equipment.

The most important service offered to resident businesses is access to business advisory and mentoring services provided by the professional incubator staff, the Virginia Highlands Small Business Development Center (SBDC), and volunteers from our local business and professional community. Most businesses will remain in this facility for only two or three years, at which time they will have achieved the financial stability and level of business competency to become independent contributors to our economy.

The facility will be open for occupancy in September 2004, but will begin taking applications during the summer. Businesses interested in locating here will be required to submit a business plan and evidence of adequate financing along with the application. For more information contact the Virginia Highlands SBDC at 276-739-2559.

CREATING THE FUTURE

Futurist Ed Barlow predicts that skills will become obsolete in three years in some technology occupations. Human knowledge is expected to be doubling every year by the year 2012. How can an organization keep up with the rate of change? Barlow recommends that managers conduct a quarterly review of the external environment and scan globally. Read three newspapers daily: USA Today, Wall Street Journal, and Financial Times of London. Review www.ceoexpress.com daily. Barlow's organization, Creating the Future, offers consulting and training services. For more information visit www.creatingthefuture.com.

TRAINING AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

Our portable computer lab allows us to customize computer training on-site.

Call 276-739-2548 for more information!



Managing Difficult Employees, Collecting Accounts Receivable, Human Resource Certification Exam Preparation all offered in the Spring of 2004. Check out the training guide or web site (www.vhcc.edu/cbi) for class dates and registration information.

*Contact
the
Center for
Business
and
Industry
for class
information
or
visit our web site
at
www.vhcc.edu/cbi.*