

Graphic Design Business Wins EDGE's Best Business Plan

LINCOLN, Neb. -- Robin Waters of North Platte is the 1998 Nebraska EDGE Coalition Best Business Plan competition winner.

The University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension program helps Nebraska residents develop or expand small businesses, and it can help people in managerial positions manage a business better.

Water, owner of Graphics Arts Unlimited, said she had never owned a business before, but the EDGE program gave her some much-needed training.

"It was the best course for people to take. It helped me with all aspects of my business," Waters said.

The 40-hour EDGE course offers practical guidance in entrepreneurial skills, including preparing financial statements, designing marketing plans and developing business plans, said Marilyn Schlake, program coordinator of NU's Center for Rural Community Revitalization and Development.

Graphics Arts Unlimited designs logos, brochures, posters, business cards and other things, Waters said.

Waters said she worked in the graphics arts business for 10 years before starting her own business in May 1997.

"The EDGE program taught me how to do bookkeeping, how to organize myself better and made me more aware of how to run a business," Waters said.

Denise Marshall of Brule has been the office manager at Fraser Welding, LLC, for 1 1/2 years, and she is starting her own art business, Faces of the Prairie, out of her home. She placed second in the competition.

Fraser Welding in Brule manufactures truck beds and flat beds for pickups. It also fabricates special products, has a large line of truck and trailer accessories and parts, and does various welding repairs. Owner is Calvin Fraser.

Marshall said the EDGE program helped her with accounting, advertising and other business functions.

"They teach you how to find your target market," Marshall said. "Even if you've been in business for 10 years, there is always something to make it more efficient."

Marsha Fuchs, owner of The Friend-Ship Christian Preschool in Ainsworth, was the third-place winner. The preschool enrolls children ages 3-6 years old during the school year.

"I gained a lot from meeting other business people and exchanging ideas. The program also helped me be more efficient," she said. "I am really excited to receive this award. I would encourage others to take (the program)."

Fuchs said since taking the course she has looked into the marketing of her business, added some features to improve customer service and added a new software program for record keeping and accounting.

More than 900 entrepreneurs have participated in EDGE since it began in 1993 as the Nebraska Fast Trac Program. In 1996, the program upgraded and is now called the Nebraska EDGE (Enhancing, Developing and Growing Entrepreneurs).

The US WEST Foundation and the Western Entrepreneurial Network at the University of Colorado-Denver provided \$1,000 for the awards.

Funding for EDGE comes from the US WEST Foundation and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development program, the Nebraska Microenterprise Partnership Fund, the Nebraska Department of Economic Development and NU Cooperative Extension in NU's Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

For more information about 1999 courses, call a local extension office or Marilyn Schlake at (402) 472-4138.

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