

Brule Businesswoman Wins NU Entrepreneurship Award

Lincoln - To Lisa Wilson of Brule one of the keys to a successful business is to develop and follow a plan. Wilson's pursuit of the conviction in her accounting business made her the winner of the 2002 Nebraska EDGE Best Business Plan Contest.

The University of Nebraska EDGE (Enhancing, Developing and Growing Entrepreneurs) Program helps communities expand through the creation of small businesses by offering training to entrepreneurs across the state, said Marilyn Schlake, Nebraska EDGE Program Coordinator.

Lisa Wilson is a two-class veteran. In 2001, she participated in "Tilling the Soil of Opportunity," the program designed for agricultural entrepreneurs who are planning to or have just started a business. It was the NxLevel Entrepreneur Training class that she took later in Ogallala where she developed her award-winning business plan for Professional Solutions, which does accounting, consultations, and tax preparation for individuals and small businesses.

"The idea of starting my business grew out of the demands I found on the market," Wilson said. "But I also like helping people to improve their daily procedures." The 12-week training session helped Wilson put her visions into a working plan as Professional Solutions became a home-based, one-person operation.

"Through the training I learned how to manage my schedule and develop credibility while working from home," Wilson said.

Course work includes hands-on training and lectures by instructors and guest speakers.

"Contributions of all the participants greatly enhance the learning process, especially when you listen to people with businesses already operating," Wilson said.

She also appreciated the safe and confidential environment.

"We practice the code of non-disclosure in order not to jeopardize the participants' current employment if they plan to originate their own business," Schlake admitted.

Since completing the EDGE workshops, Wilson has gotten involved in coalitions of businesses, organizations and institutions working on small business development. She also became an assistant for EDGE classes because she loves to "assist people in getting on their feet and learning the trade, especially when they are confused where they are in their business."

Wilson strongly recommends taking the course. "There are a lot of resources for people running small businesses. It's just a matter of finding them and asking for help."

Contest judges assessed all the business plan segments, including marketing plan, management structure and risk management as well as financial statements.

Other Nebraska Best Business Plan winner include:

Second place - Ralph and Ginger Hampton, Hampton Welding Services welding and metal shop, Hyannis.

Third place - Bernie and Sharon Deaver, Deaver Computer Service computer shop and services, Grant.

The 2001 first place award winners were Grant Schramm, Christopher Krull and Brian Merz, who submitted their business plan for a start-up business, Mid-Plains Physical Therapy and Sports Center. The center opened in August 2001.

The Nebraska EDGE Program began in 1993 and has assisted about 1,700 individuals. The program offers 10 to 12 courses per year across the state.

EDGE is a part of NU's Center for Applied Rural Innovation, a unit of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources.