

**EDG Bulletin Column**  
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**Entrepreneurial Success Stories**

Entrepreneurs continue to try out their business ideas in Nanaimo and create and circulate wealth in the community, while sharing the Nanaimo Economic Development Group's vision of a healthy, diversified economy. To help their business succeed, many have accessed the resources available to them, such as Ethos Career Management's Business Works Self-Employment program.

This program is available to unemployed persons who are eligible to receive employment insurance benefits. To be entered into the program the client must have a viable business idea, which means they have found a need in the community and are able to fill it. Once admitted into the program, clients receive financial assistance, business training, advice and support at no cost for up to one year.

Len Winter, a business coach for the program, currently has several dedicated clients who are enjoying their new business venture, even though it may not be immediately profitable. According to Winter, it is imperative that the client be optimistic and persistent. "They need to continue to go out every day and offer their product or service to the marketplace, even if they hear 'no' more than once," he says. "They cannot get discouraged." To ensure they are on the right track, clients are assigned a business coach throughout the program, and must present their business plan to a volunteer adjudication committee to move on to each subsequent stage.

Barbara Anne Davie is currently in the Business Works program, and is excited for the future of her business, Sole Comfort Reflexology. She has been a teacher for the past ten years and has always loved learning and new challenges, and so took the leap to self-employment. She has received much support in the program and has especially benefited from the vast experience offered through the network of entrepreneurs who volunteer their time and expertise. She has also enjoyed the workshops offered, including those on branding/advertising, public speaking, and bookkeeping.

When asked what is the key to her success, Davie answered "networking" without hesitation. She is a member of the Nanaimo Women's Business Network and attends various other networking events in the community. "This is much more effective than cold calls," she says. "Relationships are key in business, and networking brings partnership opportunities, referrals and support." In fact, her business partnerships to date have been a result of her tireless networking efforts. She now operates out of Northridge Fitness and Spa on Fridays, and also offers an 'Oasis in the Workplace Program' for two major local employers.

Davie's business idea was accepted into the program because she did find a need in the community and was able to fill it with her existing skill set. With a projected labour force shortage, many businesses have created wellness initiatives to attract and retain employees. By bringing reflexology appointments into Nanaimo workplaces, she has capitalized on this trend.

For more information about the Business Works self-employment program, and other employment resources, contact Supporting Employment Transitions (SET) at 250-714-0085. Our talented and dedicated entrepreneurs help maintain Nanaimo as one of the most desirable, livable small cities in North America.