

Press Release

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BCCC helps Belhaven man “create his own job”

Belhaven resident Donald Collins was ready for a change.

The Hyde County native had worked for many years in the marine construction business along the North Carolina coast.

But after moving to Belhaven, he wanted to take another career track. That’s when he met Julian Goff, a member of the Beaufort County Community College Board of Trustees.

Goff believed that for some time Belhaven needed a business dedicated to repairing lawn mowers, weed eaters, chain saws and other small engines. If the community could attract such a business, its residents and those who lived in neighboring Hyde County would not have to make the long drive to Washington to get those repairs done, Goff thought.

After meeting Collins, Goff thought he would be perfect for the job and encouraged him to take small engine repair classes offered through BCCC’s Division of Continuing Education.

Collins had a background in automobile repairs and said he found the transition to small engine repair easy – learning from his instructor, Tom Rogers, and his fellow students.

Once he obtained the needed repair skills, his next step was to open a business.

For that help, he turned to BCCC’s Small Business Center and its director, Lentz Stowe. Stowe helped Collins enroll in the center’s Entrepreneurial Core Curriculum of classes – covering subjects that range from small business financing to advertising and marketing and record-keeping – and worked with him to begin a business plan.

Three months ago, Collins opened A.J.’s Small Engine Repair – named after his daughter - on Pamlico Street in a building formerly occupied by an automobile dealership.

“Julian Goff and Donald Collins are an excellent example of the type of entrepreneurship we need to promote in eastern North Carolina,” said Stowe. Julian Goff recognized an unmet need in his community and Donald Collins created his own job to meet that need.”

Collins said that since opening the business he has had a steady stream of customers.

“Almost every day, somebody brings me something,” he said.

It hasn’t always been easy, Collins said.

Through trial and error, Collins has learned what to charge for his time, where to locate a reliable supply of parts for the motors he is repairing and whether to charge a deposit to his customers. Collins also said he needs to be prepared for business to slow when the weather turns cold.

Stowe said these are all questions that he can help Collins address through seminars and counseling offered by the center.

As part of a statewide network of centers, the Small Business Center at BCCC helps the over 1,600 small businesses in Beaufort, Hyde, Tyrell and Washington counties like Main Street Eatery survive, prosper, and contribute to the economic well-being of the area, according to Stowe

Small Business Centers provide a variety of seminars and workshops, one-on-one counseling, a library of resources, and referrals to other sources to prospective and current owners and operators of small businesses; plus, the services are at no cost to clients and attendees.

Despite the challenges of owning his own business, Collins said he is glad he made the move.

He said he sees his new business as a chance to achieve success and improve the life of his family.

“I’m working for myself,” he said. “And I know every morning when I wake up that I have work to do.”