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BEAUFORT COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE | CONTRIBUTED ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE: Small Business Center Director Lentz Stowe discusses the new menu for the Tavern at Jack's Neck with Belhaven restaurant owner Jimmie Southerland. The center, part of a 58-center network, which could be potentially cut from the state budget next year, served 62 clients last year and offers numerous resources and counseling to local businesses in the college's four-county service area.



### Archived Story

## ECONOMIC AIDE: Local restaurant thrives, thanks to Small Biz Center

Published 8:13pm Monday, December 22, 2014

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By Jonathan Rowe

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Beaufort Count Community College's Small Business Center has led a local restaurant to thrive through the resources it offers.

Jimmie Southerland, and her husband, Doug, had been business owners and knew what it takes to run a successful business prior to their relocation to Belhaven. After Doug Southerland attempted to order a pizza one night, only to find out the one pizza restaurant in town had closed, he was led to enter the restaurant business.

The Southerlands discovered the location of the Old Helmsman restaurant on Pamlico Street as a possible site for their restaurant. After deciding on the location, they completely gutted and remodeled the space with brick, walnut, hickory and

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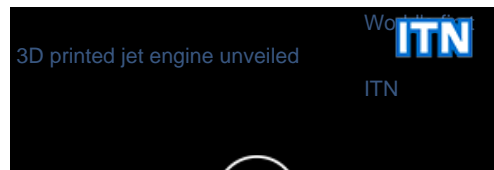
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cypress wood that was rough cut from Ponzer, a nearby town, installed new bathrooms, beams, lights, a decorative bar area and about a year ago, opened The Tavern at Jack's Neck.

Known for its fresh pizzas completely made from scratch, the Tavern also serves top-quality steaks and prime rib, pasta dishes, sandwiches, salads, more substantial entrees created by Tavern Chef Neil Melvin, as well as offers a full bar, private dining spaces and entertainment several nights, according to the Southerlands.

The restaurant has been a success so far, and has added to the local economy, attracting out-of-town visitors, as well as local customers. It has also brought about 25 jobs to town that did not exist before, according to Lentz Stowe, director of BCCC's Small Business Center.

However, in the year since the business opened, the Southerlands, new to the restaurant business, realized they still had a lot to learn about running a successful restaurant, Stowe said.

The Southerlands then reached out to Stowe, who introduced them to Robert Doe, an area retiree who has owned and operated successful restaurants in the northeast. Doe is also a subject-matter expert who works closely with the center to offer advanced counseling to entrepreneurs, Stowe said.

Stowe said Doe met with the Southerlands and provided training for their front-of-the-house staff and advised the couple on their menus, which they recently redesigned.

"I don't know if we could have found as good a consultant on our own, and if we found a consultant who was reputable, I don't know if we could have afforded it," Jimmie Southerland said. "To have that resource was a comfort."

Through BCCC's Division of Continuing Education, the Southerlands have also taken advantage of ServeSafe classes. The couple has said the help provided by the center and BCCC has been invaluable, Stowe said.

"When I hit a brick wall and don't know where to turn, it's nice to know that the Small Business Center has our backs."

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