

SBDC: Your Partner in Turning Ideas into Profits

By Jean Goers

Are you an inventor? Do you have a new product idea and have always dreamed of owning your own business? Do you already have a business that you want to expand? If only you knew what to do first, how to market your product idea or how to fund your future business. Well, here's the good news: You don't have to do it all on your own. The Small Business Development Center (SBDC) with offices in Kenosha, Wis., and Racine, Wis., is ready to be your partner. A federally funded, non-profit organization, the SBDC serves the small-business owner from business idea development through start-up and, finally, to mature business operations. The SBDC's overall objective is to promote and stimulate economic growth through counseling, education, research, and leadership throughout the community.

Tom Klamm from Sturtevant, Wis., recently invented a consumer product. For the past six months, he has been working closely with Kevin Carp, a business student at the University of Wisconsin-

Parkside and a business specialist intern at the SBDC in Racine. "We inventors often will take months and months thinking of an idea, and while we are running these ideas through our minds, our ideas have the potential to be eschewed," Klamm said. "The SBDC and Kevin in particular have given me a fresh perspective. (Kevin) has offered me a fresh set of eyes and walked me through the whole scenario of launching my new-product idea."

Carp works under the direction of Cory Mason, director of Racine's SBDC office. "I like working here; every project is slightly different," Carp said. "You get the opportunity to work with businesses that are already established, or with someone who walks in with an idea. At times, clients just want someone to tell them if it's a good idea or if it's a bad risk. But most of the time, prospective or existing business owners are looking for guidance."

Bill Early owns an accounting firm that deals with small business owners and is

Klamm's accountant. He points out the benefits of how the SBDC has supported his client. "The SBDC has served as the 'shepherd' of Tom's idea and assisted in the business development stages," Early said. "Tom and I benefited from the SBDC in three very critical areas: insight to the marketplace, help with positioning the product for sale, and the business-plan development."

"Without the support of government-funded programs, the entrepreneur is likely to languish and simply never bring his product to the marketplace. Tom is an entrepreneur with a new product idea, and unless he has very deep pockets, he needs a great deal of market info that very few people have. If he would acquire the same services from other professional or commercial sources, it could have cost him tens of thousands of dollars. That's a true indication of the value SBDC is bringing to the whole community: without it there is no future economic development."



Kevin Carp (left) discusses business plans with Bill Early and Tom Klamm (right). Learn more about Carp's experience with SBDC clients in *Fresh PERSPECTIVE* www.uwp.edu/fresh.