



Vallejo 'Hackathon' serves as breeding ground for new business



Patricia Hudnall speaks to a room full of energetic entrepreneurs Saturday at the small business Hackathon event held Saturday at Solano Community College in Vallejo. Matthew Adkins —Times-Herald staff

By Matthew Adkins, madkins@timesheraldonline.com, @MAdkinsVTH on Twitter

POSTED: 03/18/17, 7:08 PM PDT | UPDATED: 2 DAYS AGO 0 COMMENTS

Despite burning the midnight oil and the candle at both ends, the thinking caps of approximately 50 entrepreneurs remained bright and full of ideas Saturday during the first ever small business Hackathon event in Vallejo.

During the three-day-long event, budding new business owners gathered at the Solano Community College campus in Vallejo to bounce ideas off one other in hopes to come up with the next big thing.

To maximize the amount of time spent hashing out the plans for their new businesses, a handful of participants, such as Dan Ryken of Benicia, slept overnight at the college.

"I slept in the gym and hit the pillow Friday night about 1 a.m.," Ryken said. "I was up by 7 a.m. and went straight back to work."

Ryken explained he wants to create a business that will allow him to use the deep tamber in his voice to help other businesses with advertisements or commercials, be it on television, podcasts or through drone photography narration.

"I have a good voice, and I'm always looking for ways to advance business concepts," Ryken said. "With the right content I can help deliver a business owner's message better than they can. I need to feel them and understand their passion, but then I can modulate my voice to fit that groove."

Sprinkled throughout the weekend were a number of guest speakers who touched on a wide variety of subjects, such as business management, marketing techniques and how to build an effective business plan.

Speakers included William Wesley, a nationally renowned corporate business coach and trainer; Dr. Lynne Vaughn, founder of the award-winning MIT Academy; Patricia Hudnall, a business management consultant; Rolanda Wilson, a financial consultant; branding strategist Citlalli Flores Zepeda; and local business-owners/entrepreneurs Marisella Barbosa, Tim Hiemstra and Mark Hagan.

Tech business consultant and co-founder of the event, Michael Connelly (the other co-founder is K. Patrice Williams), explained the benefits of having guest speakers with tested business experience be able to connect with the fledgeling business owners before they fly out on their own.

"The speakers represent where these people can be," Connelly said. "They can share their experience and connect with their points of pain. They have knowledge of the customer base and can see the opportunity here. They know what it takes to start a business from nothing."

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locally," Williams said. "It's exciting, so far. I love it."

At the end of the Hackathon, participants were asked to present their final business plan to the audience.

The event was presented by the Solano Small Business Development Center. Supporters included the Benicia Chamber of Commerce, Dixon Chamber of Commerce; Hispanic Chamber of Commerce; Solano Black Chamber of Commerce; Dixon Economic Development Department and the housing assistance organization, A Place 2 Live.

A second workshop scheduled for March 24 is planned for youths and young adults held at the same location.

For more information on the small business Hackathon, visit www.48hourstartuplaunch.com or contact Williams at 707-560-1115

Matthew Adkins can be reached at 707-553-6833.

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