

Group focus on small business

Warren County Small Business Development Alliance is your guide.

By Denise G. Callahan
Staff Writer

LEBANON – It takes a county to raise a small business development organization, and Warren County has done it.

Intergovernmental alliances and corporate cooperation can be hard to forge, but leaders from across all spectrums of the county – government, chambers of commerce and

businesses – banded together to create the Warren County Small Business Development Alliance.

The operation officially opened for business Monday when Joe Schiesler took over the helm as the director. Schiesler, a retired Key Bank vice president, said his job is to reach out to small businesses and hook them up with resources they might need to succeed.

“My responsibility is to work with the small business community throughout War-

Alliance continued on A2

Business made to order

Alliance

continued from A1

ren County, to do some one-on-one confidential coaching and guidance,” he said. “If there are individual companies that are looking for, or individuals looking to start new businesses, I can help them and make sure they get the proper documentation they need and what’s going to be required to open up a new business.”

The Northeast Cincinnati Chamber in Mason started a pilot small business center almost two years ago, and county Economic Development Director Martin Russell said funding became a bit of an issue and geography was an impediment to getting buy-ins from the communities in the northern reaches of the county.

“I finally said, ‘would you be willing for me to break it up to build it back together,’” he said. “And the answer was yes. Within two, to three to four weeks this office – and I



Warren County Economic Development Director Martin Russell (left) meets with Joe Schiesler, the new director of the Small Business Development Alliance (center) and Springboro Assistant City Manager Chris Pozzuto, who is chair of the Alliance board. CONTRIBUTED

don’t mean to tout ourselves – this office was able to raise in cash and in-kind contributions around \$50,000 to get this moving forward.”

The county Port Authority is now the host of the center and funding has come in from everywhere. Russell said the center has \$35,000 in the bank and contributions are still coming in. The county chipped in \$5,000; Lebanon, Franklin, Mason, Springboro and Deerfield Twp. kicked in \$3,000; and smaller entities from across the county have donated \$500 to \$1,000 to the cause. The Warren Coun-

ty Career Center has offered up an office for the center. Private sector donations have also been forwarded.

The center is also projected to receive \$10,000 a year from the state and \$40,000 from the U.S. Small Business Administration.

There are nine board members on the alliance who hail from all parts of the county, and members hail from the governments, chambers, non-profits and the banking, accounting and legal business worlds. Russell said the larger advisory board for the center is made up of people from all walks

of the business world, who are able to help new and small businesses on any level.

“It’s assisting current small businesses and start-ups to navigate the road map if you will, to either become more successful, expand or get off the ground,” he said. “We have built a one-stop shop for companies to come and get their needs met, whatever that might be. He (Schiesler) guides and potentially we’ll do referrals. It allows us to keep it all in-house. It’s purely selfish, we want these businesses to stay in Warren County.”

County Commissioner Tom Ariss, who is a board member, said garnering cooperation from all the stakeholders in the county was a task but not really a difficult one.

“It was about getting everybody underneath one roof to say hey, what have we got to do to make this work,” he said. “We got a lot of heads together and came up with some really good ideas and we finally got it off the ground. Economic development is a priority for everybody.”

Schiesler can be reached at the career center at (513) 932-8145, ext. 5317.