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Local chamber becomes affiliate location to help small businesses

Support hub aims to become resource for entrepreneurs

By Hannah Ball

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The local Fenton & Linden Regional Chamber of Commerce is partnering with the Genesee Economic Development Group to help small businesses in Genesee County by becoming an affiliate location for the new Flint & Genesee Small Business Support Hub.

Led by the Flint & Genesee Economic Alliance, the Flint & Genesee Small Business Support Hub aims to be the ultimate small business resource by providing comprehensive resources and support at no cost to entrepreneurs and small business owners in Genesee County.

“We have an office space on the first floor of our office building dedicated to the Business Resource Hub. We will promote and encourage the business community to take advantage of this free service,” said Shelly Day, executive director of the Fenton & Linden Regional Chamber of Commerce. “The beauty of this program is that it will assist businesses in all stages: thinking about opening a business, new start-up businesses, existing businesses!”

The Flint & Genesee Economic Development Group received a grant and will rent the space at the Fenton & Linden Regional Chamber of Commerce to serve southern Genesee County businesses.

“Some key areas of support will be hiring new and sustaining employees, marketing and making business connections, how to plan for future growth,” Day said.

May is National Small Business Month.

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The Flint & Genesee Small Business Support Hub is one of 27 hubs established, or in the process of launching, through the state’s Small Business Support Hub program, according to a press release from the Flint & Genesee Group. It is made possible through a nearly \$2.4-million grant from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation.

“Whether you’re writing a business plan or seeking capital, there’s a lot that goes into starting and growing a business – and it can be challenging without the right network, resources, or understanding of processes,” said Karena Hamlet, director of Business Services at the Flint & Genesee Economic Alliance, which is a division of the Flint & Genesee Group. “That’s where the Flint & Genesee Small Business Support Hub comes in.”

The hub, which is also supported by Doxa Development, Metro Community Development, and the Michigan Small Business Development Center (MI-SBDC) — takes a “holistic, customized approach” for each client, according to the press release. This includes providing data-informed business counseling, experienced capital access coaching, personalized personal finance mentorship, and connections to resources to grow a business.

Starting businesses should complete the form at DevelopFlintandGenesee.org/hub. Afterward, the alliance will schedule a meeting to determine the next steps and appropriate referrals.

“We provide coaching and technical assistance, but one of our greatest strengths is the role we play as connector,” Hamlet said. “We can help local entrepreneurs and small business owners navigate the wide variety of resources available to them and make the connections they need to thrive.”

Hub partners will meet on a monthly basis and offer open hours at the Flint & Genesee Small Business Hub's headquarters in the Flint & Genesee Group office in downtown Flint. To begin, they will be available for walk-in appointments on May 1 from 1 to 4 p.m.

Hannah Ball