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YORK COUNTY OFFERS BUSINESS TRAINING SCHOLARSHIP FOR ENTREPRENEURS

Partnering with Retail Alliance, County to host classes for Certificate of Retail Operations

(YORKTOWN, VA, November 2018) – Half of all new businesses fail in the first year—and one of the biggest reasons is lack of business competence. Because the retail sector is particularly vulnerable, York County’s Economic Development Authority has partnered with Retail Alliance to help educate local entrepreneurs.

In January, the Alliance’s Center for Retail Excellence will begin a series of business training classes in the York County Chamber of Commerce office at 4102 George Washington Memorial Highway. The 42-week course culminates in earning a Certificate of Retail Operations. While sticker price on the full course is \$995, participants can apply for a 50% matching grant being offered by the County. This scholarship can be used for individual 6-week classes (normally \$165 each), or the entire certificate program. It has no educational prerequisites.

“Whether you’re opening or already running a business, these classes will improve your chances for success,” said Jim Noel, economic development director for York County. “Not only will you develop a toolbox for business operations, but you’ll develop a professional network as you engage with other entrepreneurs and local experts who come to speak.” York County Chamber of Commerce is providing space for the classes and helping to secure local subject matter experts.

The Certificate of Retail Operations walks participants through the considerations necessary to start a retail business. The program is broken up into seven topic areas, representing each of the Seven Behaviors of Retail Excellence. Classes range from “Dollars & Sense” and “Marketing’s a Pitch” to “Retail, E-Tail & Detail.” Upon successful completion of the certificate, participants will have a comprehensive, vetted business plan.

The program is presented using a hybrid model, where some work is done online and other work is done in a face-to-face classroom. Online work allows participants to work at their own pace, at a time and place most convenient for them. Each 6-week class also includes two to three cohort (face-to-face) gatherings, where topic-specific instructors and subject matter experts from the local business community will be recruited to present.

Attendees also can become members of Retail Alliance, which includes the “LOVEVA” buy-local program. York County recently came on board with the LOVEVA program and app, which lets shoppers collect loyalty points and rewards at locally owned businesses across Hampton Roads. For retailers, the program means greater exposure and advertising savings—York County even offers a grant to help local businesses get listed.

Entering its third year, the Center for Retail Excellence is the educational arm of Retail Alliance.

“It was created because we recognize how difficult it is to start a business” said Susan Moore, director of the Center for Retail Excellence. “You might open a hardware store because you know a lot about nuts and bolts—that doesn’t mean you understand the nuts and bolts of running a business. We don’t want you to discover how important those skills are by your business failing. We want you to succeed long-term.”

To register for this Certificate of Retail Operations program, visit www.retailalliance.com. Classes will be held at the York County Chamber of Commerce, 4102 George Washington Memorial Highway in Yorktown.

About the Scholarship

To qualify, your business must have a current York County Business License or you must currently live in York County and provide proof of residence. Learn more and apply: www.yesyorkcounty.com

About the Office of Economic Development and Economic Development Authority

The primary mission of York County’s Office of Economic Development (OED) and Economic Development Authority (EDA) is to create a diverse economic base by the aggressive recruitment, expansion and retention of businesses, industries, and tourism, thus expanding the tax base and capital investment in the County and providing new employment opportunities for its citizens. Learn more about the Economic Development Authority and its resources at: www.yesyorkcounty.com

About Retail Alliance

Retail Alliance is a non-profit trade association serving the interests of local retailers in Hampton Roads. The organization promotes and supports the healthy growth of retail businesses and trade through education, networking, advocacy, discounts, local first program, and other benefits.