Program Summary

In the first quarter of 2008, the GSW Center for Business and Economic has been very active. During this quarter plans were finalized and classes were begun for the EF Maximum Marketing training; the Annual Economic Outlook Luncheon was held. Both are described in more detail below. Director Cheokas continues to work one-on-one with small business owners in our service area. Consulting was offered to 25 small business clients this quarter.

Activities in which Director Cheokas participated during the quarter were:

- TAG visit to Georgia Perimeter College, January 24th & March 17th – worked recruitment fair with Jonathan Scott from Admissions offering students enrollment information for GSW. Visits to Duluth and Clarkston campuses respectively.
- EFIF Implementation Grant, January 7th - Received funding from State EF initiative in the amount of $15,300; secured $8,000 of in-kind matching funds. Money will be used to offer small business owners marketing training on how to improve their marketing plan, at no charge. Two sessions will be taught by instructors from the SBDC Network. One offered March/April 2008 and second September/October 2008. Each is a 6 weeks program offered to 15 class participants and 5 auditors. First round will be offered to small business owners that were interviewed during Entrepreneur Friendly Designation assessment phase. Our plans are to follow up this training with financial and human resource management training.
- Economic Outlook Luncheon – February 12th. Director Cheokas organizes this annual event as part of our outreach services. Rep. Ron Stephens, Chairman of the GA House Economic Development Committee, delivered keynote address. Luncheon was attended by 120 local business people.
- Economic Development Tour of Georgia, February 25th – Annually GA Power sponsors a bus tour for approximately 40 state agency staff members who are involved with various aspects of economic development. This offers the tour participants to physically see the communities around our state as well as be introduced to community leaders. Part of a “Tell Your Own Story” format to assist with relationship building. Purpose is to foster interest in areas outside of Atlanta as potential candidates for industry/business growth. Director Cheokas was invited to meet the group for a working dinner.
• Resource Fair, Buena Vista/Marion County, March 13th – As part of their EF designation, Marion County planned a resource fair for the community. Mr. Steve White contacted the GSW Center to request that Mrs. Cheokas attend. The fair was held at the Josh Tyson Building, 6:30 to 8:30 pm. Approximately 20 individuals were seen by Cheokas. Information about the Center’s services was provided as well as other State resources available to assist small business owners.

• Robins Logistic Air Base, March 17th – Mrs. Cheokas serves as coordinator for the Robins LAB internship program. Twice a year representatives from the Base visit campus to talk to Jr/Sr business students about their internship program. Since becoming coordinator, Cheokas noted that GSW students may not be great in number, but they are great in quality with approximately 2 receiving interviews each 6 month rotation and 3 students being hired, and 1 student who was made an offer but declined.

• TAG Officers from Partner institutions visit GSW campus, March 20th – Mr. Richard Beaubien, liaison officer from GA Perimeter, attended meeting. Director Cheokas discussed with Mr. Beaubien ways in which to make the transition of students from GA Perimeter (2-yr unit) to GSW seamless.

Program Measures Impact Statements /

January – March 2008: A total of 25 new client files have been open for the new year and have received consulting during this time period. Client base: Start-ups – 56 percent Existing businesses - 44 percent; Total employment (existing companies) 57; total consulting hours 99. Capital investment of $ 317,000; in-kind investment of $6,500; grant funding $5,000. Total investment $328,500.

Advocacy

At the beginning of each legislative term, the governor will invite groups of legislators for dinner at the Governor’s Mansion. As in years past, Director Cheokas attended this event with her husband, Rep. Mike Cheokas. Governor Perdue spoke with Mrs. Cheokas about the work of the GSW Center for Business and Economic Development in relationship to the tornado recovery. He was particular interested to hear how and especially what assistance could be provided to our small business community. Director Cheokas explained how the GSW-CBED was working in collaboration other state agencies to provide consulting, non-traditional funding, training, and other such services to SB owners. He requested that his office be notified if additional resources are needed.

Outreach for the GSW Center for this past quarter included Buena Vista/Marion County, Cordele/Crisp County, and the Empowerment Zone Business Development Center located in Vienna, GA. Director Cheokas continues to have regular contact with Monica Simmons, President, Crisp County Chamber of Commerce and Wayne Foster, Manager, EZ Center in
Vienna. Mrs. Cheokas works one-on-one with small business clients as well as serves as an advocate for GSW and the Center’s programs and activities.

The GSW Center for Business continues to collaborate with the Small Business Development Center consultants; identifying available resources for small business clients in our area. Upcoming Continuing Education classes for Spring 2008 include: Business Planning for Un-Retirement, Marketing Tips from the Pros, How to Start Your Own Small Business, Writing a Successful Business Plan.

**Human Interest**

The Center for Business and Economic Development at GSW provides support services to existing business in the area served by GSW. Assisting with the connecting of our institution with the business community is a central mission. This past quarter provided just such an opportunity.

Director Cheokas discussed with Dr. Dawn Valentine, Marketing professor with the GSW – SOB, the possibility her class preparing a marketing plan for one of her clients. Dr. Valentine was enthusiastic about the project which offered a practical learning experience for her students. With the wheels turning, Mrs. Cheokas scheduled an initial meeting for the client and the students (normal class time), to discuss the project.

At this meeting the client, Mrs. Joyce Carreker, Board Chair - Vision for Sumter and Mrs. Diane Hall, immediate past director for Educare, provided a summary of the day care center to the students: history, purpose, curriculum, location, what has been done, what has been tired, uniqueness, accreditation, etc. The students were able to ask questions at the end of the presentation.

During the semester Cheokas and Valentine had several discussions on progress, site visit, and other determining factors. The clients were also updated on progress every few weeks, encouraging feedback from them at all times.

The final plan was presented to Mrs. Carreker and several other Educare staff members at the end of the semester. Among the key recommendations were the following:

- Awareness, with in the community: build upon credentials
- Visibility: signage and exterior of building
- Flexibility: offer summer camps, after hours, and 4K programs.
- Gorilla marketing techniques: parenting seminars, civic organization programs, etc.

A copy of the plan with supporting material was provided client.
**Follow up**

Director Cheokas contacted Mrs. Carreker a few weeks after presentation. Mrs. Carreker was very complimentary of the students work, their professionalism, and how practical the information was. She stated that most of their (the students) comments had really opened her eyes and also the eyes of the Educare staff. They will implement several of the recommendations immediately and will continue to do more when funding is available. The first one to be done is the “freshen up” of the exterior of the building (painting and landscaping) and adding a larger logo to the entrance façade.

This type of activity provides the students with an experience beyond the classroom and creates opportunities for the professional and technical capabilities resident in the university to be made available to the larger community.

Truly a **WIN, WIN!**