**Program Summary**

During the third quarter of 2008, the GSW Center for Business and Economic has participated in following activities in support of small businesses in the Americus/Sumter County service area.

- **EFIF Implementation Grant** – Second offering of Maximum Marketing training began in September. Classes were held in the Central Bank of Georgia Conference Room in the School of Business, GSW. Training classes offered to small business owners on marketing strategies; topics included, how to improve marketing plan, identify target market, low budget grassroots marketing techniques. Sessions taught by instructors from the SBDC Network. Ms. Suzanne Barnett from Valdosta State did a tremendous job of engaging the 22 participants. Training was a 6 week program offered to area small business owners and 5 auditors. Graduation for participants will be held in October. Plans are to follow up this training with financial and human resource management training. Director Cheokas will discuss expanding opportunities with the Chamber of Commerce Small Business Committee on which she serves.

- **Lean Six Sigma** – Follow up with Financial Aid Office. By request of Ms. Frieda Jones, Director Cheokas spent two-half days working and observing the processes of the GSW Financial Aid office. Several internal recommendations for improvement were discussed by Cheokas and Jones. Non-cost initiatives will be implemented immediately; others will be determined by budgetary resources.

- **Youth Entrepreneurship Training** – Dates are confirmed. As part of EFIF grant funding, Mrs. Cheokas will offer Youth Entrepreneurship training to high school students in Sumter and Schley County. First session is scheduled to begin October 20th with Early College students. Program is a collaborative effort, with the GSW - SIFE team, to provide a 3-part series of training. First, will be introduction to entrepreneurship as career path; second – SIFE module for preparing a business plan; last – panel of small business owners will share their story with students, followed with Q&A time. Training will be conducted with three other high school groups Winter 2009.

- **TAG Officers from Partner institutions visit GSW campus** , September 23rd – 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. Recruitment strategies where also discussed.
Program Measures Impact Statements /

July – September 2008: A total 27 of new client files have been open during third quarter.
Third quarter client profile:
  o Start-ups – 47%
  o Existing businesses – 53%
  o Total employment (existing companies) - 259
  o Capital investment of $ 0
  o In-kind investment of $ 2,500 (EFIF)
  o Grant funding $ 5,000 (EFIF)
  o Total investment $ 7,500

YTD Total Client Count:  78
YTD Total Consulting Hours:  428

Advocacy

Ms. Cheokas continues to serve as a liaison for the School of Business in the GSW service area. She attends chamber meetings in Sumter and Schley counties. She is currently serving on the Small Business Committee of the Americus Chamber. Director Cheokas has assisted clients from the Dooly County and Empowerment Zone over the past quarter.

All activities further enhance the reputation of the Center, expand the economic impact upon the region, and connect the community at large with resources available at Georgia Southwestern State University.

Looking Forward

Economic Outlook Luncheon – Plans are being made for the annual Economic Outlook luncheon to be held Feb. 10th, 2009. This annual event is sponsored by the GSW – Center for Business and Economic Development. Attendance includes: area business people, local and state elected officials, School of Business faculty, and SIFE students.
Total attendance LY 120.