

entrepreneur

HELP OTHERS SUCCEED, THEN HELP YOURSELF

Think tank helps small companies enhance images, troubleshoot

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FREDERICK — A diverse group of professionals would never beg for membership in their infant think tank but will appeal to those who want to enhance their businesses.

About eight years ago, Jason Feaga was developing Kathryn Ann McKenzie's Web site and corporate identity, and they kicked around the idea of how to find ways to promote their businesses, said Mr. Feaga, owner of 18 Visions Design, a graphics and Web design company.

"We decided to form a networking group and keep it small because, for a small business, time is precious," Mr. Feaga said.

Being an entrepreneur would not be the only criterion for membership, Ms. McKenzie said, because an interested person could be a professional in any number of companies.

So, Ms. McKenzie, a Realtor with Real Estate Teams, brought aboard Jane Helm, a junior partner with Riley Financial Services, who is Ms. McKenzie's financial adviser.

In April, they became the original three members of the Business Enhancement Group, Mr. Feaga said. BEG's goals are to provide members an arena in which to grow and develop their businesses through group interaction and problem-solving.

Mr. Feaga brought in two



The members of the newly formed Business Enhancement Group are, from left to right: Kelye Rouse Brown, of KRB Customized Training Solutions; Jason Feaga, of 18 Visions Design; Kathryn Ann McKenzie, of Real Estate Teams; Jane Helm, of Riley Financial Services; Jim Moss, of First Horizon Home Loans; Carina Franca, of GranTops; and Scott Guenther, of Monocacy Automotive.

clients as members: Kelye Rouse Brown, owner of KRB Customized Training Solutions; and Carina Franca, public relations coordinator of GranTops, a producer of granite and quartz countertop materials for residential and commercial applications.

Ms. Rouse Brown brought in Scott Guenther, owner of Monocacy Automotive, and Ms. McKenzie brought in Jim Moss, a loan officer for First Horizon Home Loans.

The seven-member group is looking to expand to 10-12, Mr. Feaga said. The only limitation is that there are no two members from the same business field.

There are no dues because the group's expertise is the members' reward, Ms. McKenzie said.

"Because we want to limit the group's size, we want people from different business disciplines who offer different views," she said. "The members would bring varied backgrounds and education levels than what each individual member is involved in."

The group meets once a month at a member's place of business, and meetings generally last from 1 to 1-1/2 hours, Mr. Feaga said.

"Each member gets 5 minutes, which gives them the opportunity to discuss his or her business during the current month and gain feedback from other group members," he said.

Each month a member can become the speaker, which provides 15-20 minutes to introduce the business to the group,

Mr. Feaga said.

"At our last meeting, we discussed what professions we would want in our group," Ms. McKenzie said. "We determined that we would not be limited by profession."

"When we meet people, we would evaluate whether that person would work well with the group and would they like to come on board."

Mr. Feaga doesn't view the sessions as just networking. "We are becoming friends and are doing things outside the business realm. I think we can keep the group going for years to come," he said.

For more information, visit www.businessenhancementgroup.com or e-mail contact@businessenhancementgroup.com.

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