



Springdale Chamber Launches Stimulus Plan

By Rob Keys - 7/9/2009 3:06:00 PM

The Springdale Chamber of Commerce unveiled Thursday afternoon what it's touting as a Small Business Economic Stimulus Plan.

"I think this is probably one of the most aggressive small business programs that we've seen that's been created anywhere," said Chamber President and CEO Perry Webb, who added the program has been four to six months in the making.

The program is comprised of three major parts and will culminate with the Northwest Economic Summit, to be held Nov. 11-12 at the Holiday Inn Northwest Arkansas and Convention Center. Chamber Board Chairman Blake Hanby said the initiative is designed to help small businesses "be more profitable and more efficient as we come out of this tough economic cycle."

"It's almost a la carte," Hanby said, "where you can cherry-pick the parts of the program you want."

The program is available primarily to new and existing Chamber members.

"Most of the elements of this program are designed for Chamber members, but many of them will be available to non-members," Webb said.

One part of the plan is a series of seminars covering a variety of topics, while another part is meant to expand networking opportunities. There also is a business discount program, featuring a drug discount card and member-to-member discounts.

Webb said the program as a whole is targeted at small businesses that have been especially affected by the recent economic downturn.

"We're trying to identify what the true environment is and offer tools to help them," he said.

Webb declined to give a total cost for the program, but did say the Economic Summit will cost in the "\$75,000 to \$100,000 range."

"It's not a real expensive capital expenditure for us" Webb said. "It's more about refocusing and redirecting activities of our staff."

The Springdale Chamber currently consists of a staff of eight, down from 12 at this time a year ago. Webb said the Chamber hasn't had any layoffs, but has chosen not to replace staffers who've left for other reasons.

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