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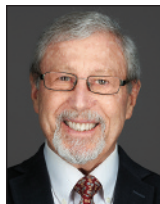


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# Small Business Resource Association



# THE SBRA COMMUNITY OUR STUDENTS & THEIR FUTURE



**By Gary Seibert, CEO,  
Small Business Resource Association**

At the time of this writing, the SBRA is three weeks into a 6-week program called the Emerging Entrepreneur Academy (EEA). We are helping high school juniors and seniors that have shown an interest in someday owning their own business. The program provides the principles of starting and running a business as well as interning with a local business to see how the information they learned is applied. Ten years from now they will be 27 or 28 years old and hopefully, gainfully employed or running their own business. Twenty years from now they will be in their late 30's and in a position of influence in their personal lives as well as in their work and local community. It's hard to believe that this generation of teenagers will be responsible for someday determining the future of our country. My parents said the same thing about me and my peers 60 years ago.

For what it's worth, I believe I have some encouraging news. The student mix in this summer's EEA program is made up of 55% students from Reading High and 45% from other suburban schools. They are giving up six full weeks, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. every week day of their summer vacation to learn and then practice the skills of an entrepreneur. These students had never met before our first class on June 20th but within the first three weeks they have bonded and become great friends. They are eager to learn and when put in small groups to solve problems or

perform team building activities, they work together like they had known each other for years.

Our staff is made up of local business owners that have specific experience and expertise diverse topics that they are able to teach through real-life situations. We also have a local Entrepreneur each day that "tells their story" to the students about the good, the bad and the ugly details of their journey. The questions the students are asking and the responses from the speakers are absolutely incredible.

Their note taking is incredible as we've already gone through three reams of paper. The comments we get after each session from the staff is truly encouraging and optimistic as they see young students that really do want to learn so that someday they will become successful business owners in control of their destiny. In many cases, this is totally different from the environment they are growing up in.

Every day we have a panel of four different business owners that are asked a variety of questions related to the daily business theme.

The students are allowed to participate in the discussions with comments or questions. This stimulates a desire to learn more and the panel participants are invited to stay and have lunch with the students which encourages further and deeper discussion. Relationships are being developed, business cards are being given to the students and some of them are even being invited to visit the owner's business to discuss a future internship during the school year.

In the afternoon we always have some type of a team building event that reinforces something we have taught

earlier in the day. The students are learning the concept of teams working together for a common goal as well as how culture plays a key role in the success of a business. Debriefing is the most important part of the activity as it points out and reinforces how the activity is not just fun, it really teaches something useful for success in their personal and business lives.

The last two sessions in the day we call "Digging Deep" where our instructors take the daily theme and provides content and examples that will further help the students better understand the topic and how to apply it in the business world.

Each student has a 3-ring binder that at the end of their six weeks will be their operations and procedure manual for starting their business. Not only will this binder include hundreds of pages of information that will be useful to them in the future but, equally valuable, will be a resource list that they will have to get even more information and help.

Yes, I am encouraged because these past three weeks have introduced me and all the EEA staff to what we believe will be the future leaders and business owners in Berks and beyond. These young men and women really do want to excel, own a successful company and give back to their community. These students are the remains of the past that built our GREAT country and the future that will keep it GREAT. And here is the best news, I believe that there are hundreds of thousands, even millions of students in our country, right now, that are just like the students we are working with. They just need to be exposed to all the opportunities that are available to them. Not every child needs to go to college but every child needs to find a career path. We will discuss that in more detail next month.



## SBRA Business Spotlight



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## Thank You to the SBRA's 2022 Emerging Entrepreneurs Academy Sponsors!



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**TUNE-UP Tuesdays**  
information. sharing. motivating.



Free to the public.  
Get more details and register at

<https://www.sbrassociation.com/#EVENTS>

### MEMBER MINGLES – NETWORKING

**Wednesday, August 31st, 5:30-7:00**

**B2 Bistro:** 701 Reading Ave, West Reading, PA 19611  
Register: <https://www.sbrassociation.com/#EVENTS>

### Learn How the SBRA Can Help Your Business Grow

– Membership Benefits Update  
**Wednesday, August 31st,**  
**9:00-9:30 a.m.**

Register: <https://www.sbrassociation.com/#EVENTS>

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