



## **Crowd Turns Out for Business Plan Contest Kick-Off Event**

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More than 40 people attended the June 1 kick-off event for the Accelerate Your Business Plan Contest. Hosted by Rock County 5.0, and title sponsor Murphy Desmond Lawyers, S.C., the event was held at the Blackhawk Technical College.

The contest is designed to encourage the development of effective and strategic business plans, and serves as a platform to match available financial and technical resources with local needs. The winner of the contest will receive a prize package valued up to \$25,000, according to contest administrator Mary Rajek.

Tuesday's crowd consisted of business leaders, community leaders and prospective participants from all over Rock County. About 10 participants were from the Beloit area.

"We are really excited by how much the business community has shown support for what we are doing. It speaks to the climate in Rock County today. People want to support small business and entrepreneurship. This contest works to provide support, education and networking opportunities for small business owners and emerging entrepreneurs," Rajek said.

The good news is that people can still enter the contest. Submissions are due by noon on June 17. For additional contest information, people can visit the "Business Resources" section online at [www.rockcountyalliance.com](http://www.rockcountyalliance.com).

The Accelerate Your Business Plan Contest concludes in mid-October. Contestants are required to participate in a series of structured workshops and one-on-one mentoring sessions. Individuals or businesses interested in lending their support to the contest are encouraged to apply online.

"The recessionary impacts on our small businesses have been severe, that's why it is absolutely essential to match-up available resources with emerging needs," said Rock County 5.0 Co-Chair Mary Willmer-Sheedy.

Rajek said the prize package consists of \$10,000 in cash and up to \$15,000 in in-kind business services. Examples of services provided to the winner include marketing, accounting, strategic planning, risk management as well as a market research services from the Wisconsin Innovation Service Center, out of the University of Wisconsin at Whitewater Small Business Development Center.

"These businesses have really stepped up to offer support," Rajek said.

Rajek said there has been a tremendous amount of planning and preparation leading up to this kick-off event and workshop. Several area businesses stepped forward to contribute their time and talents as a contest mentor, judge or as an in-kind sponsor.

Rock County 5.0 is a five-year public/private economic development initiative designed to reposition and revitalize Rock County's economy. The initiative's efforts are focused on the following five economic development strategies: business retention & expansion, business & investment attraction, small business and entrepreneurship, real estate positioning and workforce profiling. For more Rock County 5.0 information, visit [www.rockcounty5.com](http://www.rockcounty5.com).