

## Encouraging Entrepreneurship and Aiding Small Businesses

As one of the largest and most influential business advocacy organizations in the Southeastern United States, the Cobb Chamber and its 2,500 business members are key partners to help small businesses achieve more. In fact, more than 80 percent of members are small businesses. That is why a major focus of the Cobb Chamber's mission in economic development, advocacy and member services is to *encourage entrepreneurship and aid small businesses*. Here are a few specifics in each area:

- **Advocacy:** The Cobb Chamber represents small business members' needs to make sure their voices are heard. Working year-round with local, state and national officials, the Cobb Chamber has created and will continue to **advocate for a pro-business climate that encourages entrepreneurship**. Small business members can get involved in Government Affairs Committees, legislative events such as the Washington Fly-In and interact with high profile elected officials at Cobb Chamber events.
- **Economic Development:** Through EDGE, the Cobb Chamber will work with community partners to enhance supportive infrastructure for small businesses and entrepreneurs to help the county grow its strategic economic development targets and support an aggressive recovery from the Great Recession. Here are a few major focus areas through EDGE:
  - Develop a **collaborative business incubation and accelerator facility** to provide low-cost space for burgeoning entrepreneurs, an environment that supports creativity, and a network of supportive partners.
  - Develop a comprehensive **start-up guide** for small businesses.
  - Develop a "**Capital Support Group**" to examine the needs of entrepreneurs and improve access to funding.
  - Provide involvement opportunities through **Economic Development committees** including Workforce Development, International Commerce and committees focused on the EDGE target industries.
- **Member Services:**
  - **Cost-Savings:** With exclusive discounts on office supplies, prescription drugs, workers compensation insurance and electronics, the cost-savings programs are especially beneficial for small businesses.
  - **Marketing Small Businesses:** Through one of our many award programs such as Small Business of the Year or the Business Community Service Awards, our Business Resource Center, online member directory, career center, community calendar, Coupons, *Chamber INK* blog, E-newsletter, Member Spotlight, ribbon cuttings and much more, there are numerous ways we market small business members.
  - **Networking Events that Especially Help Small Businesses:** With more than 300 dynamic events per year such as First Monday Breakfasts, Area Councils, Business Expo, Business-After-Hours and the weekly Cobb Connections, there are many ways that the Cobb Chamber especially helps small business members make connections.
  - **Nurturing Small Business Leadership:** Our nationally acclaimed leadership programs are perfect for small businesses to connect to peer leaders and the county's influencers. Programs include **Leadership Cobb, Honorary Commanders, Cobb Youth Leadership and their alumni associations**.
  - **Partnership Programs:** Through partnerships with **SCORE, SBDC, SBA and all 10 business associations**, all groups work together providing resources, programs and events to support entrepreneurs and small businesses.
  - **Professional Growth Programs Specifically for Small Businesses:** The majority of the Cobb Chamber's professional growth programs are designed to meet the needs of small business owners and their employees:
    - **Business Builders** provides a weekly book study opportunity to learn key business principles.
    - **Business University Seminars** help business owners and their employees accelerate business growth. Topics include customer service, human resources, healthcare, marketing, technology and much more.
    - **CEO Roundtables** provide a venue for presidents and CEOs of small businesses to meet monthly with non-competing business owners in an atmosphere that fosters entrepreneurial thinking.
    - **Cobb Executive Women** consists mainly of small business owners dedicated to cultivating mutually beneficial and supportive professional relationships among executive women in Cobb County.
    - **Cobb Young Professionals** is becoming a great place for entrepreneurs as it develops young talent.
    - **Networking Master Sessions** helps small business members maximize networking time at events.
  - **Make A Difference:** Through **community programs** such as Partners in Education, Public Safety Appreciation Week and Give Our Schools a Hand, small business members have the opportunity to make a difference.

*"As a small business owner, I am impressed by how focused the Cobb Chamber is on supporting local entrepreneurs and developing Cobb's next generation of leaders. The Cobb Chamber offers a great return on investment."*  
– Christa Pitts, Co-CEO & Publisher, CCA&B (*Elf on the Shelf*)