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AdvantageWest and VERVE magazine seek submissions from women entrepreneurs for business plan competition - enter today!

AdvantageWest's entrepreneurial development program and VERVE, a monthly magazine targeting WNC women in the arts, business, fashion and design, announce the launch of the VERVE-iciously BIG Idea Business Plan Competition, a contest for women entrepreneurs. Deadline to enter is April 1.

The competition targets women-owned, for-profit businesses, both established ventures seeking expansion and would-be entrepreneurs with ideas for a startup. A total of \$10,000 in cash, prizes, business support services and expert advice will be awarded. Winners will be announced at Carolina Connect, AdvantageWest's signature annual conference for entrepreneurs and investors, held on May 5 in Asheville.

Businesses participating in the VERVE-iciously BIG Idea Business Plan Competition must be located in the 23-county region served by AdvantageWest. The contest is open to businesses in any industry segment, though high-growth businesses or those that use technology in an innovative way are strongly encouraged to participate.

SEE FULL COMPETITION GUIDELINES [HERE](#).
MORE ABOUT CAROLINA CONNECT 2011 [HERE](#).

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Feb 14: e-NC Authority presents update on broadband initiatives; session takes place at NC Arboretum, 1-4pm.

As the state's broadband authority, e-NC Authority works to find and advocate for solutions to ensure that all North Carolina citizens and businesses increase broadband usage and have equal access to affordable, high-speed broadband Internet. At a Feb 14 information session, held 1-4pm at The NC Arboretum and open to the public, the authority introduces its redeveloped technical assistance program, designed to support communities with current and/or future broadband planning efforts and to help increase their broadband adoption, education and outreach. This program builds on e-NC's longstanding history of working directly with service providers, citizens and communities to address specific broadband needs and assist in building last mile. For more information or to RSVP, email info@e-nc.org.

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Feb 23: 1st Annual NC Conference on Sustainable Viticulture offers a practical approach to growing grapes in the mountains.

An upcoming conference sponsored by the NC BioNetwork BioBusiness Center explores sustainable viticulture in WNC and features national, regional and local speakers. Presentations cover information on how to grow grapes organically and still make a profit, which grapes are best for WNC's steep mountain slopes and climate conditions, how to develop vineyards on steep slopes with hard-pan clay soils, practical aspects of pest management and treatment alternatives, end-product differentiation for organic and/or biodynamic wines, and value-added products like nutraceuticals. The event is Feb 23, 9am - 4pm, at the A-B Tech Enka campus, and the cost of \$30 includes lunch. Register by Feb 22 [HERE](#).

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State Energy Office offers up to \$500,000 in grants for energy efficiency upgrades; deadline is March 9.

North Carolina's State Energy Office has announced a new program which offers grants between \$100,000 and \$500,000 for energy efficiency upgrades such as solar electricity, solar-thermal systems, and installation of energy efficient lighting. This program is for owners of commercial or industrial facilities and incorporated "large" nonprofits (nonprofits that occupy a space that they own of 20,000 square feet or more) to conduct energy efficiency upgrades. This program is made possible by federal funding from ARRA. The SEO is seeking projects that will be able to be implemented quickly and notes that the applicant entity/recipient entity will need to manage the work itself. **Deadline to apply is March 9 at 2pm.** To obtain a copy of the 2011 Energy Efficiency Projects for Commercial, Industrial and Large Nonprofit Sectors RFP, go [HERE](#).

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Rutherford's Facebook Data Center construction employs hundreds and patronizes local businesses.

Hundreds of construction specialists are now working on the fast-moving Facebook data center project near Forest City, with a wide variety of local merchants also picking up business. As of mid-January, the massive build out employed an average of between 200 to 250 qualified workers per day, with well over half coming from Rutherford County or the surrounding area. Read more [HERE](#).

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WNC businesses and AdvantageWest programs receive national recognition and media exposure, from Industry Week to NY Times and others.

The spotlight continues to shine on Western North Carolina! Here's a glimpse:

- **Industry Week:** Snap-on Power Tools in Murphy is named one of the country's Top 10 best manufacturers in the publication's annual rankings. Read the article [HERE](#).

- **NY Times:** "How to Choose a Small-Business Incubator" mentions Blue Ridge Food Ventures and includes a photo of the founders of Buchi, a company that got its start at BRFV. (Buchi is also a recipient of an AdvantageWest Advantage Opportunity Fund loan.) Read the article [HERE](#).

- **UNC-TV:** Several WNC businesses and organizations are profiled in the segment "North Carolina Rising," including Gaia Herbs in Transylvania Co, Brushy Mountain Bee Farm and Meadow Mountain Grist Mill in Wilkes Co, Bent Creek Institute in Buncombe, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Cultural Tourism, HandMade in America, and the Center for Applied Technology (CAT) at Tri-County Community College in Cherokee Co. See the videos [HERE](#) and [HERE](#).

- **WLOS-TV:** Instructors at Tri-County Community College's Center for Applied Technology are honored in the "Person of the Week" segment. View the video [HERE](#).

- **Our State Magazine:** "Making it to Market" profiles Blue Ridge Food Ventures and includes interviews with several current BRFV clients. Read the article [HERE](#).

- **Smoky Mountain Living:** A profile on Blue Ridge Food Ventures "graduate" Lusty Monk Mustard includes a sidebar on Blue Ridge Food Ventures and other BRFV clients. Read the article [HERE](#).

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Mark your calendar for these upcoming events & opportunities.

Feb 14, 1-4pm: e-NC Authority Broadband Update - *NC Arboretum*. (See article in this newsletter.)

Feb 17, 2pm: AdvantageWest Board of Directors Meeting - *AdvantageWest Offices*. Regular bimonthly meeting of the 21-member Board of Directors. Open to the public. Call 828.687-7234 for more information.

Feb 22: Registration deadline for NC Conference on Sustainable Viticulture - Event takes place Feb 23 (See article in this newsletter)

Feb 23: Poster session abstracts due for 'Science in the Mountains' conference - *A-B Tech Enka Campus*. Conference on entrepreneurship and biotechnology career opportunities in NC, sponsored by NC Biotechnology Center, is accepting poster session titles and abstracts through Feb 23 [HERE](#). Info on the April 18-19 conference [HERE](#) - register by April 8.

March 5-6: Organic Growers School - *UNC Asheville*. Early bird rate of \$40 continues until Feb 17 at 5pm. Info [HERE](#).

March 9, 2pm: Deadline for Energy Grants (See article in this newsletter.)

April 1: Deadline for submissions - AdvantageWest/VERVE Business Plan Competition for Women Entrepreneurs (See article in this newsletter.)

May 5 - SAVE THE DATE! AdvantageWest's Carolina Connect. Annual daylong conference for entrepreneurs and investors. Registration opens soon - watch for details.

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Check out the AdvantageWest website for announcements, press

releases and more news of interest.

[Bookmark the AdvantageWest Online Newsroom](#) for a roundup of other news and items of interest from around the region, including the following:

- MARC is named one of 20 national semifinalists: Lodestar Foundation recognizes successful and innovative partnerships; 8 finalists to be selected and awarded a total of \$250,000.
- Henderson Co Welder is Small Business of the Year: Advanced Technical Welding Inc is named NC's Small Business of the Year for 2010. Buncombe's Carolina Management Team LLC is runner-up.
- Local filmmaker's flick released nationally: "Red Dirt Rising," a feature-length film covering early stock car racing and produced by a resident of Transylvania Co, is released nationally.
- Expansions and other job announcements: Digital services provider Arvato to create 408 jobs in Buncombe and invest \$1.8 million during the next three years; textile firm Sattler AG to locate in Caldwell Co, creating 76 jobs and investing \$4.56 million during the next three years.

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Got news?

We welcome your announcements about economic development activities within the 23-county region of Western North Carolina. Submit news for consideration to the [newsletter editor](#). AdvantageWest reserves the right to modify submissions to conform to editorial guidelines, space constraints, timeliness and other circumstances.



AdvantageWest is the regional economic development partnership serving the 23 westernmost counties of North Carolina. Chartered by the state General Assembly in 1994, AdvantageWest is a nonprofit, public-private partnership governed by a 21-member board of directors. Our program of work focuses on advanced manufacturing, entrepreneurial development, agribusiness, and the green economy. AdvantageWest also maintains the WNC Film Commission.

AdvantageWest Economic Development Group - 134 Wright Brothers Way - Fletcher, NC 28732 - 828.687.7234
www.advantagewest.com

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