



## NOW OPEN: Registration for Carolina Connect 2011, coming May 5 at Renaissance Asheville.

*Sign up today for early bird rates.*

Mark your calendar and register today: Carolina Connect is Western North Carolina's signature event for connecting entrepreneurs and investors across the region and beyond. [Registration is now open, with special early bird rates of \\$110 per person](#), which includes a breakfast reception, lunch, and post-conference refreshments and beverages on the terrace. This much anticipated event is Thursday, May 5, 8:30am - 5:30pm at Renaissance Asheville (registration and pre-conference breakfast begins at 7:30am). [Register online here.](#)

Carolina Connect is a full day of networking, professional development and idea-sharing. Produced by AdvantageWest in partnership with Mountain BizWorks, this is sure to be the best attended Carolina Connect conference since our start in 2002.

### *5 reasons to mark 5/5 on your calendar!*

**(1) INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED KEYNOTE SPEAKER:** This year's lunchtime keynote speaker is Peter Shankman, a globally recognized PR and social media entrepreneur, author and angel investor. He travels roughly 300,000 miles a year speaking and consulting - by the end of February alone he will have traveled to London, Frankfurt, South Africa, Washington DC, Philadelphia, Las Vegas, Atlanta, and his hometown of New York City, with other recent trips to Saudi Arabia, Tokyo, Thailand, Mexico and major cities across the U.S. And now he's coming to Western North Carolina!

Peter has appeared in countless national publications, including *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Daily News*, *USA Today*, *the Associated Press* and *Reuters*. He has also appeared on CNN, MSNBC and Fox News (including an appearance just this week). [More about Peter Shankman here.](#)

**(2) BREAKOUT SESSIONS:** Throughout the morning and afternoon, breakout educational sessions will provide key concepts and ideas for entrepreneurs at all stages of business development, as well as investors. These will be organized within three concurrent tracks focused on innovation and high growth, green business initiatives, and capital and finance.

**(3) CRITICAL CONVERSATIONS ON HOT TOPICS:** The popular Critical Conversations Networking Cafe is back

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with a dynamic series of new topics relevant to trends in the global economy. Join peers and industry professionals for up-close-and-personal discussions in a fun, interactive environment.

**(4) BUSINESS PLAN COMPETITION:** The winner of our business plan competition for women entrepreneurs, sponsored by AdvantageWest and Verve Magazine, will be announced during Carolina Connect. Want to enter? The deadline is April 1. [See article below for details.](#)

**(5) NETWORKING, NETWORKING AND MORE NETWORKING:** Besides the education and enlightenment you can get from all our general and breakout sessions, this is a day for networking. From the time you arrive until the end of the post-conference reception - and all throughout the day - there will be many opportunities for mingling with new contacts and reconnecting with others. Many a deal has been made at Carolina Connect!

## *Carolina Connect sponsorships now available*

AdvantageWest and [Mountain BizWorks](#), both nonprofit organizations, rely on the generosity of sponsorships to bring this jam-packed day of professional development and networking opportunities to the business community at an affordable price. [To learn about sponsorship benefits and opportunities, click here.](#)

## *Early bird registration available only through April 15. Sign up now!*

Early bird registration for Carolina Connect is only \$110 and available through April 15. After that, prices go up to \$125 per person. Don't miss out on this great opportunity - [register today!](#)

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## **AdvantageWest and VERVE magazine seek submissions from women entrepreneurs for business plan competition. Deadline is April 1!**

AdvantageWest's entrepreneurial development program and [VERVE](#), a monthly magazine targeting WNC women in the arts, business, fashion and design, continue to accept submissions for the VERVE-aciouly 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 on May 5.

Businesses participating in the 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](#).



*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.*

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