

Biz Briefs

Realtor earns elite designation

Kara Hart, a real estate agent with Carrboro's Terra Nova Global Properties, recently graduated from the National Association of REALTORS® e-PRO certification course. The program prepares real estate professionals to identify, evaluate and implement new Internet business models. Though more than 80 percent of home buyers and sellers use the web, only 1 percent of the nation's REALTORS has completed the e-PRO course.

Nominations sought for Pauli Murray Awards

Know a local business that's working for social justice in our community and beyond? Nominate them for the Orange County Human Relations Commission's Pauli Murray Human Relations Awards. The honor is presented annually to an Orange County business that has served the community with distinction in the pursuit of equality, justice and human rights for all citizens. (Awards also are given to an individual adult and youth.) Nominations are due Jan. 23. For applications or more information, visit www.co.orange.nc.us/hrr/events.asp or call 960-3875. The awards will be made during the Annual Pauli Murray Awards Ceremony on Feb. 22.

Company to co-develop ALS therapy

Chapel Hill's Asklepios BioPharmaceutical, Inc., and ALS Therapy Development Institute will collaborate to create a panel of viral vectors that could be deployed to deliver treatments that will slow or stop amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), also known as Lou Gehrig's disease. Researchers believe that this kind of gene therapeutic is the best way to address complex diseases like ALS. The project is financed through a three-year, \$18-million funding and scientific collaboration between ALS TDI and with the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA). AskBio's intellectual property portfolio was created with more than \$35 million in grants and other funding, and is based on the scientific work of R. Jude Samulski and his colleagues at UNC.

Registration open for CED program

The Council for Entrepreneurial Development opened registration for its next FastTrac® TechVenture™ class. The class will run Tuesday evenings from Feb. 3 to April 14. The application deadline is Friday. Online application is available at www.cednc.org/fasttrac. In the program, start-up entrepreneurs work with local experts to create a business plan — from refining the business concept to writing the business plan. After completing the class, participants possess a detailed business plan and executive summary presentation, as well as a strong understanding of how to finance a company.

Chamber annual meeting

The Chamber will host its 2009 Annual Meeting from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday at the Carolina Club. Registration and networking will begin at 11 a.m., and the program will begin promptly at 11:30. The Carolina Club is located at the corner of Stadium Drive and Ridge Road on the UNC campus. Parking is available in the Rams Head Parking Deck on Ridge Road. Click here to register, or visit www.carolinachamber.org/annualmeeting for more information.

Inaugural Ball

Due to Tuesday's inclement weather, the Inaugural Ball scheduled for Tuesday at the Siena Hotel has been rescheduled for Saturday at 8 p.m. Tickets are still available for the event. For more information or to reserve a space, contact the Siena Hotel at 929-4000.



... **Biz Blog** ... Hankinger for a local angle on breaking business news? **The Citizen** has started the Orange County Housing & Economy blog (carrborocitizen.com/housing) to sate your jones. In addition to late-breaking news, the blog also features personnel and business announcements. Got something you'd like us to post? For consideration send it to: **Margot Lester: margot@carrborocitizen.com**

Doing more to keep your job

BY MARGOT C. LESTER
Staff Writer

Misery may love company, but griping with your colleagues isn't the most effective way to deal with the threat of layoffs. "While it is human nature to participate in water cooler discussions, you need to stay focused on the job at hand," says David Hemmer, president and COO of Career Partners International, an international counseling service based in Chapel Hill. "How you handle this difficult time will reflect on your supervisors' view of you." With pink slips as common as candy wrappers, kvetching is the easy way out — and I do mean out. Instead of complaining or worrying about your status, take control of it. Contrary to what you may think, there are ways to reduce your chances of getting laid off — and improve the odds of getting a good recommendation if you do. Here's how: **Cultivate on-the-job relationships:** "Be the kind of help to your boss that you would like to have from someone working for you," counsels

Jim Weinstein, a Washington D.C.-based life consultant. "To be clear, I am *not* talking about brown-nosing here — I'm talking about making genuine contributions rather than appearing to make them, or taking credit for contributions that are not yours, which will probably infuriate those around you and create ill will that you certainly don't need at this precarious time. Be a contributor to the superior functioning of your team or department. A team member who smoothly interacts with others is a lot less trouble, and therefore more valuable, than someone who has prickly relationships with his co-workers." **Focus on your value:** The biggest mistake many people make is assuming they're a top performer already, according to Linda Conklin, manager of alumni career services at UNC. "People get complacent in their jobs — not so much in what they're doing, but in making sure their managers know what they're doing. Know what you do to add value and tell your boss." Regularly ask yourself (and then tell your boss): What are your ac-

complishments? What needs to be done and how can you do it? Are you in alignment with what your boss wants? **Choke back the bile:** Your attitude toward your work will have a direct impact on your output, and therefore your value. "Most employees are being asked by their firms to do more, often for less compensation. And this, quite naturally, can foster bitterness and anger," Weinstein notes. "Nonetheless, it is crucial to make consistent efforts to rid yourself of these emotions. Easier said than done? Yes, absolutely. But don't for a minute think you can't influence your state of mind towards your employer. Take an inventory of your resentments and what you perceive to be unfair at work. Then notice how much time you spend focusing on *this* inventory as opposed to another you need to take: what are all of the good things about your job. By remaining vigilant throughout the day for the tendency to focus on the half-empty, rather than the half-full, glass, you can start to shift the balance in a direction that will not only foster

less anger, but will also bring you greater job satisfaction." **Continue to develop yourself:** Staying current with your certifications and adding to your knowledge and skills bases can help you increase your value to the organization. Read industry journals, stay up on trends affecting customers, attend classes offered by trade groups or other organizations. All this allows you to be "the primary expert in some area of the company's work or operation," says John Challenger, CEO of Challenger, Gray & Christmas, the Chicago-based international jobs expert. "Ask yourself this: 'Will your work still be done if you're not there? If the answer's no, if there's no back-up, it'd be awfully hard for them to let you go.'" Each of these ideas requires some degree of extra work and time, but in today's shaky job market it is well worth making that investment. "Consistently working on them, or at least keeping them in mind, will most certainly raise your value at work, and consequently increase your job security," Weinstein says.

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Cut pay, not jobs: "Sometimes if you can reduce everyone's salaries, you can avoid a layoff completely or do a smaller one," Hardy says. That's what Hewlett-Packard did back in the 1980s. Instead of laying folks off, everyone took a 10 percent pay cut for about six months. This enabled the tech giant to cut costs without losing talent or totally killing morale. It's also a good idea to give as much notice of the cuts as possible, Hardy adds. "Tell them to start being frugal now, before the cuts come." Unfortunately, even if you follow this advice, you may still have to bite the bullet and hand out some pink slips. In that case, it's crucial to be communicative and honest, says Hugh O'Neill,



Hugh O'Neill

Edward M. O'Herron, Jr. Distinguished Scholar and professor of strategy and entrepreneurship at UNC Kenan-Flagler. "As obvious as it may seem that layoffs are necessary, they are often a surprise to the workforce. Some corporations do try to avoid giv-

ing people bad news so they don't say anything about what might be coming. When they do, it's a shock." Instead of withholding the bad news, talk about it. This means providing information on corporate performance, benchmarks and timeframes for making decisions as often as possible. Management should indicate things they're trying to do to take steps other than layoffs to solve problems," O'Neill adds. The information helps employees see the reality, and it keeps those productivity-killing rumors to a minimum. And when the cuts do come, communicate with feeling. "Frequently corporations don't communicate anything that indicates a sense of empathy for the laid off," O'Neill says. This tactic not only is hurtful to those who are laid off, but is damaging

to those who remain. "They feel a guilt that leads to a set of cultural issues. And the level of the guilt is a direct function of explanations managers use to justify layoffs, and the perceived equity workers feel. It's manifested by low morale, increased absences, lack of willingness to do extra work. There's also a fair amount of lost time due to people consoling each other." There's no way to completely avoid the impact of a bad economy, but it's definitely possible to mitigate negative consequences. Companies that do that tend to come out of turbulent times in good shape — and you want to be one of them. "They have more market share and motivated employees, and they generate more revenue and margin," Roberts says. "So being strategic and thoughtful seems to suggest success."

Carrboro Citizen announces expansion

The Carrboro Citizen plans to increase its circulation by 20 percent by the end of the first quarter of 2009 and will expand editorial coverage in Chapel Hill, the company announced Thursday. Publisher Robert Dickson said adding rack and news-box locations in Chapel Hill, Hillsborough and Pittsboro already has accommodated a 10 percent increase in circulation for the free newspaper, from 5,000 to 5,500. The newspaper plans to add additional distribution points to bring that number to 6,000. "We are slowly but surely growing our reach," Dickson said. "The important thing is that reader demand for the news-

paper is driving the circulation jump." *The Citizen* currently distributes 2,225 papers in Carrboro, 2,400 in Chapel Hill, 525 in Hillsborough and 350 in Chatham County at more than 130 locations. Dickson said reader interest is also driving an increase in coverage. This month, *The Citizen* began weekly coverage of Chapel Hill town government. Editor Kirk Ross, who covered the town and UNC for the Chapel Hill News for several years, will be the chief reporter on the Chapel Hill beat. "A lot of people have urged us to include more coverage of Chapel Hill," Ross said. "This is going to be an important year for the town, with Carolina North negotiations,

concerns about the budget and the local economy, major construction in the works downtown and a municipal election." *The Citizen* also has recently expanded its coverage of business and the local economy, signing on veteran writer Margot Carmichael Lester to write for both the paper and a new blog called Orange County Housing & Commerce. The blog's address is carrborocitizen.com/housing. In addition to the business blog, *The Citizen* is also adding several new contributors to its MILL blog. MILL's address is carrborocitizen.com/mill

—Staff Reports

Human Relations Month Events

KICK-OFF EVENT

Sunday, January 25, 2009 • 3 pm - 5 pm

PLACE: Carrboro Century Center — 100 North Greensboro Street, Carrboro

THEME: "Power Of The People: Race And The Environment In Orange County"

SPEAKER: Mr. Omega R. Wilson — President, West End Revitalization Association

PERFORMANCE: East Baile Latino

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PAULI MURRAY

HUMAN RELATIONS AWARDS CEREMONY

Sunday, February 22, 2009 • 2 pm - 5 pm

PLACE: The Little Theater, New Hope Elementary School Auditorium

EVENTS: Student Essay Contest Winners Announced;
Pauli Murray Human Relations Award Recipients Announced

QUESTIONS AND INFORMATION:

Orange County Office of Human Rights & Relations
(919) 960-3875



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