

NEWS RELEASE

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UWA, BLACK BELT COMMISSION OFFER SECOND ANNUAL HOMEGROWN SMALL
BUSINESS CONFERENCE

Work from Home...Inside or Out!

TUSCALOOSA, AL—The University of West Alabama Small Business Development Center and the Alabama Black Belt Commission will host the second annual Homegrown Small Business Conference on Friday, September 26, 2014.

The conference, to be held at Shelton State Community College, will include two tracks: the first focuses on farming and agribusiness, and the second targets women and youth who want to start businesses in their home. Donald Mills, chairman of the Black Belt Commission's Small Business Development Committee and director of the University of West Alabama's Small Business Development Center, said, "This will be a great opportunity for a diverse set of entrepreneurs to come together and get the tools they need to succeed in business."

Opening the conference will be Charles Spurlin, owner of The Shirt Shop in downtown Tuscaloosa. He will share lessons he has learned as a successful business owner. "We were so pleased that Mr. Spurlin agreed to be our opening speaker," said Ginger Stewart, project manager for the Small Business Development Committee. "He is an excellent example of how small businesses are the lifeblood of a community. He's done so much to grow and maintain downtown, and he's extremely adept at marketing and branding."

For the luncheon keynote address, 11-year-old Moziah Bridges of Memphis will be traveling to Tuscaloosa to inspire the audience. Moziah, CEO of Mo's Bows, has been featured in national media for his successful entrepreneurship. Mo has appeared in magazines including *O: The Oprah Magazine*, *GQ*, *Forbes*, *Vogue*, *Glamour* and *Esquire* and has appeared on the television program *Shark Tank*. "Mo's bow tie business earned over \$30,000 last year," Stewart said. "He's a real go-getter. Plus, he's adorable! We can't wait for the audience to meet him."

Breakout sessions will include testimonials from other entrepreneurs, information on resources and loans, and technology. Attendees will also learn how

to write a business plan, which Mills said is “the first step to getting any business off the ground.”

The program opens at 8:30 a.m., with registration beginning at 7:45 a.m. However, conference organizers encourage interested parties to contact the University of West Alabama Small Business Development Center at (205) 652-3665 to pre-register. More information and online registration are also available at www.westalabamaconferencesandevents.com.

The Alabama Black Belt Commission is Governor Bentley’s task force for improving conditions in twelve of the state’s most impoverished counties. The Small Business Development Committee assists Black Belt entrepreneurs and business owners in creating and growing their own enterprises.

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