

**MAY 2009**

## Commissioner Socolow Welcomes First Generation Entrepreneurs to a 9-Month Weekend Training Program

Commissioner of the [Department of Labor and Workforce Development](#), David Socolow, addressed a group of 50 first generation entrepreneurs stating that the nine-month training program that they are embarking on is a culmination of New Jersey's efforts to give people the opportunity to succeed. He also credited the workforce as New Jersey's competitive advantage that leads the State's economic development strategy. He added that even though New Jersey is not a low cost state, it is the most WIRED and the most productive.

Out of the 39 Workforce in Innovation for Regional Economic Development (WIRED) federal grants, New Jersey received three, making it the most WIRED state. This training program, entitled the Entrepreneurial Pioneers Initiative (EPI), is funded by [North Jersey Partners](#) through WIRED and developed and managed by [The Center for Urban Entrepreneurship and Economic Development](#) (CUEED) at the Rutgers Business School in Newark.

Over 150 entrepreneurs applied for EPI that includes workshops on operations and technology management, branding, procurement, strategic alliances, and international trade. EPI also offers entrepreneurs one-on-one and group counseling, mentoring, and networking opportunities. Dr. Jeffrey Robinson, assistant director of the CUEED summed up this opportunity, "We will challenge you to make your business grow."

The group was also welcomed by Chancellor Steve Diner – Rutgers University, Newark; Vice President of Programs for the Newark Alliance, Kathy Weaver; Director of the Rutgers Small Business Development Center, Dr. Tendai N'doro; and Mitchell Green from the Greater Newark Business Development Center.



A full house for the kickoff event for the Entrepreneurial Pioneers Initiative training program held at Rutgers University - Newark.

### North Jersey Partners Happenings...

*Advanced Invention to Venture Training Course* designed for technology-based businesses focusing on licensing or commercializing product and/or services, June 8-11, 2009 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the New Jersey Institute of Technology, Economic Development Center, Newark, NJ. Registration Fee is \$250. Register at [Invention2Venture](#).

# Retail Customer Service and Sales Training Course Has Students Waiting in Line

The response for the Customer Service and Sales Training course offered by Union, Warren, Passaic, and Hudson County Community Colleges has been overwhelming. The free, 120-hour training program is funded by [North Jersey Partners](#).

All of the initial courses are filled with Union, Warren, and Passaic adding second sessions to meet the demand. To qualify, applicants must be active job seekers, ready to begin a job after training, and must live or be seeking work in New Jersey. Each applicant is screened before being accepted.

This course prepares students for two National Retail Federation Foundation certifications: the National Professional Certification in Sales and the National Professional Certification in Customer Service. This training program offers students the advantage of entering the retail workforce with increased knowledge and better skills to serve customers.

---

## Verify-ED and ContestDesigns Win IFEL Competitions

The Institute for Entrepreneurial Leadership (IFEL) announced the winner of its 2nd Annual Business Plan Competition along with the winner of Dr. Randal Pinkett's Campus CEO Challenge at a luncheon in late April supported by [North Jersey Partners](#).

Joelle Hinds-Ware's Verify-ED, a resume verification and background screening service, took first prize out of a field of 27 business plan applicants. IFEL's Chief Operating Officer, Jill Johnson, explained, "The field of submissions was extremely diverse. We are pleased that as a result of the technical assistance that was provided as part of the competition, the finalist pool that emerged was extremely high quality. All of the finalists have tremendous potential to create jobs that will help strengthen New Jersey's economy. We look forward to working with Joelle and the other finalists over the course of the next year as they take another step toward realizing their respective visions. We thank North Jersey Partners for supporting this effort."

As for the 20 Campus CEO Challenge competitors, Babatunde Busari, a senior from the New Jersey Institute of Technology, received first place honors for ContestDesigns.com, a global online design marketplace where a design project can be launched as a contest. Dr. Pinkett, chairman and CEO of BCT Partners, added, "During a time of economic difficulty all over the world, Babatunde Busari's ContestDesigns.com adeptly evens the playing field, not only for the graphic designer, whether stay-at-home mom, freelancer, corporate employee or fledgling artist, but also for individuals in countries that would normally not have access to the kind of design options prevalent in wealthier places."