

>> Hello, and welcome to The Valley Today.

I am your host, Janet Michael.

We are pre-recording today's conversation with Guy Curtis.

It is LFCC day so Guy Curtis is sharing a Zoom screen with me from Lord Fairfax Community College's Workforce Solutions, though technically, he is in his office at his house.

We are recording today's show on a fairly beautiful, so far, not too humid Wednesday morning.

You, of course, are listening to it on Thursday afternoon.

Also on the screen with us is Christine Kriz.

She's the director of the Lord Fairfax Small Business Development Center, and we're going to talk a little bit about transitioning, about reopening, about re-skilling, learning new things.

We've got all kinds of stuff that we're going to talk about today, Guy, because you always bring a good list of things to talk about.

>> Well, thank you.

Thanks for having us back on and I'm glad you're allowing us back.

But yes, we definitely have a lot of opportunities and it's hard for many folks right now because of the challenging times that we're in.

But those who have the opportunity to rethink, re-strategize, whether you're a small business or if you're an individual re-seeking a career change we're here to help on a number of different ways at the college.

We want to share some of those opportunities and some of those updates.

We're very excited to begin opening our campus again.

A lot of our courses that were paused during the pandemic,
we will resume next week actually on the 13th,
and many of our in-person courses also are resuming too.

The college itself has continued to be online and done some a lot of remote learning,
and the college will continue that this fall as well,
but the in-person courses are still happening and taking place.

I'll add Workforce Solutions in around the college.

We're hoping obviously to encourage folks to consider those as they are in
certain situations that they're able to look at the career training programs we offer,
and of course the small business resources that we
have with Christine Kriz in small business development center.

>> Guy, I guess it's really convenient for you to have

Christine literally just down the hall from you.

Because she's dealing with businesses, I would imagine,

and I know she's going to speak to this,

that are either struggling,

they're growing, or they're closing,

and if they're doing the closing part,

they've got to figure out what they're going to do with the rest of their life.

She can send them to you and the same goes for the other way.

If you have somebody who's taking some of

these classes because they want to start a business,

you can send them right down the hall to Christine.

>> Absolutely. The hand-off is very organic and natural, sometimes depending on the individual where they want to go. Unfortunately, many businesses may have closed or are about to close soon and she has tremendous amount of resources to help those folks. But if they're at a point where, "When I'm done with the small little business I've been running for years, I want to transition to something entirely different," we can certainly help them there. But she's the expert to help those individuals as they are unfolding their business and handing things off to maybe another business owner or if they're moving on. She would be a great resource to do that. But certainly if taking entirely new career, we can help in many different ways. Yes, we're happy to have her just down the hall, and a quicker short distance the hand-off is perspective interested, business owners and students.

>> Christine, Guy brings up a good point because we've done so much talking, at least I have in particular, about the impact that COVID-19 has had on the business community, on us as regular people in our everyday lives. But he brings up a good point because some business owners may decide, this is it, I'm done. It may not have anything to do directly with the pandemic, the pandemic just made them realize,

I'm too old for this,

or this isn't something I enjoy anymore.

You're a really great resource for them to come as a starting point,

to get to that endpoint, right?

>> Definitely. One thing we know from COVID,

it's given us all a chance to slow down a little bit

and evaluate our life choices and what we're doing.

We know that a small business is like raising kids.

It's the most rewarding and the hardest thing a person could ever do.

There may be folks out there,

if you've decided that maybe owning

a small business isn't what you want to do for the rest of your life,

maybe you want to sell it,

or maybe you want to close it,

or maybe unfortunately you're struggling with it,

we can help give you the tools and counsel

you through the steps to close or sell a business.

Then as Guy mentioned, it's very organic.

Right down the hall from us,

and or through a Zoom meeting.

If you're more comfortable meeting via Zoom,

we can help connect you because they've got a lot of

great career programs in IP and CDL and business.

I mean, there's a lot of different options that if you decide to close your business,

you owe it to yourself to reach out to work for solutions and find out what they have available.

Potentially keep an eye open because potentially there may be grants in the future to help pay for that fast track career changing, or upskilling.

Nothing in stone yet,

but just keep looking at and researching the LFCC Workforce Solutions.

>> Well, in the other piece of what you just mentioned too, Christine, is businesses come to you in all the different stages of business, whether it's,

"Hey, I think I have an idea and I don't know if it's a good business to.

I've been in business five years,

ten years, and now I need to add employees,

or I need to add a product line,

or I'm adding in-house manufacturing to what I'm doing now."

Then they need training.

They need to know, how do I hire these people and then how do

I get them trained to do the job that I need?

I'm sure you guys work pretty closely on that as well.

>> A lot of these small businesses, if you're listening,

you know you've had to pivot and you've probably had to learn a lot of new tools.

As you reopen, your business may look different.

You may not have your same employees,

you may need employees,

you may need to train them.

The college has some great classes to help you do that,

and we can connect to you very easily.

>> Guy, how has it been working from home from a communication perspective?

Have you guys seen an uptick in people reaching out saying,

I'm interested in this or that,

because they're home and they're rethinking their life choices and their work options?

>> Yes, certainly. Many of businesses who have

had to adapt to this new online environment,

we've done the same as well.

Fortunately, the college itself had a lovely license to live chats.

In other words, we're now live chatting with our customers remotely.

We've always been their remotely,

but I guess now we can connect to them much easier.

I think, yes, with this new pivot and this new change in the online environment,

just there the day I personally went to my son's and daughter's orthodontics

appointment and they're texting me to be

ready to come inside to the office to [inaudible] the kids.

There's this new way of interfacing with customers,

and now with this new online environment that we're really focusing right now,

just keep ourselves safe.

That's the chance to the pivot, like Christine said,

to a new opportunity for a small business.

Or if you're thinking a whole new career to go out on your own to join another business,

we have the training programs to align you with that.

Also, a quick fast-track way to do it,

something that we've have been offering for years,
which are career changing programs, upsilon,
reinvent themselves and find themselves in a high-demand career area.

But we brought that back. So back in 2008,
2009 emerged these bootcamp style programs that
were very regimented, short-term in nature.

We've always offered career changers that take weeks and sometimes obviously not years,
but these new boot camps are back.

One of the big areas that we have a mini boot camps in is our IT area.

If you're looking to get in IT,
and that's one observation we've seen with labor market data,
is that many retail positions
have closed and minimized some other opportunities they have,
but we've seen an emergence of IT.

Software development, web developers,
IT infrastructure, IT help support desk.

All these different types of roles,
whether small business owners and take these on to incorporate
into how they provide services to their customers,
or if it's an individual trying to reflect what's happening in our local environment,
it's just a great way to pivot and provide a new opportunity
to either rebrand yourself or find new ways to meet where your customers are.

We have those opportunities that are reflected, and those boot camps,
as I mentioned, are a quick way for an individual to get into it.

Or if you have an employee that you have on board now that you want to upskill as fast as you can to reflect today's market.

On the call before we got on, Janet,

you were talking about how convenient it is to have things delivered to your house, or if you go pick up an order.

I've been noticing personally,

so many businesses are incorporating this safe distance thing and using technology to support it.

Just thinking of ways for folks to

really reinvent their business or how to provide a service,

online and IT environment is going to be a great way to really focus

their strategies in upskilling their own personal employees,

or if they're wanting to jump off on their own

to reinvent themselves entirely differently.

>> I've always joked with a lot of

my business owner friends and colleagues

about how sometimes it feels like here in the Shenandoah Valley,

we're 10, maybe 15 years behind what we see in the major metro cities,

and it takes a while for us to catch on.

But I think this kind of sped that up a little bit.

You're a local resource because while you can look

at these big national numbers and see this data,

you're able to pull that into something right here in our community.

That the two of you can then say,

hey, this is what we can do.

It doesn't have to be a big box store or
a major chain that can only offer this particular type of service.

>> Janet, we were talking prior to recording this as well,
and Janet's a great marketing expert as well.

We both agree, if you're listening,
if you switch to online e-commerce during COVID,
please do not forget about
that and let it go by the wayside now that we're gradually reopening.

Because customers will want different options,
and not everyone feels safe.

If you're not skilled in that area
or you want some training or want to train your employees,
the college is here for you to be able to do that.

I go through counseling at our center at the SBDC workforce classes,
you won't find a better group of people that
are willing to help you with your individual.

>> Well, on that note guys,
and she said something nice about me and gave a compliment to you.

We're going to take a break so that people
hear something good before we go to the commercials.

We are going to take a quick break, when we come back,
we're going to continue our conversation with Guy Curtis.

He is with LFCC's Workforce Solutions.

Christine Kriz is also on the zoom screen with us.

She is the Director at Lord Fairfax Small Business Development Center.

It is LFCC Day on the screen.

Again, we are pre-recording this on a Wednesday morning.

You, of course, are listening to it on Thursday afternoon,

regardless, we're going to be back in about two or three minutes.

>> Expecting to hear a commercial,

that's what this is, sort of.

First, I want to thank you for listening to the Valley Today podcast.

You're one of thousands who listen to the show this way every month.

Sometimes it's because our listeners are busy

and they want to listen when it fits their schedule,

or it's a guest on the show who want to hear what they

sounded like when they were on the radio.

We even have a few binge listeners who listen to

a week's worth added time and even imagined.

So if you want those people,

your potential customers, to hear your message,

then this could have been your ad, and the bonus,

your commercial isn't restricted to just 30 or 60 seconds.

You can take up to two minutes to talk to those customers.

There's even the opportunity to be an exclusive sponsor of the Valley Today podcast,

which also gets you on air mentions at the end of every show.

If any of this sounds interesting to you,

give me a call at the station;

540-635-4121 or send me an e-mail to Janet@theriver953.com.

You can also find all my contact info by searching for me on Theriver953.com.

Welcome back to the Valley Today,

I am your host, Janet Michael,

we are sharing a Zoom screen today with Guy Curtis from LFCC's Workforce Solutions.

It is LFCC Day on this screen.

We are, of course, pre-recording this on a Wednesday morning,

you're listening on a Thursday afternoon.

Thank you for listening by the way,

Christine Kriz is also sharing a Zoom screen with us,

she is the director of Lord Fairfax Small Business Development Center.

We talked a lot a bit about

the different business climate that we find ourselves in right now.

Some of it due in part to the pandemic,

some of it because businesses grow and they change,

and I seized on a keyword that both of you had

mentioned to me in our pre-show chat about transitioning.

Christine, I'm guessing you're in the middle of

the greatest transition that we

will probably see in the Shenandoah Valley for years to come.

What are you hearing from business owners?

>> Sure, first just some expectations from our top economists in the nation.

They predict that it'll take us

three or three and a half years to get back to where we were pre-COVID,
and that 30 percent of small businesses will go away,
and that seven percent of all jobs will not be around in three years from now.

What that means to you as a small business owner,
or an employee of a small business,
or if you're looking to find out what to do with your small business,
you've got to evaluate and talk with
your current customers to say what do they want and need,
and is this something I'm still willing to offer and do?

Otherwise, if you're not listening and offering what your customer needs,
you're going to be out of business in six months or a year.

What we're hearing that people need,
one is more education on e-commerce.

How do I best come up high in Google results,
how do I make my retail physical location match my online store?

Those are things that we can help consult with you on at the SBDC.

Also, people hate to talk about it,
but if you're a small business owner,
you have got to be doing cash-flow projections and looking
at 20 percent decrease or 50 percent decrease.

If you'd all decrease,
yes for you, that's awesome.

But you need to be doing these cash flow projections for
at least the next year so that you don't make the irrational emotional decision.

We want you to have a cash flow plan in place.

If it's looking dire,

we have had some calls where people have said,

"Hey, I need to close my business," and that's fine.

If you're a small business owner,

you need to know that you just don't shut the door and walk away.

There are lots of steps that you have to do to close a business with the IRS,

and the Virginia SDC.

Please don't just close your doors and walk way,

there are things that you need to do,

and we can help you with that.

We've had some people talk about selling their business,

there are steps to prepare your business for a sale,

and ways to do that effectively.

If you're thinking about that,

it's an okay, there's a time and a place for everything.

We're here to help get you through that,

and also to prepare you for the next step,

what that next step looks like.

Some people may open a different business in a couple years,

and others may transition into other professions,

IT, or CDL, or other businesses,

and that's okay too.

What we really want you to hear is that LFCC is here for you,

and we provide different options.

We're here to help you with that.

>> Well, and Guy, Christine touched about a second ago for the next phase of your life,

and I get a lot of friends,

and family, and even clients to a certain degree,

that say it must be nice to have your own business and work when you want to work.

I start laughing hysterically,

and I want to work 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Don't even get started,

but a lot of people do decide after they've closed that business,

they want to go to a nine to five job or something

that has a little more structure and a lot less stress involved,

and that's where you're there to say,

"Well, what interests you,

what did your business do.

What did you like about running your business?

Here's a whole portfolio of programs."

You mentioned earlier that don't always take a year or two years,

and in some case, they don't even take six or eight months to complete.

>> That's what we really want you to hear.

If you have to close your business, that's okay.

We're here to help you get through that and get you through the next step.

Just as you said, Janet and Guy mentioned,

please don't think this is a incredible hurdle that you can't do.

These programs, some of them are short programs as I mentioned before,
the localities and the college.

There are lots of people looking at different great opportunities.

Nothing in stone yet but please know there is hope and there is a future,
and we're here to help get you through to that future whatever that might look like.

>> Guy, the fast-forward programs are the first thing that pop into my mind.

I swear I feel I could maybe even do the show without you now.

I've learned so much from everything that you've talked about when you come.

But that's a really good example because that's a whole bunch of different types
of job opportunities in those fast-forward programs, isn't it?

>> Exactly. So depending on where you are,

if you are a small business owner or someone who's continuing to work,
certainly you want to continue with some income,
but our programs do allow for the opportunity for
the closure or dismemberment of your business.

>> The transition.

>> The transition. That's the word I was looking for.

The transition of going out of that small business,
even though it is a lot of time and effort
to wipe your hands clean and walk out door thing,
but the thought is, you can still train and still
maintain a job on the side too or run a small business.

In other words, a lot of the fast-track programs do take weeks.

They don't take years to complete.

The great things about them is that they're aligned with a lot of in-demand jobs that are out there right now but they are challenging to fill by owners in the companies that are local. If I want to train a couple of days a week or I want to train full time, we have boot camp styles where you can uniquely train if you've been unemployed for several months and looking for that next opportunity.

There are funding opportunities for those who have been dislocated because of the closure of their company, for example.

Or there is fast-forward funding that Janet have heard a lot about that we will quiz you on later.

The thought is, there's a lot of funding opportunities, but there's a lot of flexibility depending on the crew you would like to get into that's high in demand, or the training that you're able to do.

Obviously, folks that want to maintain that work-life balance and maybe still work a full-time job or a part-time job as you go to school.

If you're needing to immediately train, we can work with you on that.

But also, if you will need to take time to transition from one career to the next, you have the autonomy to do that whether it's out of a small business that you're closing or reinventing, or if it's a small business that you're handing off, whatever it might be.

We had that autonomy and the ability too to having trained here on weekends, nights, evenings,

and very flexible training even during the day too,
during the week to allow you to still have that freedom and an opening timeframes.

>> I think the really cool thing about Lord Fairfax Community College in general,
and you guys take the full advantage of this in Workforce Solutions,
is the online piece of it.

You sell so much in the national news about the struggle for
public school systems and some colleges and
universities to make again that transition to online learning.

You guys already had a lot of programs that were already being done online.

People could do them nights,
weekends, on their lunch break,
and get some of this training in without having to physically set foot at the school.

>> Right. Believe it or not, the Community College System of Virginia
is a leader in the state among online courses.

Compared to the some of the foreign universities
and other institutions that are out there,
we're one of the top leaders of online courses.

We've always been here historically.

There was a natural transition for a lot of the courses
that whether their credit or non-credit,
to transition to the online environment.

If we're using Canvas or the old version of the Blackboard,
whatever it might be, that our instructors or staff are very flexible and adaptable.

I think that's where Christine is trying to driving it

too for this business that needed adapting to transition to a whole new world.

A lot of them are being faced with that,

but we're able to luckily,

pivot quickly and adjust to the demands.

I think this fall will continue to be online in some way form.

Of course, our hands-on courses that we are offering in-person who are taking

the strict cleaning and also

the social distancing guidelines that we need to make sure everyone is safe.

As students return to campus,

as folks come into our campuses,

we are taking very strict measures to make sure everyone's safe,

and we'll have a lot of that language available as you arrive.

But we want to reassure folks too that it is safe to join and start training again.

But if you feel more comfortable going online,

that opportunity is certainly there for you in a number of different ways.

That's a great way that offers flexibility, but certainly,

a lot of the hands-on stuff and eventually you have to get here in person

for is available but still safe for you to do so.

>> Guy, as we wrap up,

where can people get more information about all of these different programs,

about the boot camps?

Where is the best starting point for them if

they think they're at a point where they want to make some change?

>> Sure, absolutely. Our website is a great place to start, lfcworkforce.com.

You could live chat with us.

You can give us a call directly in our offices.

We have people answering phones right now.

Or just shoot us a some message really quickly just to see if there's a specific question that you have.

Certainly reaching out to Christine and let her reply to her website as well too.

But you can reach out to us directly at Workforce School,

who make the transition to hand off if we had

small business questions that you need to be addressed that she can answer it for you.

>> What is the web address?

>> Lsbdc.org.

>> Guy, yours is?

>> Lfccworkforce.com.

>> Awesome. Christine real quick for

somebody who's been living under a rock for I don't know how long,

tell me real quick about the SBDC because we've talked

a lot about your role in helping businesses open,

and grow, and close and all the different various stages of being in business.

What does the Small Business Development Center do and how can people reach you?

>> Sure. So we're federally funded through the SBA and

supported as well through the local economic development authorities.

What that means to our public is that they receive

free consulting from us on anything around starting a business,

preparing a loan application,

growing, managing, or selling your business.

We've got experts in different areas of business,

and we're here to help you.

We could meet via Zoom,

telephone, or from eight feet apart.

>> You mentioned a second ago,

but tell me again, what is the web address?

>> Lsbdc.org.

Lord Fairfax SBDC.

>> Awesome. Well, we're going to wrap up today's conversation for LFCC day.

We have been sharing a Zoom screen with Guy Curtis from LFCC Workforce Solutions.

Christine Kriz has joined us as well.

She is the director of the Lord Fairfax Small Business Development Center.

Thank you, guys, for taking some time out of

your morning to have a conversation with me. I appreciate it.

>> Great to see you.

>> Thanks, Janet.

>> Thank you.

>> Tomorrow on this schedule,

we are going to be talking with Turner and Mary Kay Kobayashi

from Audley Farm as the Clarke County farmers market is opening up this weekend.

I'm going to have a conversation with them

as you listen to this tomorrow on Friday afternoon.

However, as I'm sitting here on Wednesday morning,

I'm recording it this afternoon.

I need some training Guy in calendar management and what day of the week it is.

Do you think you're going to help me there?

>> I think you're doing great, actually.

You look pretty intense.

>> Well, regardless of what day today is or when you're listening to this because again,

you could be listening to it on a podcast and it

could be July by the time you hear this show.

I will be back on the air with you tomorrow a few minutes afternoon,

and I will definitely have a brand new episode of The Valley Today.

We're ready to go for you.