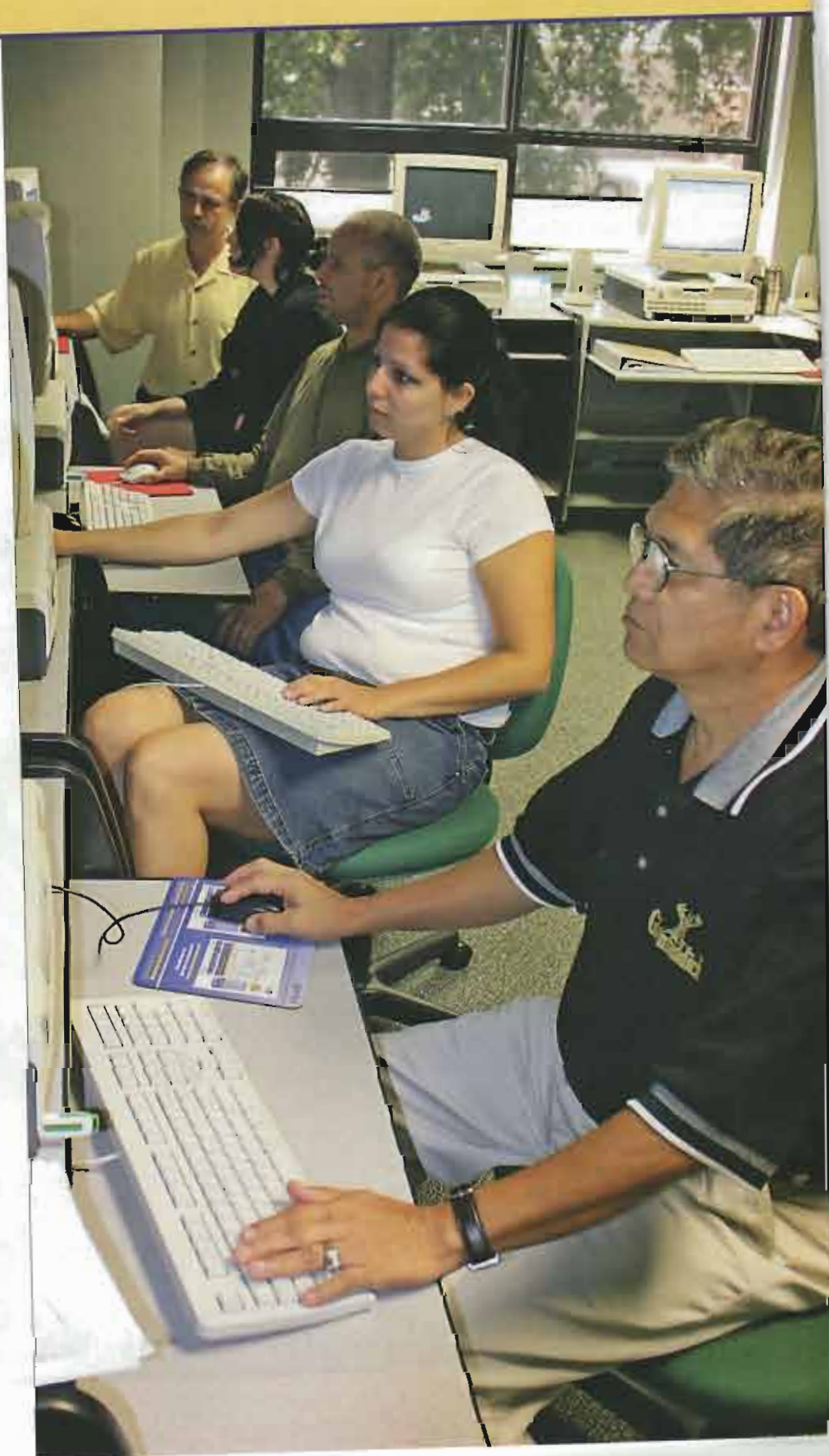


SLBDC - Creating futures



The Sarnia Lambton Business Development Corporation (SLBDC) has been trying to help entrepreneurs in the community for nearly two decades.

The Federally funded organization has helped 24,000 Lambton County residents in the past three years.

"We are here to offer support on the good days and the bad days," general manager of SLBDC Mike McDonough said.

"Financial and counseling are the two main fields we deal in."

According to McDonough qualified entrepreneurs could receive a loan to a maximum of \$150,000. for their business.

But something that SLBDC does offer to the community is a Self-Employment Benefit (SEB) program.

The program provides networking, personalized consultation, entrepreneurial skill development and income support to new entrepreneurs.

"The four-week work shop teaches the entrepreneurs about making a business plan, marketing,

websites and Emerge," he said.

"It also covers some of the problems and concerns with new businesses. The big thing is the financial support. Participants will receive money every week. This is to help bridge the gap between when a business starts and the first year. Hopefully, by the end of the first year the business owner will be making money and able to cover their personal expenses."

McDonough said there are about 12 (SEB) workshops a year, which are funded by the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

"I am a mother, so having the opportunity to open my own business in my home is like being a stay at home mom and getting paid for it," Amanda Beselaerre said.

She took the SEB workshop to help her open a scrap booking shop that will be called the Stamp N Stop.

Baselaerre was one of four people taking the workshop last month.

Maure Cheong is hoping to start a business called the Canadian-Korean Connection.

She wants to teach Korean students how to speak English.

Marcelo Villanueva is opening a consulting company that, among many other things, will create a profit and reduce scrap metal. He is opening it in Canada, but hoping to expand it all over the world.

Bill Fyfe has been working for companies for 25 years renovating residences.

He wants to go into business for himself so he asked the SLBDC for guidance.

These four very different and diverse ideas are in the same class getting guidance from the SLBDC.

According to McDonough that is just the diversity that makes the SLBDC program so good for the community.

Since 1992 the SEB program has helped 544 businesses employ 847 people.

McDonough said that every Monday at 2 p.m. those interested in the programs offered by the SLBDC are welcome to drop in and discuss their business or business idea.

- Kyle MacKinnon **t**