



## Montcross Area Chamber Launches Programs To Help Members Battle Tough Economic Times

Recognizing its members are facing the challenges of an economic downturn, the Montcross Area Chamber today launched a series of new programs aimed at helping members cope with tough times.

Under the title “**ChamberEdge**,” the program focuses on “energizing development, growth and enterprise” among members.

“Most of our members are small businesses and many are young entrepreneurial companies,” said Ted Hall, president of the Chamber. “For some, this is the first time they’ve had to cope with overcoming slumping sales and escalating costs. It’s the Chamber’s responsibility to do all it can to help.”

One of the new initiatives is a series of free workshops on topics addressing managing a small business in an economic downturn. The programs will be presented by accomplished professionals in the evening when business owners will be able to attend. One workshop per month is planned from August through November.

The first workshop is scheduled for August 26 at Belmont Abbey College, with check-in beginning at 5:30 and the program from 6 – 8 p.m. The topic will be “Keeping Sales Up When The Economy Is Down,” presented by noted sales trainer Tim Dannelly. The workshop is being coordinated by the Small Business Center at Gaston College.

Other programs will be planned on topics such as controlling costs, managing finances and creative marketing in tough times.

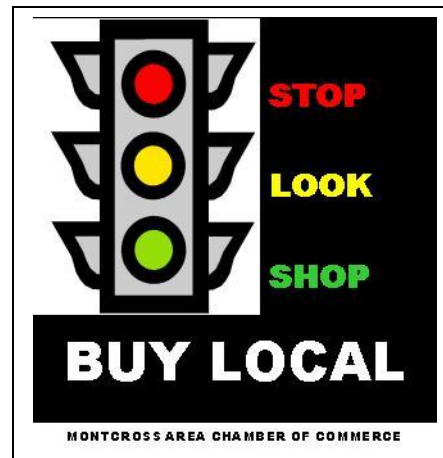
Dates for the other three workshops are:

**September 18**

**October 23**

**November 20**

All will be held at the East Campus of Gaston College, and more details will be announced as available.



A “Buy Local” campaign will be the second program in the series. “Stop, Look, Shop ... Buy Local” is a marketing and promotional campaign designed to encourage Chamber members and everyone else to support their local community businesses, especially when times are tough.

“Shopping close to home makes sense when fuel costs are at record levels,” said Teresa Rankin, Chamber VP for Member Services. “And neighbor helping neighbor is part of the heritage of our communities.”

The Chamber will be reminding residents to “Buy Local” in emails, publications, and a public service advertising campaign. “We’ll ask our member businesses to help spread the word and encourage non-member businesses and others to join in the campaign,” Mrs. Rankin said.



The third in the series of measures to help members survive the downturn is a member-2-member discount program called **MoneySaver**. Montcross Area Chamber members will provide discounts on products and services to fellow members.

“This is one way our Chamber members can help each other,” Hall said. “It’s especially important during hard times, but it’s also a practice that should be followed at all times.”

Chamber members can participate in the program at no cost, listing the discounts they offer on the Chamber website. “A member needing, for example, an oil change will do business with a fellow member offering him or her a special discount for the service.”

Members will be able to update their discount offers quarterly. And new member participants will be added to the program monthly.

Hall said the Chamber has worked to keep the program as simple and easy to use as possible. No membership cards will be required. Chamber membership can be verified instantly through the online member directory on the Chamber website.

Chamber volunteer Annette Gehle of Cramerton helped develop and is coordinating the **MoneySaver** program. “With our small staff, we couldn’t manage all the services we offer without the help of volunteers,” Hall said. “We’re very grateful for Annette’s contribution.”

*For more information on any of these programs, contact Ted Hall or Teresa Rankin at the Montcross Area Chamber, 704-825-5307, send email to [info@belmontchamber.com](mailto:info@belmontchamber.com) or visit [www.belmontchamber.com](http://www.belmontchamber.com).*