



**For Immediate Release**

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## **Minority Business Alliance Sponsors Forum to Show Small Businesses How to Strengthen their Business and Benefit From Stimulus Funds**

The Minority Business Alliance of Southwest Michigan is sponsoring a forum on July 15, 2009 at the Fetzer Center on the campus of Western Michigan University. The forum will make small business owners aware of how they can benefit from stimulus dollars, explain how to sell to government agencies and provide information about insurance and financing for those business interested in pursuing stimulus money.

“This forum is designed to bring small businesses and minority and women owned businesses together to share information and learn about the Federal guidelines for stimulus dollars,” remarked Erma Gordon, Minority Business Alliance Executive Director. “We are excited to be able to bring together resources to help small businesses in Southwest Michigan access stimulus funds,” said Gordon. “Businesses attending will get the opportunity to find out how to access the bidding process for city, county and state agencies, as well as Kellogg’s. They will also have the opportunity to meet in person with individuals that can help them gain access to these organizations,” Gordon added.

The Keynote Speaker for the event will be Carol Lopucki, the State Director of the Michigan Network of Small Business and Technology Development Centers (MI-SBTDC), a partner program of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC). In her capacity as State Director, Ms. Lopucki oversees 12 regional and 30 satellite offices that provide counseling, training, market research and commercialization assistance to approximately 12,000 small businesses annually. She has worked in the small business sector of the SBA since 1991 and has been named one of West Michigan’s 50 Most Influential Women several times. Ms. Lopucki received the Athena Award in 2000 for her contributions to the growth of women owned businesses.

Ms. Lopucki’s Keynote Address is titled, “Positioning Your Company: Recovery Act and Other Key Resources.” She will be speaking on the opportunities and challenges related to Recovery Act Funding and the importance of utilizing available resources at the local, state and federal level to be better positioned as a successful state and/or federal contractor.

“It’s very important for entrepreneurs and small business owners to understand the Recovery Act Funding and how to align themselves to benefit from the funding,” stated Carol Lopucki, State Director of the Michigan Small Business and Technology Development Center. “Equally important,

entrepreneurs and small business owners need to be aware of the abundant services that are available to them at the local, state, and federal level to grow their businesses.”

Attendees at the forum will learn about:

- Procurement standards for local and county governments
- What is bonding and what are the requirements for obtaining government contracts
- Requirements necessary for obtaining a bond
- Public and Private certifications/registrations (CCR, 8a, gender, ethnicity, etc)
- Financing Options (including the City of Kalamazoo Revolving Loan Fund)
- Supplier Diversity: how to develop a plan of action (MBE approach)
- D.K.I.'s Downtown Retail Incubation Program
- Public and private contacting opportunities

Presenting organizations include the Marvin Okun Agency, City of Kalamazoo, Kalamazoo County, Western Michigan University, Kellogg's Supplier Diversity Procurement Process, Michigan Department of Transportation, U.S. Small Business Administration, Small Business Technology and Development Center, City of Kalamazoo Revolving Loan Fund, Downtown Kalamazoo Retail Incubation Program and The Small Business Enterprise.

The forum will be held July 15, 2009 at the Fetzer Center at Western Michigan University. Registration will begin at 1:00 p.m. Cost for the Forum is \$45.00 or \$25.00 for any member of a southwest Michigan chamber of commerce. Additional information and online registration can be found at [www.minoritybusinessalliance.ws](http://www.minoritybusinessalliance.ws)



The Minority Business Alliance of Southwest Michigan believes owning a business empowers minorities and women and ultimately benefits entire communities. The nonprofit organization of more than 30 minority and women-owned businesses assists individuals in starting their own businesses and works with existing businesses in reaching new heights.