

WISCONSIN STATE
LEGISLATURE
COMMITTEE HEARING
RECORDS

2007-08

(session year)

Senate

(Assembly, Senate or Joint)

Committee on
Economic
Development
(SC-ED)

(Form Updated: 08/11/2009)

COMMITTEE NOTICES ...

➤ Committee Reports ... CR
**

➤ Executive Sessions ... ES
**

➤ Public Hearings ... PH
**

➤ Record of Comm. Proceedings ... RCP
**

INFORMATION COLLECTED BY COMMITTEE
FOR AND AGAINST PROPOSAL ...

➤ Appointments ... Appt
**

Name:

➤ Clearinghouse Rules ... CRule
**

➤ Hearing Records ... HR (bills and resolutions)
**

(companion bill: _____)

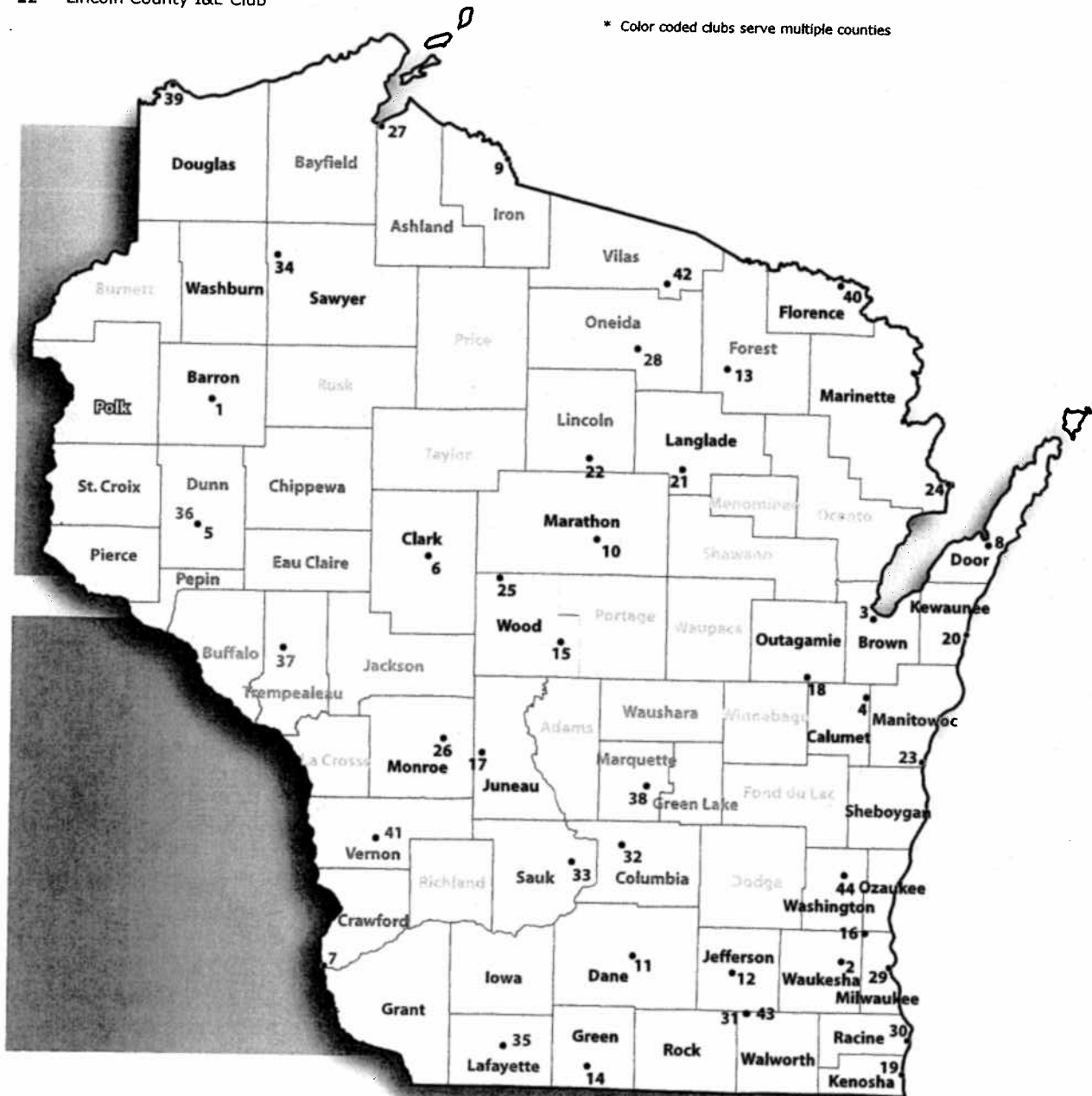
➤ Miscellaneous ... Misc

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(2007 documents)

Wisconsin Inventors and Entrepreneurs Clubs

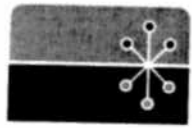
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|----|--|-------|--|
| 1 | Barron-Polk-Washburn I&E Club | 23 | Manitowoc-Sheboygan Counties I&E Club |
| 2 | Brookfield I&E Club | 24 | Marinette County I&E Club |
| 3 | Brown County I&E Club | 25 | Marshfield I&E Club |
| 4 | Calumet County I&E Club | 26 | Monroe County I&E Club |
| 5 | Chippewa Valley Entrepreneur Network (Chippewa, Dunn, Pepin, Eau Claire) | 27 | Northwest Wisconsin's I&E Group (Ashland, Bayfield) |
| 6 | Clark County I&E Club | 28 | Northwoods I&E Club (Forest, Iron, Lincoln, Oneida, Vilas) |
| 7 | Crawford-Vernon County I&E Club | 29 | Ozaukee County I&E Club |
| 8 | Door County I&E Club | 30 | Racine County I&E Club |
| 9 | Dream Catchers Club | 31 | Rock Valley I&E Club |
| 10 | Edison Club | 32-33 | Sauk and Columbia E&I Club |
| 11 | Entrepreneurship Association | 34 | Sawyer County I&E Club |
| 12 | Entrepreneur and Inventor's Connection | 35 | Southwest Wisconsin I&E Group (Grant, Iowa, Lafayette) |
| 13 | Forest County I&E Club | 36 | St. Croix Valley Entrepreneur Network (Pepin, Pierce, St. Croix) |
| 14 | Green County E&I Club | 37 | Trempealeau-Jackson-Buffalo Counties I&E Club |
| 15 | Heart of Wisconsin | 38 | Tri-County I&E Club (Green Lake, Marquette, Waushara) |
| 16 | I&E Forum of Greater Milwaukee | 39 | Twin Ports I&E Club |
| 17 | I&E Club, Inc. of Juneau County | 40 | Upper Menominee River E&I Club |
| 18 | Inventor's Network of Wisconsin | 41 | Vernon-Crawford County I&E Club |
| 19 | Kenosha County I&E Club | 42 | Vilas County I&E Club |
| 20 | Lakeshore Networking Association | 43 | Walworth County I&E Club |
| 21 | Langlade County I&E Club | 44 | Washington County I&E Club |
| 22 | Lincoln County I&E Club | | |

* Color coded clubs serve multiple counties





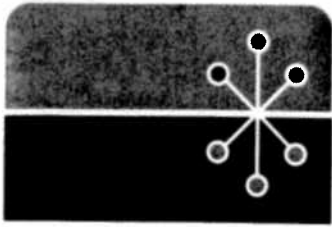
WISCONSIN ENTREPRENEURS' NETWORK



THE SMART CONNECTION

UW Extension

commerce.wi.gov
Wisconsin



**WISCONSIN
ENTREPRENEURS' NETWORK**

**THE SMART
CONNECTION**

WEN's mission is to help spawn new ventures and grow existing businesses by creating seamless access to entrepreneurial resources and expertise from across Wisconsin.

IN ITS FIRST YEAR OF OPERATION, WEN HAS:

- Reached over 20,000 existing and aspiring entrepreneurs with one-to-one business counseling and training
- Brought over 86 complementary partners together, and the network is growing
- Created access to new expertise through four regional directors with high impact business experience
- Fostered over 22 inventors and entrepreneurs forums, with more on the way



Dear Friends,

Governor Jim Doyle strongly supports entrepreneurial development. In his Grow Wisconsin plan, he called for improved and better coordinated resources for prospective and existing entrepreneurs all across Wisconsin.

When the Wisconsin Department of Commerce requested proposals for a statewide entrepreneurial and technology transfer center, several dedicated institutions joined together to respond with a winning concept: their seamless entrepreneurial support system called the Wisconsin Entrepreneurs' Network.

One year after its launch, WEN has succeeded in establishing its vision of an integrated infrastructure for our state's entrepreneurs, creating tremendous benefits for local communities and positively impacting Wisconsin's economy as a whole.

WEN has exceeded our expectations in reaching out and helping those who want to start businesses. We at Commerce look forward to a continuing partnership with WEN as we work to fulfill the Governor's mission of a strong, positive entrepreneurial climate for Wisconsin.

Sincerely,

Mary P. Burke
Mary Burke, Secretary



Dear Friends,

Congratulations to all of our WEN partners on a terrific first year! The University of Wisconsin-Extension is proud to play a leadership role in this exciting new statewide partnership.

By smoothing out the pathway toward business success and job creation, WEN addresses a common challenge that entrepreneurs face. WEN enables our clients to tap into the many strengths across the public universities, the technical colleges and other state resources. Entrepreneurs get timely answers to their questions, and a quick start toward growth and long-term success.

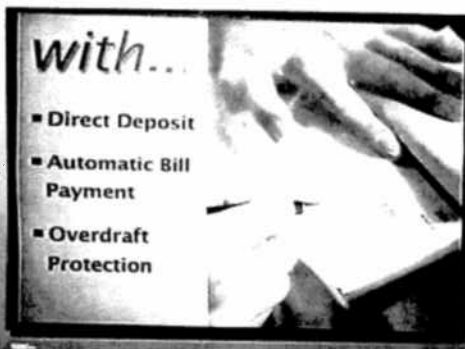
This is the Wisconsin Idea in action, continuing our century-long tradition of bringing university knowledge from the laboratory to the field, moving education beyond the classroom and into state businesses.

WEN is an essential component of UW-Extension's goal to establish economic vitality and prosperity for all Wisconsin communities.

We look forward to its ongoing contributions.

Sincerely,

David Wilson
David Wilson, Chancellor



“The network provided valuable outside points of view that helped me refine my thinking about both the StrandVision product and our markets.”

— Mike Strand,
StrandVision Digital Signage

STRANDVISION DIGITAL SIGNAGE

Marketers dream of a captive audience — and Mike Strand invented a new way to deliver. StrandVision Digital Signage, started in 2003, manufactures digital signage systems that deliver marketing messages and information directly over the Web to displays in a waiting room, office, or lobby. The product reaches a previously unaddressed market segment — people waiting for appointments or events. “It’s a very captive audience and they’re looking to pass the time,” Strand said. His company won the 2005 Governor’s Business Plan contest in the Information Technology category for its system, which helps businesses promote their products or sell advertising space to their suppliers.

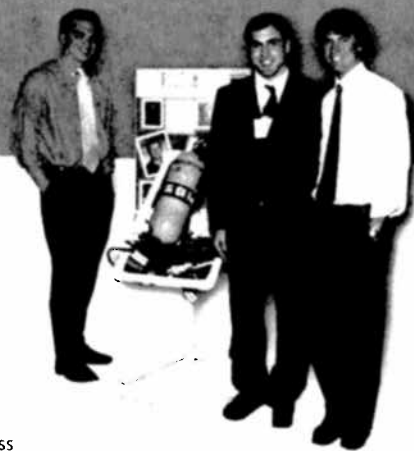
Strand, a serial entrepreneur, already had a long-standing relationship with the UW-Eau Claire Small Business Development Center (SBDC). The SBDC connected him with several WEN professionals when he sought advice on expanding his business. He met Ayla Annac, Southwest regional director for WEN, at a Wisconsin Technology Council workshop and she helped him to refocus his business and protect his intellectual property. “I hadn’t thought at all about patenting the technology but after talking with WEN, I started the patent process and expect to have full patent protection for my intellectual property.”

Strand also worked with the SBDC for financial assistance, connections to angel investors, and a referral to the research team at the Wisconsin Innovation Service Center (WISC) at UW-Whitewater. WISC helped him define his key market segments and better understand the market opportunities and limitations. Strand ultimately landed \$250,000 from the Chippewa Valley Angel Investors.

“WEN was very helpful. The network provided valuable outside points of view that helped me refine my thinking about both the StrandVision product and our markets,” Strand said.



FIRESITE



If prizes are any indication, Nick O'Brien, Mitchell Nick, and Chandler Nault have a great idea and a bright future. The three partners in FireSite LLC won \$10,000 in the Schoof Prize for Creativity contest, \$7,000 in the G. Steven Burrill Technology Business Plan competition, and \$1,000 in the Governor's Business Plan Competition. They developed a navigation system that helps firefighters navigate through burning, smoke-filled structures — and hope to find a large market among the 32,000 U.S. fire departments.

FireSite obtained additional funding through a Wisconsin Department of Commerce Early Planning Grant. It also received a \$25,000 loan through Commerce's Technology Venture Fund, which the partners will use to develop a prototype. Ayla Annac, Southwest regional director for WEN, assisted the FireSite team in their interactions with Commerce and helped them find additional loans and grants.

"WEN has kept our minds open and not on a one-way track," said O'Brien. "It's important to know where you're going, but it's also important to keep your eyes open and realize there's always opportunity to go another direction."

As young entrepreneurs, the FireSite team has sometimes felt challenged by their age, said O'Brien. "The people at WEN are more receptive to that — some of the more progressive people out there really support younger talent."

"Ayla has kept our minds open and not on a one-way track. It's important to know where you're going, but it's also important to keep your eyes open and realize there's always opportunity to go another direction."

— Nick O'Brien, *FireSite*



PHOTO: WEN — wntechology.com



SEALPANES

Frustrated by the dwindling number of local manufacturing jobs, Gary John of Hartford decided to develop a business that would create more Wisconsin jobs and improve the area's economy. John came up with an easy-to-install window-sealing product that reduces heating costs by more than 50 percent.

Seeking to get his product to market, John attended the Ideas to Profits conference put on by the Wisconsin Innovation Service Center (WISC). After attending the "invaluable" conference, John hired WISC to conduct a market research report, which he calls the best thing he's done in starting a business.

At a Juneau County Inventors and Entrepreneurs Club meeting, Pam Christenson from the Wisconsin Department of Commerce told John about Dave Linz, Southeast regional director for WEN, who helped John develop business creation and commercialization strategies. Linz also connected John to Dave Franke of Venture Accelerators. Linz and Franke helped John secure an Early Planning Grant from Commerce to help with a business plan, which was co-funded by the Milwaukee Economic Development Corporation.

Three manufacturing facilities have been tentatively selected for the production of SealPanes and manufacturing will begin soon.

"The Wisconsin Entrepreneurs' Network is such a great support system," John says. "It has really given me the tools necessary to make my product idea a reality."

WEN OFFERS GRANT OPPORTUNITIES FOR A RANGE OF NEEDS

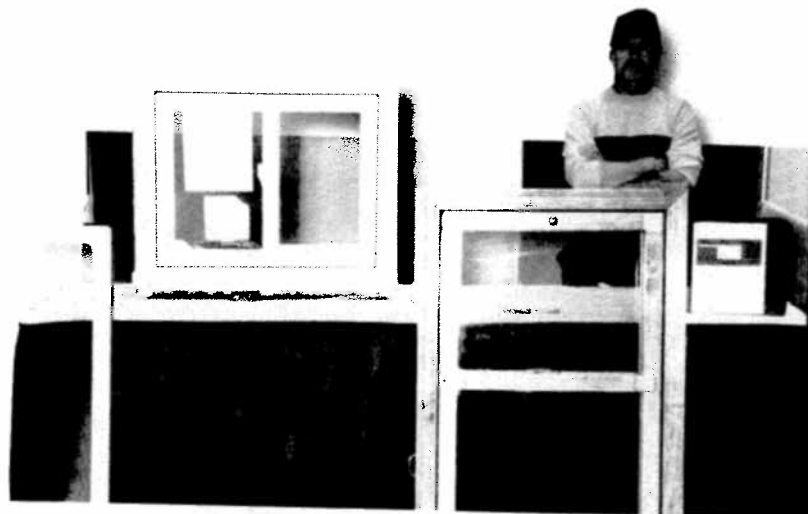
Besides its helpful network of experienced business advisors, WEN offers easy access to financial resources, too. WEN administers and tracks performance for three different grant programs that help entrepreneurs construct a plan for creation or growth or obtain professional services to apply for federal R&D funding or other new technology commercialization assistance.

Detailed information on the Wisconsin Department of Commerce's Entrepreneurial Training Grant (ETG), the Early Planning Grant (EPG), or the Technology Assistance Grant (TAG) is available at www.wenportal.org under the "Financing and Grants" category.

Applications can be submitted at the same location.

"The Wisconsin Entrepreneurs' Network is such a great support system. It has really given me the tools necessary to make my product idea a reality."

— Gary John, *SealPanes*



RESOURCE NAVIGATOR LINKS ENTREPRENEURS TO RELEVANT SERVICE PROVIDERS

The goal of the Resource Navigator at www.wenportal.org is to organize the array of business expertise across the state into one access point for entrepreneurs. This time-saving tool connects entrepreneurs to more than 85 WEN service providers and handles entrepreneurs' electronic requests for assistance.

AQUASENSORS

When the company that employed Bruce Bathurst moved to another state, he and co-worker Greg Retzlaff decided to start their own business. AquaSensors, which manufactures a modular sensor system that measures and communicates the chemical properties of various liquids, took shape in 2002. It now has a Brookfield office and a Menomonee Falls manufacturing facility.

Bathurst started his business using his own savvy, but when he sought to expand his business, he benefited from the newly established WEN. "I started my company before WEN existed and had to spend time myself seeking out the help I needed," he said. "WEN makes it easier for a start-up business like mine to discover and access the various grants and other resources that are available."

Bathurst received assistance from three different WEN partners, each with a unique perspective.

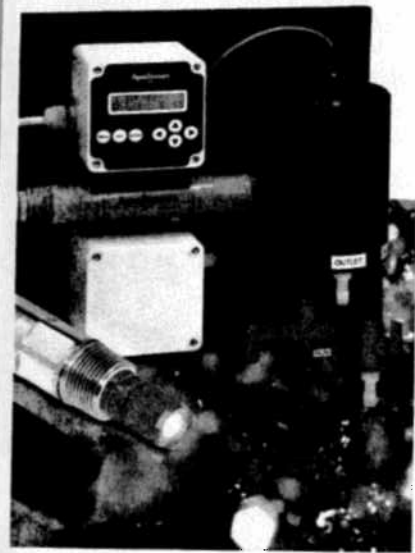
The Waukesha County Technical College connected Bathurst to financing resources. He obtained a low-interest loan through the Wisconsin Department of Commerce's Technology Venture Fund.

Bathurst also received business planning assistance from Don Hill of Heartland Information Research. Dave Linz, Southeast regional director for WEN, used his manufacturing business background to help Bathurst perfect his presentation to investors and suggested potential manufacturing sites.

AquaSensors won the Advanced Manufacturing category in the 2005 Governor's Business Plan Contest and finished second overall. It recently closed a \$360,000 financial deal with the Silicon Pastures angel network.

"WEN makes it easier for a start-up business like mine to discover and access the various grants and other resources that are available."

— Bruce Bathurst, *AquaSensors*



VISONEX

More effective and coordinated care for dialysis patients is the goal of Visonex of Green Bay. This web-based data gathering service recently received a \$100,000 loan from the Department of Commerce Technology Venture Fund program. The company will use the funding to enhance its product and position in the marketplace.

John Opichka, Visonex president, praised Kurt Waldhuetter, Northeast regional director for WEN, for his continued assistance in gathering a team.

The Wisconsin Innovation Service Center (WISC) was the first in a line of WEN partners to assist Visonex. WISC conducted a survey of the clinics treating chronic kidney disease to assess current issues and needs surrounding IT systems handling dialysis patients.

Pat Dillon, Northwest regional director for WEN, helped Opichka apply for a fast track Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) grant.

"Kurt is very knowledgeable about technology, which has been very helpful." Opichka said.

"Kurt is very knowledgeable about technology, which has been very helpful."

— John Opichka, *Visonex*

INVENTORS AND ENTREPRENEURS NETWORK THROUGH GRASS ROOTS GATHERINGS

Inventors' and entrepreneurs' forums are cropping up across the state, fueled by a desire to create a more vibrant entrepreneurial climate in communities from Rhinelander to Milwaukee. Start-up forums can apply for \$1,000 in seed money from WEN and the Wisconsin Department of Commerce. So far, 22 of the popular groups have been launched.

Members join together to stimulate ideas and share experiences and expertise in the supportive environments, often touting camaraderie and networking as the gatherings' main benefit. In fact, they devote minimal time to formal programming at the meetings, leaving the bulk of the time wide open for mingling and discussion.

Don Clewley, Executive Director of the Marinette County Association for Business & Industry, said that his area's first I & E meeting was a great success with higher than expected turn-out. "The networking was fantastic," Clewley said. "There was electricity in the air." Even the meeting's featured speaker — the owner of an already-established wood craft business — made a contact that evening that will enable him to save money in his manufacturing process. Clewley recently partnered with other area representatives to launch a Florence County I & E group.

Juneau County's group, one of the pioneer I & E forums, boasts regular attendance of 100+ and has helped develop the other forums across the state.

Each year, UW-Whitewater's Idea to Profits conference will host training and networking for I & E group facilitators and act as a statewide meeting for members.

Learn more about the I & E forums at http://wenportal.org/ieclub_grants/



