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For Immediate Release
September 15, 2014

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# City Partners to Promote Food Business and Entrepreneurship

Harrisonburg, VA – The City of Harrisonburg will partner with Rockingham County, the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance, and the Friendly City Food Co-op to promote the ever-growing food culture in Harrisonburg.

The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) awarded the City a $35,000 Building Entrepreneurial Economies (BEE) Innovation Grant to support their new "What's Cooking" program.

"The intent of the innovation grant is to promote creative projects that can be replicated across the state to encourage business and entrepreneurship," said Ande Banks, Director of Special Projects and Grant Management. "DHCD specifically seeks out projects that are supported by collaborative partnerships."

"Our 'What's Cooking' program will build on the growing food culture in the region, support existing businesses, cultivate new entrepreneurs, and serve as a model for future projects," said Joyce Krech, Director of the SBDC. "The program's first phase – the food business competition – is for both new and existing food-related businesses to define, test, and perfect their business concepts."

**How does the competition work?**

Those interested in the competition will be invited to pitch their initial idea, receive constructive feedback and a formal assessment, take advantage of a wide array of training classes for food-related businesses, and then submit a more refined concept plan during a public competition hosted in Harrisonburg's Downtown Culinary District.

On **Tuesday, September 30** the partnering agencies invite members of the community to attend a free information session at the SBDC office in the Ice House (127 W. Bruce Street) from **6:30 p.m. until 7:30 p.m.**

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Winners of the competition will receive a no-interest loan, subsidized time in Friendly City Food Co-op's commercial kitchen, and a variety of "in-kind" services from local businesses.

"Everyone wins in this competition if participants leave with a better plan for starting or expanding their business," said Banks.

More information on this program is available at www.ValleySBDC.org/WhatsCooking.

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