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IDA will market businesses around Champlain Bridge

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MORIAH — The Champlain Bridge corridor is the target of a massive marketing effort by the Essex County Industrial Development Agency.

The IDA has \$50,000 from the state to use for promoting those businesses that saw their sales sag after the bridge closed Oct. 16, 2009.

Next Wednesday is the deadline for businesses to join the new marketing program.

In addition, the new Champlain Bridge Business Assistance Center will open at 10:30 a.m. today at 3259 Broad St. in Port Henry, across from the Post Office. The no-cost Assistance Center is an outreach office for small businesses adversely affected by the bridge and will offer help to maintain or start a business.

A free, temporary ferry started running next to the bridge on Feb. 1, restoring the commercial corridor.

The IDA has been running workshops to teach small-business owners how to use the new marketing program.

County Industrial Development Agency Co-Director Carol Calabrese said they'll be using four-color brochures, coupons, newspaper and radio ads and billboards.

"We'll spend the grant over the next four or five months. We'll be marketing businesses in Ticonderoga, Crown Point, Moriah, Port Henry."

She said Empire State Development Corp. President Dennis Mullen came to southern Essex County and met with business owners after the bridge closed.

"They expressed a need for marketing. We convened representatives from all the towns. We took their ideas back to Empire State Development."

Essex County Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism Vice President Carol Joannette said businesses will be able to offer discount coupons to boost sales.

Two types of coupons will be in use, one for money off and another designed by businesses themselves for whatever deals they want to offer.

"Businesses can create their own coupons using our Web site. They'll get an access code (to use the site)."

Business owners will be able to design their own coupons, Calabrese said, and once the program starts people can print them at Web sites to be announced later.

"We'll measure the economic impact of the coupons. We really want to encourage businesses to contact us to participate in the marketing initiative. This is all grassroots-driven."

Wednesday is the cutoff date for businesses to sign up for the program by calling 873-9114 or e-mailing info@essexcountyida.com.

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Photos



Carol Calabrese conducts a marketing seminar for businesses affected by the closure of the Champlain Bridge. The workshop was held in the Moriah Central School library computer lab. Staff Photo