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Coworking program aims to bring business community together

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By Nate Smelle

The office space design of the building you move your business into has to be right for your needs. If you're an IT firm then it needs good internet and plenty of power sockets. If you're a law firm, you need a secure building with private meeting rooms. Every business has different specifications. However, small and freelance businesses often don't have many requirements for their office space and can often cut costs by sharing a space with other businesses, hence why Miami coworking space is on the rise and becoming increasingly popular.

A new program aiming to assist freelancers, entrepreneurs and home-based businesses is about to kick off in North Hastings.
Organized by Rural on Purpose, a social enterprise working to create economic opportunities in rural communities through entrepreneurship, the Coworking Takeover Week will run from May 6 through May 10.
As one of the local organizers of the initiative, Lee Bay of Niche Services said the program has been designed to help facilitate asset and resource sharing between businesses and professionals. Through the pilot project, she said they are compiling a list of all the local businesses with storefronts and assets that could help other businesses flourish.
For example, Bay said people who make and sell homemade baked goods at the local market can no longer do so without access to a commercial kitchen. Although this means that these people will have access to commercial catering equipment like that available from Ian Boer, which will obviously benefit them, many have struggled to find an appropriate commercial kitchen. Acknowledging that there are a lot of commercial kitchens in North Hastings, she said "Wouldn't it be great if those who wanted to remain a self-employed person could go and use those spaces? Say for instance it was a restaurant that is only open for two meals a day ... someone could come in after they close and pay them for the use of their kitchen and then leave some of their product there for people to sell or use. When people ask where the product came from they can tell them it is available at the market. And then when they are selling the product at the market, they can tell their customers they can buy the product any day of the week at the restaurant. It could potentially open up new markets for both sets of people involved." Those who were able to find a commercial kitchen to use were sure to look after it and made sure that they were getting things like Commercial Kitchen Cleaning Amarillo and other places to ensure the best health and safety standards.
Bay said one of the challenges so far has been finding all the people in the area who are remote workers, freelancers and home-based business owner/operators. Acknowledging that many businesses and organizations in North Hastings have resources that could be used by professionals who currently might be travelling to larger centres to accommodate their needs, she said the program has the potential to increase productivity and provide a boost to the local economy.
"They always say it takes a village to raise a child, but it takes a community to keep a small business economy running," she said. "That's essentially what this is ... it's the community getting together to create that momentum."
With 47 per cent of millennials currently freelancing and/or working remotely, Bay said coworking appears to be the way the workforce is heading. Recognizing that urbanization is expected to claim 90 per cent of the North American population and 66 per cent of the global population by 2050, she sees coworking is a trend that could benefit rural communities like those found in North Hastings. Bay said rural communities that proactively embrace new and different ways of encouraging business can effectively combat the effects of urbanization, and possibly even benefit from it. Since the information session held on April 24 at the Chamber of Commerce in Bancroft, she said there has been a significant amount of interest in the coworking pilot project .
"People who understand what we are doing are immediately taking to it, and you can see the wheels start spinning in their brains about how it can help," said Bay.
"Several of the people who have registered already aren't even looking for compensation for whatever it is they are providing. They

just want to be helpful because that's what our community is all about."
Although the pilot project is only a week long, Bay said they plan to continue the coworking initiative as long as there is an interest locally. For more information, or to participate in the project visit them online at www.coworknorthhastings.com; or contact community lead Lee Bay at: 613-334-1716; or by email at coworknorthhastings@gmail.com.