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OUR VIEW: Growth of small business key to economy

By the JG/T-C Editorial Board
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Last week three area firms made presentations at the first Prairie Spark investment forum.

The forum is a way for people with ideas about growing or starting small businesses to present information to potential investors and other regional leaders. The theme is to bring ideas to money in a formal way, and open doors for interested parties to follow up.

In the first forum, the presenters included an early stage high tech firm based in Champaign, possible expansion of an area small specialty business and a potential major conversion of another ongoing area business.

The types of projects varied significantly. They showed that ideas being developed range from retail to service to high tech.

We don't know what will come of any of the proposals. But we're confident that this sort of forum is important for our area.

A key to any economic recovery is for people to put forth ideas for small businesses, to seek to fund their ideas, and for some of those ideas to emerge into successful businesses, just as some will surely fall short.

"Small businesses are the lifeblood of cities and towns across the country," President Obama proclaimed back in May.

"Over the last decade, small businesses created 70 percent of new jobs, and they are responsible for half of all jobs in the private sector. They also help enhance the lives of our citizens by improving our quality of life and creating personal wealth. Small businesses will lead the way to prosperity, particularly in today's challenging economic environment," he said.

The investment forum hosted by Eastern's Business Solutions Center is a continuation of efforts by various entities to positively contribute to the regional economy by encouraging locally developed business ideas and plans.

Among those in attendance was the CEO high school class from Effingham, which is another example of efforts to encourage entrepreneurial thinking and activity.

The forum last week is another positive step to support and encourage the lifeblood of cities and towns. It is the sort of activity we need more of, to spark private sector growth that is needed in our economy.

— JG/T-C Editorial Board

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