

OPERATION: START UP & GROW **VETERANS BUSINESS CONFERENCE**

MARCH 13, 2012

2012 Conference Interview With Veteran Entrepreneur Mary Warren

FREE EVENT!
Registration details
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On March 13th at this year's Operation: Start Up & Grow veterans business conference, our event emcee will interview successful entrepreneur Mary Warren. Much like a TV talk show, the conversation will provide attendees the opportunity to learn how Mary transitioned her military experience into starting her successful small business. Mary will share her view of the risks and rewards, obstacles and opportunities that she handles on a daily basis as an entrepreneur. Don't miss out on this insightful interview at Onondaga Community College on March 13th!

"In 2005, I was working as a civilian for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and spent six months on a construction project in Afghanistan. While I was over there, on my down time I would sit and think how I was going to start my own business," recounted Mary Warren, a licensed professional engineer. "Starting a construction business is difficult especially if you don't have any money, credit to rent equipment, references or bonding. All those things were piled up against me."

The Long Island native had educational background in the industry, with a degree in mechanical engineering from the New York Institute of Technology. Warren spent four years serving in the U.S. Air Force as an environmental engineer at Mountain Home Air Force Base



**Mary Warren, president of
Black Horse Group General
Contractors.**

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2012 Keynote Speaker Veteran Entrepreneur Brian Bluff



**Brian Bluff, president of
Site-Seeker, Inc.**

Successful entrepreneur Brian Bluff will present the keynote address on veteran entrepreneurship at the 2012 conference. Brian Bluff is the President and co-founder of Site-Seeker, Inc., a full service internet marketing firm. Together with his brother and co-founder Eddie Bluff, vice president of key accounts, Brian has grown the company into a successful source of search engine marketing and social media solutions, with offices and employees in four states.

Prior to becoming an entrepreneur, Brian studied Micro-Electronic Engineering at the Rochester Institute of Technology. After earning his Bachelor's degree and spending several

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OPERATION: START UP & GROW 2012 Veterans Business Conference



March 13, 2012
Gordon Student Center
Onondaga Community College
Syracuse, New York
8:45 am to 1:00 pm



Do you want to start a business? Expand your existing business? Find all of the resources in one location at this FREE conference! Operation: Start Up & Grow is the premier veterans business conference in Upstate New York for our veterans and members of the military community who want to start or expand their own small business.

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS:

- Keynote address from successful USN veteran entrepreneur Brian Bluff, president of Site-Seeker, Inc.
- Interview with successful USAF veteran entrepreneur Mary Warren, PE, president of Black Horse Group General Contractors
- Marketing, Financing and Government Contracting Workshops
- Exhibitors, networking, awards, lunch and much more

Register For This Free Conference!

Call 315-471-9393 ext. 233 or visit

www.sba.gov/operationstartup



Presented by:

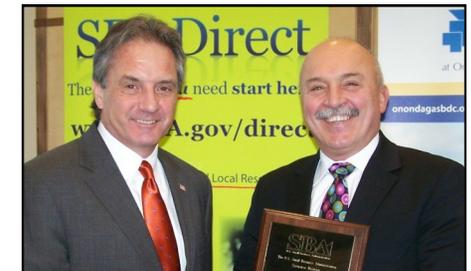


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Photos from Operation: Start Up & Grow 2011 Veterans Business Conference



From left: Conference opening remarks; breakout financing workshop; networking session with exhibitors.



From left: Donna Adamo's interview with veteran entrepreneur Lee Buttolph, president of Buttolph Lumber Company, Inc.; keynote speaker J. Michael Haynie, PhD, Syracuse University; presentation of SBA Patriot Lender of the Year Award to M&T Bank CNY President Allen Naples (r.) by SBA Syracuse District Director Bernard J. Paprocki (l.).

Veteran-Owned Business Achievement 2011 Award Winner



**Al Nardslico, 2011 VOBA
Award winner.**

In 1991, U.S. Navy veteran Al Nardslico and Ron Fishbeck started Systems Made Simple in Al's basement in Liverpool, NY. SMS has since grown into a multi-million dollar technology firm with offices in Syracuse NY and McLean VA and more than 140 employees deployed on customer contracts nationwide. In 2009, SMS was ranked # 310 on the Inc. 500 and in 2010, SMS ranked # 625 on the Inc. 5000 listing of the country's fastest-growing, privately held companies based on its impressive growth.

Built on a foundation of hard work and desire to exceed customer expectations, SMS has become a recognized leader in the IT Services field. SMS provides program management services, systems and software engineering, data management and integration services to Fortune 500 customers and federal agencies including Department of Veterans Affairs, Environmental Protection Agency, and General Services Administration.

SMS was selected as the 2011 Veteran-Owned Business Achievement Award winner for its dramatic growth in sales and employees and its proven ability to respond to adversity.

The road to success hasn't always been easy—the economic impact of September 11, 2001 dramatically affected many small businesses, including SMS. With help from a timely SBA loan, SMS was able to work through the economic down-turn and realize the great success which they are being recognized for in this award.

In December 2010, SMS was formally certified by the Department of Veterans Affairs, Center for Veterans Enterprise as a Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business. This certification enhances the company's ability to compete for government contracts. With new opportunities for growth on the horizon, including adding 20 new hires in March 2011, the future looks bright for SMS.

2012 Conference Interview With Veteran Entrepreneur Mary Warren

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near Boise, Idaho. After her military service, Warren worked as a civil servant for the U.S. Army Public Works Engineering and Construction Division, OSHA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Warren returned home from Afghanistan and then visited the Watertown Small Business Development Center, funded in part by the U.S. Small Business Administration, for free startup counseling sessions.

“They taught me the ABCs of starting a business, including business formation, how to write a business plan and different tax structures. They also gave me important contacts such as the regional PTAC (Procurement Technical Assistance Center). I found the PTAC was the best place for subcontracting opportunities and for networking with other companies,” said Warren.

With a solid business plan, Warren found crucial support to launch her business from the Department of Defense’s Mentor-Protégé Program (MPP). After many attempts, Warren successfully pitched her startup to an existing construction company that participated in the MPP. As the mentor, Structural Associates helped Ms. Warren with obtaining a line of credit, help establish bonding, provided non-competitive subcontract awards, and provided rented space in its Watertown office. Warren’s time as a protégé allowed her startup company, Black Horse Group, to grow quickly from its sole-proprietor status to employ 35 people in just 18 months.

Today Ms. Warren employs eight managers and 30 to 50 field employees depending on the project. Black Horse Group has become a full-service design-build general contracting firm that excels at federal and state construction projects, successfully completing project worth over \$4 million as a subcontractor and \$24 million as a prime contractor. Projects range from \$400,000 building maintenance contracts for corporate clients to larger projects such as an \$11.8 million infrastructure upgrade contract, a \$6.5 million contract to build a 25,000-square-foot fire station, and a \$6.3 million contract for a 15,000-square-foot Child Development Center. Black Horse Group was also a joint-venture partner to build a 25,000-square-foot Child Development Center on Fort Drum.

Black Horse Group is currently working on the \$397,000 historical renovation of the Rock Island lighthouse in the St. Lawrence Seaway for the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. As part of a five year Multiple Task Order Award Contract (MATOC) for the Northeast region through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Black Horse Group is currently building a 75,000-square-foot Training Support Center and a 4,000-square-foot storage building at Fort Drum. The design includes adding a ground source heat pump geothermal system and upon completion, both buildings will earn the U.S. Green Building Council’s LEED silver rating.

“My military experience really taught me how to manage resources, assets and people. I wanted to start my own company because I liked to build teams and I liked to build things. To anyone considering starting a business, I would say if you have the passion for something, go for it,” said Ms. Warren.

2012 Keynote Speaker Brian Bluff

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years in the United States Navy, Brian went on to work for some of the country’s most successful companies including Pfizer, M&T Bank, and PAR Technology - where he held several Vice President positions, including Vice President of Marketing at Rome Research Corporation and Vice President/General Manager of PAR Logistics Management Systems. In 2000, Brian went on to start his first business, TCO Inc. As a provider of Internet marketing solutions, TCO, Inc. became one of the first of its kind in Central New York, offering clients a competitive advantage online through the use of consulting, online marketing, and the Thomas Industrial Network.

Today, Brian shares the secrets of Internet marketing on the national stage, traveling throughout the U.S. and Canada to speak at trade shows and seminars. Site-Seeker, Inc. is an Internet Marketing Firm specializing in SEO, SEM, social media, and web development, with a strong focus on the B2B and manufacturing arena. Site-Seeker, Inc. performs the efforts necessary to drive qualified visitors to its clients’ websites; convert those visitors into buyers; measure the results achieved; and develop improvement plans based on performance.