



New Hampshire District Office

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Mary Ann Kristiansen of Keene's Hannah Grimes Center is selected as SBA's New Hampshire Small Business Champion



CONCORD, NH - Mary Ann Kristiansen was born and raised in Minnesota. She moved to New York City and then to New Hampshire in 1991. She bought Buckminster Farm in Roxbury and started a home-based soap making business in addition to building gardens and raising sheep and chickens at her farm. This was before the buy local movement and through her soap making, gardening, and farming contacts, she began to realize that there was a shortage of markets for locally-made products from small-scale businesses, while at the same time; there was a shortage of skills on the part of local producers to enter and succeed in those markets.

From those realizations, the Hannah Grimes Marketplace was born in 1997 as a community and economic development organization whose mission is to provide the space, tools and connections that innovative entrepreneurs need to build strong businesses, thriving local economies and vibrant communities.

Hannah Grimes Marketplace opened as a "retail classroom" It provided a market for locally made and grown products but also offered support and educational programs to help small business people start, develop and grow their businesses. These efforts expanded in 2006 beyond the makers and growers of the Marketplace to all sectors of business when the Hannah Grimes Center for Entrepreneurship opened. The Hannah Grimes Center, just a block away from the Marketplace in downtown Keene, is a business incubator which provides low-cost office space and a supportive environment in which emerging businesses can be launched, developed and graduated into the community. The Center also provides an extensive array of programs and networking events and a co-working space.

Twenty-one years later both the Hannah Grimes Marketplace and the Hannah Grimes Center buzz with entrepreneurial activity on any day of the week. Mary Ann is involved in all aspects of the operation: start up,

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member recruiting, financial, fundraising, systems, structures, marketing, workshop development, board development, legal, retail management, technology, human resources, planning and evaluation.

As a leader Mary Ann has a record of accomplishment in providing small businesses over the long term. She serves on a range of boards and commissions that impact small business owners throughout the state including the NH Community Development Finance Authority, Senator Shaheen's Small Business Advisory Committee, the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation.

Greta Johansson, District Director of the New Hampshire SBA office commented "Mary Ann has had a tremendous impact on small businesses throughout the Monadnock Region. Her name and that of the Hannah Grimes Center for Entrepreneurship are embedded in the identity of Keene and the Monadnock region and provide an exemplary model for innovation and creating an effective rural small business culture."

Mary Ann was nominated for the award by Benjamin Robertson of Menadena, who is currently in the Hannah Grimes Center's Business Incubator in Keene. He states "As a resident of Keene since 2009 and current participant in the Hannah Grimes Center for Entrepreneurship incubator program I have had a chance to see Mary Ann's important contributions to the local business community. The Center provides the space, tools and connections that innovative entrepreneurs need to build strong businesses, thriving local economies, and vibrant communities in the Monadnock Region."

Mary Ann Kristiansen will be recognized for their efforts in support of small business at the NH SBA Small Business Awards event on May 2nd at the Manchester Country Club in Bedford.

For more information on the Hannah Grimes Center for Entrepreneurship visit www.hannahgrimes.com

For info on the May 2nd event call Warren Haggerty at 603-225-1405 or warren.haggerty@sba.gov

To register for the event click [here](#) or visit www.nhbankers.com Event Schedule