

Keeping SCORE

Professional mentors in demand across South Florida

BY STEPHANIE DAVIS

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“We’ve been very aggressive about getting out into the community and demonstrating how effective SCORE can be.” — Jack Dunigan, Southwest Florida SCORE chair Ah, [Florida](#), where former executives, business owners and CEOs come to live out their twilight years in the sun playing golf, fishing and joining Pickle [Ball](#) leagues. And yet, there are many who aren’t quite ready to put away their brief cases, close up their laptops and focus on gardening and Mahjong.

Fortunately, SCORE is around to keep their sharp minds busy — in fact, very busy.

SCORE puts mentors, usually retirees, together with entrepreneurs to share their business knowledge and years of experience with the newbies.

The expert advisors are available at no cost and come from varied backgrounds as they volunteer their time and expertise for the nonprofit organization founded in 1964.



DUNIGANOriginally, the SCORE acronym stood for “Service Corps of Retired Executives,” but because many mentors continue to work, the organization is now recognized as SCORE Counselors to America’s Small Business.

As one of the top retirement destinations in the U.S., it’s no surprise that there are hundreds of volunteer mentors across [South Florida](#).

The Southwest Florida SCORE was established in [Fort Myers](#) in 1970.

Jack Dunigan, chair of the chapter for two years, is a retired trainer/consultant for both profit and nonprofit organizations, and has been a mentor with SCORE for four years.

He said he’s seen a significant growth in clients recently. The SCORE in Fort Myers mentored 350 to 400 businesses this past year, he said.

“We’ve been very aggressive about getting out into the community and demonstrating how effective SCORE can be,” Mr. Dunigan said. “Since we serve not only [Lee County](#), but also Hendry and Glades, we’re always networking at chamber of commerce events, Rotary and Kiwanis meetings and more.”



POMPEI Mr. Dunigan said social media has been a challenge for some retired mentors. “Many see the internet as an intrusion,” he said. “But it’s proven to be an effective business marketing tool. So we’re very proactive in instructing our mentors.”

These days, SCORE uses the technology available, whether it’s mentoring via email, Skype or phone.

“There are so many ways we can reach out and help business people and entrepreneurs,” Mr. Dunigan said. “We provide the tools, resources, workshops and experience. The idea is to help our local business community grow and thrive.”

Penny Pompei, chapter chair of Palm Beach Score, said business is “booming.”



FRIEND “We serve all of the [North Palm Beach](#) area,” said Ms. Pompei, who describes herself as a “serial entrepreneur.”

“The volume of new requests for mentors has gone up dramatically — last year, we had 600 new requests; this year it’s been well over 700, with 95 requests in the month of July alone,” Ms. Pompei said.

Ms. Pompei holds the distinction of being the first woman chair of the 41-year old [Palm Beach](#) chapter of SCORE and says that the needs of the local business community have evolved.

“These days we spend at least half of our time mentoring businesses that are already established,” she said. “It used to be just start-ups, but now we’re helping current businesses with problem solving, hiring, financing, and whatever they need.”



BURKHOLDER One of the largest SCORE chapters on the West coast of Florida is in [Naples](#), which serves all of [Collier County](#) and some of southern Lee County.

[Frank Friend](#), [SCORE Naples](#)’ director of marketing, said between 50 and 60 volunteer mentors serve up to 40 new clients each month.

“We’ve noticed a real upswing in business over the last year,” said Mr. Friend. “And we’re responding a lot to women entrepreneurs. Only about 10 percent of women business owners employ someone other than themselves; our new program called Insights Into Successful Business Strategies was created by SCORE women mentors for Naples area women business owners.”

On Nov. 19, the chapter will host a conference with workshops geared exclusively for women business owners.

In [Port Charlotte](#), Bob Burkholder, who has been a mentor with Port Charlotte Score for more than eight years, acknowledges that there is less business activity in the [Charlotte County](#) area due to fewer major corporations, but points out that the chapter, which also serves [DeSoto County](#) and southern [Sarasota County](#), sees a regular flow of requests for mentors.

Mr. Burkholder said that the Port Charlotte SCORE, like the other chapters of SCORE in South Florida, has had to adapt with the times and that perhaps the biggest challenge of the past few years has been the advent of social media and the internet in the business world.

“The fundamentals of business haven’t changed,” said Mr. Burkholder. “But since many of our volunteers retired before social media played a part in making a business a success, we’ve had to deal with a learning curve.”

The chapter helps both mentors and clients by hosting monthly workshops internet technology.

Upcoming workshops

These free workshops are held at [Keiser University, 9100 Forum Corporate Parkway, Fort Myers](#). Register at the SCORE website.

For more information, contact Karen Durand, 489-2935, swflscore@gmail.com.
Fundamentals of starting a nonprofit organization

Tuesday, Sept. 13, 6-8 p.m.

Looking to create social change by starting a nonprofit organization? This workshop will outline the key principles you should consider and how to get started.

The speaker is Jack Dunigan, [Southwest Florida Chapter](#) chairman. He is a published author, internet marketer and blogger and has 30 years of experience as a trainer and consultant with clients in nonprofit agencies, tribal governments and small and larger businesses. He also has 10 years of experience as owner and operator of the third largest millwork company in the Caribbean islands. He mentors SCORE clients in the areas of business operations, strategy planning, nonprofit board relations and sales, marketing and public relations.

Supercharge your Q4 holiday sales

Tuesday, Sept. 20, 6-8 p.m.

Discover how to increase your holiday sales. This workshop will help you create a plan with clear and measurable goals, select the right offers for audiences, learn to make your offers get noticed — especially through mobile devices, help you make your business known and shared on social media and it will provide specific ways to create a variety of campaigns.

The speaker is [Ingrid Fuller](#), president of Fuller Online Solutions, a website design and internet marketing company helping small- and medium-sized business succeed online. Fuller Online Solutions has been recognized as one of the top three website design companies in [Southwest Florida](#) by Gulfshore Business Magazine for 2013 through 2016. Ms. Fuller is a business partner and certified trainer for [Constant Contact](#).

Independent contractor or employee: Free Lunch N Learn
Wednesday Sept. 21, 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m., lunch provided

The [U.S. Department of Labor](#) and the [IRS](#) are stepping up enforcement of worker classification regulations, and in today's part-time "gig economy" it may be harder than ever to avoid penalties. A human resources professional will help you learn how to classify employees with confidence and avoid regulatory risk. You'll learn about the current DOL definitions of independent contractors and employees, employer responsibilities as they apply to the different types of workers, methods of determining worker classification and misclassification errors, concerns and consequences.

The speaker is Darlene Alvarez, human resource generalist with Paychex Fort Myers. She has a master's degree in management and human resources and 14 years of human resource experience.

How to write a business plan

Tuesday, Sept. 27, 6-8 p.m.

Looking to start a business or obtain additional financing for a current business? This workshop is for you since a business plan is essential for both. You will learn what should be included in a business plan from the market to financial analysis.

In addition to the presentation material, additional worksheets and supplemental data on select subjects will be included in packets for those who attend.

The speaker is Lee Dunn, who joined SCORE this year. A retired Navy captain, [Mr. Dunn](#) also has 40 years of experience in banking, holding various positions in retail, commercial lending, marketing, corporate support and management. He was president of Charter One's Western Ohio Division, president of Genoa Savings and founded the Bank of Maumee in 2006, retiring in 2011. Mr. Dunn counsels clients about enhancing customer service through the development of strategic plans, operations and finance. |

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