



**MERG**  
Annual Report  
2008-2009

MERG serves as the unified voice throughout the state and at the legislature.

# MERG's Mission

The mission of MERG is to advocate for and promote the interests of micro enterprise in Connecticut.

## Section 2.4. MEETINGS OF MEMBERS.

(a) Annual Meeting. The Annual Meeting of the Corporation shall be held each year at a date and time to be set by the Board of Directors. At the Annual Meeting, all Members shall elect the Board of Directors. **In addition, the Board of Directors shall present an Annual Report to the Members at the Annual Meeting, which shall include the accomplishments of the previous year and the plans for the coming year.**

Micro Enterprise Resource Group, Inc.

By Laws

# Table of Contents

1	Table of Contents
2-4	Message from the Co-chairs
5-6	Website
7	5 <sup>th</sup> Annual Gala Reception at the Capitol
8	Thanks to our Caterers
9	Goals and Objectives
10-11	Financial Report
12	Board of Directors

# Message from the Co-chairs

Five years ago, MERG set out to educate the public and the legislature about micro enterprise and its importance to Connecticut's economy. We wanted a voice in legislation that affects us, and to advocate on behalf of micro enterprise around the state. Our most recent event in May had more than 125 legislators attend. They can now quote MERG's statistics and ask about our needs. We are pleased to have met our original goals. As we reflect on our past year's accomplishments, it is also time to determine MERG's future.

As a volunteer organization, we could not have accomplished so many of our goals without the time, effort and resources of so many members. We thank each and every one of you for all your contributions. We also want to thank Rep. Diana Urban for continued support and assistance, SBDC for helping us throughout the year and especially for stepping up to sponsor the Gala, particularly during a difficult economy, CEDF for our office and meeting space, also our friend Ernie Brown @ CEDF who is always willing to help us and PCSW for providing the legislative updates.



Ginne Rae Clay , Director, SBDC

We also would like to thank the members who took the time to write to their representatives or go to the Capitol to testify and make their voices heard. Each one of you have made a difference, probably more than you realize. We thank you for volunteering either to help staff our trade show booths or contribute to some of the administrative tasks of MERG. Thank you to all the members who contributed to our blog and newsletter, we hope you will continue to read and comment. A special thank you goes to our executive board members, who tirelessly devoted their time to continue MERG's mission.



Secretary of the State, Susan Bysiewicz

We began our new year with our annual meeting in September. Over 50 members and guests gathered to listen to a presentation with the Secretary of the State, Susan Bysiewicz. Everyone was encouraged to join in a lively discussion of questions and answers, following her comments.

MERG members have actively sought to inform the business community real facts about micro enterprise in our state. One method was by participating in various tradeshows including the Middlesex Chamber of Commerce Business

Expo and the Hartford Business Expo. As chairs, we represented MERG at the Connecticut Business Day at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford and sat in on the planning team for PCSW's Women's Business Conference.

We also took many opportunities to promote MERG's mission with numerous business organizations such as: SOHOA (Small Office Home Office Association), CCWF (Central Connecticut Women's Forum), and Creative Juice & Micro Business Councils of Middlesex Chamber of Commerce.

We were pleased to receive proclamations from the Governor, the Secretary of the State and the General Assembly in recognition of MERG's accomplishments and congratulating us on five years of service to the micro business community. We were happy to welcome, Siamack Shojai, Dean of the School of Business from Central Connecticut State University, as our keynote speaker. We continued a sponsorship program for the Micro Enterprise Recognition Gala. This event, where



Siamack Shojai, CCSU



Marc Gallagher receives proclamation from Rep. Diana Urban, (D-N. Stonington)

businesses have the opportunity to meet with lawmakers and voice their opinions in person, would not have been possible without the financial support of our sponsors. We'd like to thank Small Business Development Center (SBDC), our presenting sponsor, and Reid & Reige, P.C., as a supporter and the many hours of behind-the-scenes planning by Marc Gallagher, our Vice Chairperson.

Our executive board has been working hard each month to maintain an up-to-date website and calendar of business training and development across the state. Traffic to our website continually increased, as the MERG message spread throughout Connecticut. Our website was entirely redesigned through the hard work of Leslie Olding of Streamlined Development.

In June 2009, we started an exploratory committee into forming a buy local initiative. We always encourage our members to support each other as we join together to strengthen Connecticut's economy. This effort to work together to support our local independent businesses has just begun to take on some momentum. We chose to affiliate with the national organization, AEO (American Enterprise Opportunity).

We look back over the past year and realize we've all had many challenges to face in our individual businesses and collectively as MERG members. As happens in business, we pursued some projects that didn't reach fruition, and enjoyed some successes in growth. We are most proud of our increased legislative recognition. We know when we hear Gary LeBeau, chairman of the Commerce Committee, quote MERG facts, they are *listening*.

We thank you for entrusting the leadership of MERG to us. We have worked hard to establish a name for MERG in the business community. Although we will not seek re-election at the 2009 Annual Meeting, the mission of MERG will continue to be alive at JK Designs. On a personal note, we want to extend a special thank you to Leslie Olding, for always being on the frontlines with us, willing sounding board, proofreader, and webmaster extraordinaire.

*Jean and Karen*



Laurin Killian, Leslie Olding & Chris  
Coutu(R-Norwich)

# Website – [www.mergct.org](http://www.mergct.org)

## Traffic

In 2008, MERG's website, [www.mergct.org](http://www.mergct.org), saw a significant increase in traffic, represented by page views and total visitors. Total page views increased 102% from 2007, while unique visitors increased 128%. During the same period, new visitors (those who had not previously visited the site) increased by 132%.

## New Features

During the past year, MERG's website underwent a major facelift, which included the addition of a new blog. The blog has helped MERG in its mission to educate, as many of the topics blogged about have been issues that affect micro enterprise owners. The blog has helped to educate members and the public, but most importantly, it has drawn members into an ongoing conversation about issues. Several members of MERG have contributed posts and comments to the blog, so it has become a collaborative effort that includes many different viewpoints. The blog has helped the micro business community come together to discuss issues that affect us and our businesses.

In addition to initiating a conversation on its website, MERG also created a discussion group on the popular social networking site, LinkedIn. This group facilitates discussions by members and the public about MERG and about issues of concern to micro enterprise.

The new website also links to member blogs, which encourages our site visitors to learn more about our members by reading their blogs. It also includes a blogroll of important sites that share our interest in micro enterprise. During the last year we've added more photo galleries and another interactive video on micro enterprise statistics and definitions.

While the website continues to serve up many helpful resources to visitors, it is also an extremely useful tool to the organization. One of its most useful functions continues to be web-based forms. Our RSVP form allows people planning to attend an event to indicate this to MERG through the website, and pay online for events. Our registration form also allows MERG to collect data and dues for new and renewing members. MERG also uses sign-up forms to schedule members to volunteer at various events throughout the year. All of these web-based forms simplify the collection and use of data, and streamline various payments, which reduces paperwork and trips to the bank.

In January of 2009, MERG launched another electronic initiative, a member newsletter. The newsletter is emailed to all members on the first Tuesday of each month. It also goes out to a list of MERG supporters, and others interested in our mission. The newsletter was developed in order to improve communication between the Board and members at large who cannot always attend meetings. Each issue features a member spotlight, committee news, announcements from our partners, and other news of MERG. This newsletter has helped to increase member participation in MERG by communicating directly with members, and also by getting members involved in its production.

# Training Calendar

MERG's statewide training calendar continues to be one of the site's most successful features. It features a comprehensive listing of low- and no-cost business training available statewide. In the last year, the calendar has seen an increase in the number of events listed, and it has become a valuable resource, both for individuals looking for training and for groups offering it.

# Sponsors and Sources of Support

MERG is fortunate to have several generous sponsors whose unwavering support has permitted it to carry out its mission. The Community Economic Development Fund serves as MERG's home, providing office space and a conference room for monthly meetings. The Small Business Development Center assumed the role of presenting sponsor at our 5th Annual Reception at the Capitol with a generous donation. Our members provided many in-kind donations of printing and other necessary supplies to carry on the work of MERG.

Other major donors and benefactors include:

Small Business Development Center

Reid & Riege, P.C.

MERG would like to thank each of its sponsors for their generous support of the organization and its mission.

# 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Legislative Reception

On May 6, 2009, the Micro Enterprise Resource Group (MERG ) celebrated its 5th year of advocating on behalf of Connecticut's micro enterprise with a recognition gala at the Capitol. We had an excellent turnout, with over 125 legislators and their staff in attendance. Mother Nature chose ours to be the one sunny day in a rather long stretch of gloom. A town crier read our proclamation from Governor Rell and we heard from our presenting sponsor, Connecticut SBDC.



Governor's Proclamation

Our emcee, Marc Gallagher, reminded us to buy micro enterprise, or "Buy ME", as it is known. That "buy local" theme was reiterated by Rep. Diana Urban (D-North Stonington), who quite enthusiastically embraced the notion that we should all work together to strengthen our communities by keeping our dollars circulating locally. Rep. Urban also presented MERG with a proclamation from the General Assembly. Valeriano Ramos, Jr. also offered congratulations from the office of the Secretary of the State and presented MERG with a proclamation.

Ginne Rae Clay, Director of Connecticut SBDC, our presenting sponsor , also spoke briefly about the importance of micro enterprise in Connecticut. She introduced the audience to Siamack Shojai, Dean of the School of Business at Central Connecticut State University, who shared some comments and offered congratulations on the ingenuity and perseverance of micro enterprise.



Adrian Myles,  
Myles Catering, LLC

All of the food and drinks were provided by micro enterprise businesses, and there were some excellent dishes served up.

Thanks to all of our caterers, for donating their time and talents.



Bill Potvin, Hosmer Soda,  
Bob Greenberg, Café on the Run

## Thanks to our Caterers

Taste of Italy

Myles Catering, LLC

Café on the Run

Hosmer Mountain Bottling Co.

Jitters Coffeehouse

Scotts' Jamaican Bakery

Liz's Quick Gourmet

Olde Burnside Brewing Company

Carriage House Farms Catering

Avery's Beverages

Plainville Pizza

Picnic Basket Catering

Genell Rose, Inc.

Alchemy Juice Bar Café

# Goals & Objectives for 2010 and Beyond

- Continue to grow membership—Goal 200 by end of 2010 and long range over 1000 in the next five years
- Obtain Not-For-profit status for organization
- Reach out to all geographic areas within state to educate and bring in new members
- Create alliances with state agencies for betterment of micro-enterprises
- Create a year round effort to update micro-enterprise statistics
- Enhance grant writing and sponsorship capabilities
- Obtain major grants for funding
- Obtain major sponsors for events
- Grow the size of committees to get more involvement and participation
- Become the “ONE” source for micro-business to access for information, referrals and aid
- Create subdivisions of MERG as we grow to properly cover the entire state
- Spearhead BUY ME & BUY Local campaigns throughout the State of CT
- Develop and maintain MERG website as the one stop resource for micro-entrepreneurs
- Within five years hire staff for a full-time office
- Create Partnerships with higher education for entrepreneurship development

# MERG Financial Statement

## Balance Sheets

as June 30th 2009 and December 31st 2008

	Jun 30, 2009	Dec 31, 2008
<b>ASSETS</b>		
Assets		
Bank accounts	\$ 5,507	\$ 4,792
Accounts receivable (net of reserve)	-	325
Prepaid expenses	243	-
Property and equipment	300	-
Total assets	\$ 6,049	\$ 5,117
<b>LIABILITIES and FUND BALANCE</b>		
Liabilities		
Accounts payable	\$ 379	\$ -
Prepaid membership dues	125	125
Total liabilities	504	125
Fund balances		
Unrestricted fund balance	5,545	4,992
Total liabilities and net assets	\$ 6,049	\$ 5,117

## Statement of Support, Revenue and Expenses

for the six months ended June 30th 2009

and the 12 months ended December 31st 2008

	2009	2008
	Jan 1 - Jun 30	Jan 1 - Dec 31
Income		
Membership dues	\$ 225	\$ 3,150
General support donations	450	1,350
Sponsorships (1)	4,250	6,500
Other receipts	-	1,165
Total support and revenue	4,925	12,165
Expenses		
Advertising and promotion	-	1,059
Meeting expenses, net	120	2,278
Operating overhead	370	582
Tradeshaw events	500	985
Uncollected dues	275	350
LOB Event expenses	3,107	4,138
Total expenses	4,372	9,392
Change in fund balances	553	2,773
Fund balances, beginning of period	4,992	2,219
Fund balances, end of period	\$ 5,545	\$ 4,992

### Notes:

(1) The following sponsors supported MERG's 2009 LOB Gala.

Connecticut Small Business Development  
Center  
Reed & Riege, PC

# Board of Directors 2009

## **Co-Chairpersons**

Jean Dunning, JK Designs

Karen Gumkowski, JK Designs

## **Vice Chairperson**

Marc Gallagher, POW R PC, LLC

## **Treasurer**

## **Secretary**

Brenda Violette, VBS Virtual Assist, LLC

## **Members**

Shirley Bloethe, Pass-it-on-Sports & Jitters Coffeehouse

Jean Dunning, JK Designs

Marc Gallagher, POW R PC, LLC

Cherie Griffith-Dunn, VLO Group New England, LLC

Karen Gumkowski, JK Designs

Jon Landers, Creative Group, LLC

Leslie Olding, Streamlined Development

Brenda Violette, VBS Virtual Assist, LLC

Donna Wertenbach, Community Economic Development Fund

Permanent Commission on the Status of Women  
CT Small Business Development Center

# MERG

Micro Enterprise Resource Group

P.O. Box 2060

Meriden, CT 06450

Phone: 203 235-2333

Email: [info@mergct.org](mailto:info@mergct.org)

Web: <http://www.mergct.org>