

# **THE MICRO BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

## **Northeast Kingdom Community Action Agency**

### **Serving Orleans, Essex and Caledonia Counties**

**In addition to business coaching and business educational opportunities, through out the year, MBDP collaborates with other community partners to create innovative projects to help businesses in our region move forward.**

#### **INNOVATIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES**

##### **ASPIRE! – Empowering Female Entrepreneurs in the Northeast Kingdom**



ASPIRE! is a program within the Micro Business Development Department of NEKCA. ASPIRE! aims to increase the prosperity of the Northeast Kingdom by offering business technical assistance and educational opportunities to female owned businesses.

Recently, the Micro Business Development Program offered three “Circle of Support” networking sessions which included women from all three counties. The focus of “Circle of

Support” networking events is to engage and empower women entrepreneurs. These events were hosted by the Grindstone Café in Lyndonville and were sponsored by the Passumpsic Savings Bank. In addition to the peer support and networking one business was chosen from a drawing from each county to receive a \$500.00 business award. The winners are below:

##### **Val Elliott-Caledonia County**

Val Elliott co-owns the company Spice Box with Hend Al-Raimi, (originally from Yemin) who shares her passion for good food and bringing our community together. Spice Box is bringing Middle Eastern food to the Northeast Kingdom, using fresh and local produce when available.

##### **Janet McKenzie-Essex County**

Janet McKenzie is a painter internationally renowned for her distinctive iconography of sacred and secular subjects, with a particular dedication to honoring women. Janet McKenzie is from New York City and was one of the youngest recipients of the Edward McDowell Traveling Scholarship while a student at the Art Students League of New York. She now lives in Island Pond.

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#### Penny Jensen -Orleans County

Penny Jensen is the owner of Thistledown Farm. She has created a “drawing salve” from a recipe that has been in her family for multiple generations. Her background as a registered nurse and her desire to help others are the driving force for sharing this hand crafted product with others.

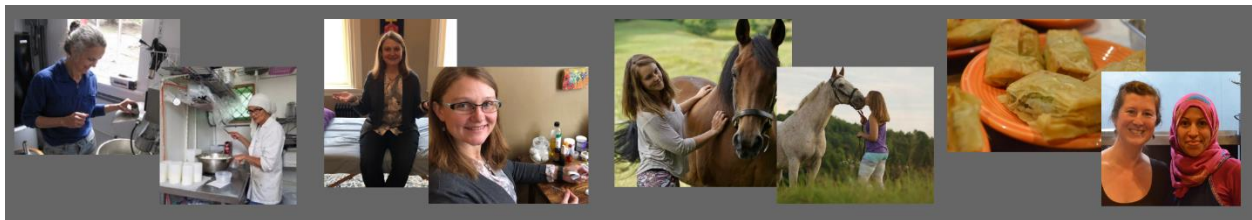
#### The Prosperity Fund – NEKCA’s Micro Business Development Program Chosen as First Pilot Project

The **NEK Prosperity Fund** has been created as a result of work by *NEK Prosper!*, the Accountable Health Community of Caledonia & southern Essex Counties. *NEK Prosper!* is a coalition of the leading health, social service, housing, educational, governmental, and cultural organizations and institutions in the southern half of the Northeast Kingdom, an area that is encompassed by the service area of Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital. *NEK Prosper!* has adopted the following vision statement to guide its work:

*Our members are committed to our shared goal of improving the health and well-being of the people in Caledonia and southern Essex Counties by integrating our efforts and services with an emphasis on reducing poverty in our region.*

To hear their stories, please click the link to see the Prosperity Fund Video:

<http://www.katv.org/vod/studio/2019/nekca082119>



*“As the only employee of my business, my ability to grow my business was limited by the time needed to treat patients and the need to schedule appointments. With the support of this software, patients now set up their own appointments online, fill out intake forms at home, and receive reminder messages about upcoming treatment visits.”*

~Sarah Strafford, M.Ac.O.M., L.Ac.  
1000 Cranes Acupuncture & Massage