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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 20, 2014 614-804-2557

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**SBDC Named 2014 Partner of the Year by Ohio CDC Association**

*The Butler County Microenterprise Program recognized for its community development impact*

The Butler County Small Business Development Center (SBDC) was named the Ohio Community Development Corporation Association’s Partner of the Year for its role in the Butler County Microenterprise and Microloan Program that supports low-and moderate-income individuals in pursuing their dreams of self-employment and small business ownership. This collaborative program is a partnership with the SBDC, Supports to Encourage Low-income Families (SELF) and Neighborhood Housing Service of Hamilton, Inc. The Ohio CDC Association is a statewide membership organization of Community Development Corporations that engages in capacity building, advocacy and public policy development that fosters socially and economically healthy communities.

In the past 3 years, 125 prospective low- and moderate-income entrepreneurs have enrolled in the Butler County Microenterprise Program trainings, 32 businesses have been launched or expanded and 28 of these businesses are still in operation and thriving. Also, 8 microloans have been awarded totaling $28,000.

SELF nominated the Butler County SBDC for the award for their on-going work with the program, which includes classroom training on small business topics and hands-on support for writing a business plan and completing a loan package. “Dave Riggs and Mark Langford of the SBDC -- both experienced entrepreneurs and business owners themselves -- go above and beyond to teach, mentor and encourage our entrepreneurial clients,” said Jeffrey Diver, executive director of SELF. “They offer advice, a listening ear and their expertise—and help support our clients by buying local and encouraging others to support these micro businesses”.

Prospective entrepreneurs have at least two major barriers to successful small business ownership. First, they are not able to access even minimal funds through traditional loans. Banks may find the loan requests to be too small, require the same amount of work as larger loans. Additionally, the borrowers are not creditworthy given current standards, and/or the economic climate discourages loan origination. Furthermore, in many cases, the entrepreneurs are inexperienced in business. They need both training and technical assistance to develop a quality business plan, get a small business started, and manage a business that is successful and lasting. The Butler County Microenterprise and Microloan Program addresses these problems by incorporating an intensive 10-week, 30-hour training program and an alternative source of microloans. Together, these components allow worthy microenterprises to be started, re-started, and maintained. With the help of this program’s well-designed technical assistance and accessible loans, the goal of successful self-employment becomes available to the unemployed and underemployed residents of Butler County and spurs local economic development.

“SELF and the SBDC are continuing to operate and enhance the microenterprise program that will result in the opening of more successful small businesses by low- and moderate-income entrepreneurs,” Diver said. “Our partners at the SBDC have kept us up to date on tips and trends throughout the small business world. Also, we have added new information and requirements to the classes for our entrepreneurs. In just three years, our clients have reported an improvement in their household incomes and overall self-sufficiency. Our business owners are also creating jobs and contributing to the area economy. The talented, hard-working and knowledgeable staffers at the Butler County Small Business Development Center have been a major part of this success.”

*The Ohio CDC Association announced 6 additional community development awards during its 2014 annual conference at the Crowne Plaza Dayton. The two-day gathering, Oct. 9-10, convened 250 community development leaders from around Ohio under the theme, Re-Inventing Our Communities. The other 2014 winners include:*

* Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation, CDC of the Year*

* Diane Vakharia, Price Hill Will, CDC Staff Member of the Year*

* Rob Sheil, Cornerstone Corporation for Shared Equity, Stephanie J. Bevens Award Winner*

* Neighborhood Housing Services of Greater Cleveland – Cleveland CityLIFT, CDC Project of the Year*

* Hal Keller, Ohio Capital Corporation for Housing, Ned D. Neuhausel Award*

* Fred Orth, Walnut Hills Redevelopment Foundation, CDC Community Leader of the Year*

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*The Ohio CDC Association is a statewide membership organization of Community Development Corporations that engages in capacity building, advocacy and public policy development that fosters socially and economically healthy communities.*

*CAPTION: The Butler County Small Business Development Center receives the 2014 Partner of the Year Award from the Ohio Community Development Corporation Association for its role in the Butler County Microenterprise Program. The program is a collaboration with Supports to Encourage Low-income Families (SELF) and Neighborhood Housing Services of Hamilton, Inc. that provides education, training and start-up loans for low-income entrepreneurs in Butler County. Pictured L to R: State Senator Bill Beagle, David Riggs and Mark Lankford of the Butler County SBDC and Judy Jackson with the National Equity Fund.*

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