

## Learning centre gets government grant



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The Bigger and Better Journey Learning Centre recently received a grant from the Southwest Ontario Community Adjustment Fund to put towards its internship program.

The centre offers computer training and soft skills workshops and will use the federal government grant to pay 50 per cent of wages for the centre's business development intern.

"To be endorsed by the federal government gives new meaning to our initiative," Melanie Crawford, co-owner and operator of the learning centre, said. "The people who are going to contribute to our success are recognizing how viable our service is and what we have to offer. It's a huge boost to our vision and the whole reason we started this business."

Now in its third year of operation, the learning centre felt the effects of the economy over the past year. The business plan they created when the owners started, called for them to have a sales team by this year.

"We were starting 2010 at a bit of a disadvantage because we didn't have the revenue to support a sales person but the grant allowed us to stay on track," Crawford said. "Being able to stay on track with the business plan is incredibly empowering."

The learning centre is the only one of its kind in Brantford and surrounding area that offers a holistic

approach to learning, said Crawford, who runs the centre with her husband Warren Crawford.

“Holistic learning is intertwining concepts into everything (students) already understand,” Crawford said. “We have to have an idea of where they are coming from so we can apply the teachings to (their experiences).”

The approach has been successful for Cathy Armstrong, who has taken numerous accounting and computer classes at the centre over the past three years.

“Really and truly, I don’t think I’ve ever learnt anything this well,” said Armstrong. “For me, it was a completely new area, so to be able to become familiar in that period of time is amazing to me.”

Armstrong had no background in accounting before taking the courses at the learning centre, but now does all the bookkeeping for her partner’s business in Burford.

“Wherever someone is in their lives, what we offer moves them at least one step forward, if not more,” Crawford said. “All that’s going to do is enhance what our community can offer.”