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Bright spots do shine through gloom

This is the first of what will be a monthly column from Michael Dalby, president of One Southern Indiana, which is the economic development council and Chamber of Commerce for Floyd and Clark counties.

These are challenging times for business, but there are companies that continue to succeed. Most often, we see small ventures that are innovative, aggressive, opportunistic and still seeing opportunities even in a down economy.

For example, last week I met with Karla Haas, president of Rudy Green's Doggy Cuisine (www.rudygreens.com). Whatever you may think of gourmet dog food, this company is really making tracks (pun intended). Karla has such a great enthusiasm and attitude ... in talking with her, you'd hardly know there was any kind of economic crisis. Her product is in Kroger and Whole Foods stores in Louisville, Lexington, Cincinnati and Nashville ... amazing!

Karla's is the type of company we are seeing more of ... one that has grown through the start-up phase, has established its product and is now looking to move into the second phase (next round of investors, expanded building and resources, etc.). And Karla is a great example of the businessperson who blends a passion for the work with a strong dose of reality — she knows what it takes to make the product great and she understands the imperative to make money!

In Floyd County, there are some great resources for budding "micro-enterprises" looking to reach the next level. One of the best is the Horseshoe Foundation of Floyd County Small Business Revolving Loan Fund. The foundation has made \$250,000 available for low-interest loans of \$50,000 or less for qualifying, growing businesses in Floyd County. 1SI administers the funds, and we've made two loans so far to advanced manufacturer PTG Silicones and to the New Albanian Brewing Co.

For more information on the fund and its requirements go to our Web site, www.1si.org, and click on "Business Resources" and then "Financing Your Business."

Finally we've noticed an increase in local businesses "making plans" for the recovery. Here are three recent survey comments from three local manufacturers:

"We feel the bottom is behind us and are seeing a slight increase in demand."

"In the past 60 days, we have seen some upturn."

"We certainly were feeling like things were going in a downturn in July, but we've gotten completely overwhelmed with new work this week (Aug. 3-7) across multiple industries and would have to agree that things are definitely looking up — at least for the moment."

Let's hope the momentum continues!

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