

BUSINESS

Sprint announces discounted rates for low-income customers

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Qualified low-income telephone customers can save money on connection charges and the monthly rate for basic local residential service with Link Up America and Lifeline Assistance Programs.

The Public Utilities Commission of Nevada (PUCN) approved the new rate and rule changes, effective January 1, 1998.

Link Up America is a federally-sponsored program that provides discounted service connection charges to qualifying low-income

customers. It provides a 50 percent discount of up to a maximum of \$30 for new residential connection charges. If the connection fee is more than \$30, the balance can be paid, interest free, over a 12-month period.

If a customer moves, a second Link Up discount will be allowed.

Lifeline Assistance is another federally-sponsored program for low-income customers. It provides discounts to the monthly charge for basic local residential service.

For eligible customers in Las Vegas,

Henderson, Boulder City and Blue Diamond, the reduction will be \$6.36 per month.

The reductions will vary according to the service areas. The discounts are limited to 60 percent of the telephone company's one party flat residential rate.

The flat residential rate varies in some of Sprint's smaller service areas.

To qualify for both programs, customers must be a recipient of one or more of the following programs: Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), Food Stamps,

Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), or Federal Public Housing Assistance.

"Sprint is pleased to offer these programs," said Vice President and General Manager of Nevada Operations Lou Emmert. "Telephone service is a basic need for every household and these programs will assist those who otherwise may have to do without it."

Sprint customers may apply for or obtain more information on qualifications for these programs by calling Sprint at 244-7400.

REGINA'S REMEDIES**Potential business owners must plan, plan, plan**

*By Regina Lynch-Hudson
Special to Sentinel-Voice*

Q. Dear Regina: I'm in the process of seeking a loan to open a construction and remodeling business, something I've done on the side for years. Expert floor plans for interiors are my specialty. People are stressing that I need a business plan for a talent from which I've already

been making money for years. Somebody quoted \$3,000 for a plan. Isn't that money better spent on advertising?

A: A business owner who fails to plan, plans to fail. Entrepreneurs should start planning at least six months before they initiate a new business idea. A business plan helps avoid potentially disastrous errors like under

capitalization, creating negative cash flow, hiring the wrong employees, selecting the wrong location and pursuing the wrong market.

Besides, investors and lenders need to see a business plan in order to take you seriously. A winning business plan requires 50 to 100 hours to write, which includes research, documentation,

analysis and review. Software packages can also walk you through the basics of preparing a business plan. Ask yourself, what's there to advertise if you build your business on a shaky foundation?

Q. Dear Regina: My six-year-old company serves and sells private label coffees with a limited menu of teas and pastries in a strip shopping

center setting. Can you suggest marketing maneuvers that will take us to the next level?

We tried mail order for the coffee, which didn't work. Our goal is to extend our private label sales beyond our store front location.

A: The sky is the limit if you form a "win win" alliance with another company who will benefit from the addition of

your product.

For instance, a strategic and "sweet" marriage was struck in 1996 when Starbucks Coffee joined with United Airlines to serve Starbucks' coffee to passengers. If your initial aim is to keep your feet on the ground, send savvy proposals to eateries, book stores with interior cafes, hair salons and

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