



MEMPHIS SMALL
BUSINESS QUARTERLY



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ANNIVERSARY EDITION

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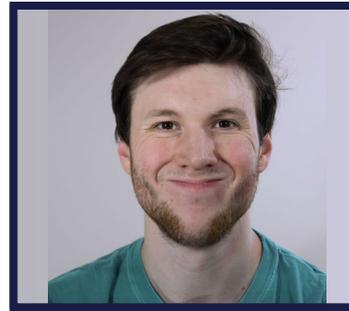
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A Message from the founder and president

It has been an honor to write stories that capture the entrepreneurial journey in Memphis, Tenn. since 2017. The concept was developed from lack of media representation in traditional media.

Over the course of five years, we have featured entrepreneurs in healthcare, project management, human resources, real estate, business development, nonprofit management and law.

While this is the end of Memphis Small Business Quarterly, it is the beginning of something new for Writing by Design Media, Inc.

We will continue to share stories about underrepresented entrepreneurs through print and digital media content creation.

Special thanks to the board of directors for their support and thanks to the advertisers for this edition. Upsquad; Three (i) Communications, LLC; LRB Global Consulting Services; Women Financial Power.

Visit our website at wbdmedia.com to stay connected.

Sincerely,

Paula Anderson

Young entrepreneur continues to make impact through real estate investing

By Jennifer Sharp

Since the premiere issue of Memphis Small Business Quarterly in 2017, Eric Ryan Brinson has continued to work as a successful entrepreneur and is making an impact in the Mid-South.

Now working in the real estate market, Eric is the managing director for A & R Development & Acquisitions. Founded in 2016, A & R Development & Acquisitions buys and sells investment properties to passive and active real estate investors at deep discounts. Their mission is to be a resource for investors who are looking to park their money into appreciating and cash flowing assets.

Brinson got into the real estate market out of necessity to get out of debt from a failed business and has found continued success.

"I guess you can say that real estate has found me and I have been successful in it ever since," said Brinson. "The business has been growing and we have been able to buy more properties during and after the pandemic."

So far, A & R has completed over 100 deals and counting and they are continuing to grow and connect with other investors and partner with wholesalers, rehabbers, landlords, developers and lenders.

While the pandemic has negatively impacted many businesses, A & R has seen a positive economic and socio-economic impact as the real estate market grew and more people became interested in single family homes instead of other properties such as apartments and condos.



"The pandemic and the racial climate have made people more sensitive to what is going on and has caused people to pay more attention to the importance of ownership and financial literacy," said Brinson. "It has also encouraged more ownership among African-Americans."

The pandemic has also forced businesses like A & R to conduct business and build relationships virtually.

Brinson stated that even though business owners are not able to network and grow their businesses organically and in-person through building relationships; people have become more comfortable doing things virtually by leveraging technology. The increased use of technology has also expanded across all ages and has caused fluidity in businesses.

Brinson's goal for A & R is to become more aggressive with acquisitions, achieve vertical growth and purchase more assets. He also wants to further expand his business in Memphis, Tennessee, Middle Tennessee and Little Rock, Arkansas.

"My advice to emerging entrepreneurs is to be patiently aggressive, meaning that you have to aggressively achieve your goals, but be patient when it comes to new opportunities. Also, set a timeline for your path to success," said Brinson.

For more information about Eric Brinson, follow him on Instagram at @ericbrinson1.

For more information about A & R Development & Acquisitions, visit www.andersonandryan.com.

Jennifer Sharp is a PR professional and president of Public Relations Society of America (Memphis Chapter).

This article was originally published in the 2021 Memphis Small Business Quarterly Anniversary Edition.

New location brings new vision for Phillip Ashley Chocolates

By Jurnee Taylor

Beale street, blues and barbeque are arguably the most notable things about Memphis. But one man, who's been dubbed the "Real Life Willy Wonka" by Forbes and "Memphis' King of Chocolate" by Loca Palate's, is changing the Memphis experience one chocolate at a time.

Chocolatier, Chef Phillip Ashley Rix, has made his mark on the Memphis community for the last five years with his unbelievable designed chocolates and his vision is to give others a different "perspective."

Rix has been able to bring more to his vision through a relocation and reopening of his Chocolate boutique in Midtown Memphis on April 19. This larger location on the corner of Madison and Bellevue allows him to get a fresh start and more importantly support other vendors.

"I don't look like your typical chocolatier, so therefore we're not going to make your typical chocolate. I learned the foundation and then I put my spin on things, my vision and voice... that's when the rule breaking came in," Rix said.



Photo Credit: Jurnee Taylor

The fictional Willy Wonka was known for making anyone's dreams come true, and Rix doesn't fall short of that. He is a "big fan" of entrepreneurs especially "founders of color" and other than the energetic green and the scripted font of Phillip Ashley on the wall, guests will see items from multiple local vendors. From paintings that are available for purchase, guests can even indulge in popcorn, gelato, coffee and more.

"This demonstrates when we are intentional about building black businesses, it works. The spirit that he has to make the chocolate is his secret sauce, that's what makes him the Real Willy Wonka," said Roquita Williams.

"Obviously we are going to have the chocolate...but being able to find products that don't cannibalize what we do, the just accentuate us being here. We have the space, we have the shelf space, we have the real estate to be able to showcase others in order to give people another reason to come," Rix said.

Coming into this new location, Rix has a new-found appreciation, a vision for something bigger, and a desire to use his platform to showcase creatives here in the Mid-south. His idea of "chocolate cafés" are soon to be the talk of the town. Phillip Ashley Chocolates "tell stories that taste like chocolate" and with a vision like his, this story is only the beginning."

Ernest Strickland celebrates one year anniversary as Black Business Association (BBA) president

By Paula Anderson

The Black Business Association was established in 1974 for the purpose of helping entrepreneurs and minority owned businesses Memphis, Tenn.

The 48-year-old trade organization is working to rebrand and rebuild its infrastructure according to Ernest Strickland, president and CEO.

Strickland is a Memphis native with his own entrepreneurial journey of over 20 years. He has experience in real estate and marketing. When Strickland took the helm in 2021, he instantly started to assess how to improve the operations of the BBA.

"I noticed a gap among the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Memphis, so I applied for a grant under the Memphis Restart Initiative."

According to Strickland, the Memphis Restart Initiative will offer products and services to help serve local business owners.

"We want to teach business acumen and provide Next Level Leadership Training," said Strickland.

Congressman Steve Cohen of the 9th District requested the funding according to the news release.

"The Memphis ReStart Initiative, a multifaceted small business development program that includes leadership training for Black managers, entrepreneurs and business owners, and identifies opportunities for Black businesses to thrive. The program is led by the Black Business Association of Memphis."

In addition to business development, the BBA will also prepare business owners for mergers & acquisitions, and digital marketing. According to Chastity Jones, executive office manager, they have contracted with APEX marketing to perform a digital audit.

Most businesses have experienced challenges due to the pandemic and a lack of funding and resources. Strickland said, "This is an opportunity to collaborate with other organizations to help rebuild businesses in Memphis."

The Chamber's business model is based on a membership fee, but it will not require individuals to be a member to receive services from the Memphis Restart Initiative.

"We hope that our value will encourage new members to join the BBA," said Strickland.

Another initiative is the Blue Oval Ford Project. The Black Business Association (BBA), Memphis Minority Contractors (MAMCA) and Mid-South Minority Business Continuum (MMBC) have collaborated to help black and minority business owners navigate throughout the process.

MAMCA is an entrepreneurial focused organization committed to wealth creation in minority communities according to the [website](#).

[The Mid-South Minority Business Continuum](#) is an accelerator business for minority and women owned businesses according to the website.

After a year of work on the job, Strickland said, " I want to move from the cusp of greatness to the place of greatness.

To learn more about the Black Business Association, visit bbamemphis.org.

Governmental agency assists entrepreneurs with contracting opportunities

by Johari Hamilton

The University of Tennessee Procurement Technical Assistance Center is a program funded in part by the U.S. Department of Defense. It is administered through a cooperative agreement with the Defense Logistics Agency.

[UT PTAC's](#) primary mission is to "assist businesses in competing successfully in federal, state and local government contracting.

"Government contracts are a tremendous financial opportunity for small businesses. Federal agencies must publicly list their contract opportunities. Some of these contracts are set aside exclusively for small businesses. UT PTAC helps small businesses take advantage of government contracts, known as "set-asides."

"In 2021, PTAC counselors had 1,115 clients that received awards totaling more than \$1.3 million, which led to more than 26,967 jobs created or retained," stated Veronica Clark, counselor for West Tennessee.

With experience in "market research and strategy," Clark focuses on equipping small business owners with the tools they need to grow their businesses through government contracts.

"My word of advice to my clients is to know your target customer! This will enable you to narrow your focus. Once you know your target customer, you can build authentic relationships.

Individuals will do business with people they know. Once you make the connection, make sure that you follow up," explained Clark.

PTAC clients can expect assistance in multiple areas, including:

- Analyzing solicitations
- Marketing to the government
- Researching markets
- Completing certifications

In addition to providing technical assistance and one-on-one counseling, many of the training opportunities UT PTAC offers are available to entrepreneurs and small-business owners through local workshops in conjunction with the Tennessee Small Business Development Center.

To learn more about UT PTAC, visit the website at www.cis.tennessee.edu/programs/procurement-technical-assistance-center-ptac

Johari Hamilton is a former intern and content writer for Writing by Design Media. She can be reached at joharihamilton1@gmail.com.

Entrepreneur Interview Essay

By Adrianna Hardy

The chance to be able to interview entrepreneurs is an amazing opportunity. I was ecstatic to be able to interview an African American businesswoman because entrepreneurship has a reputation for being a predominately white boys club. Although African Americans account for less than ten percent of business owners, they start businesses at higher rates than any other groups and have higher rates of female entrepreneurs. I like to learn from people with similar backgrounds to me because it lets me know that it is possible for me to succeed having seen someone with a similar story do so. Nevertheless, I do understand that diversity and inclusivity will make me a more well-rounded learner and entrepreneur, and it is better to learn what you do not know. It was a great teaching and learning opportunity as a future entrepreneur to interview a current entrepreneur in this economy.

First, I learned just how fortunate I am to be exposed to entrepreneurship and other entrepreneurship resources. When you grow up having access to your needs and wants, you can take for granted the invaluable opportunities they bring. I realized that I do not make use of the resources offered and that I will not always have these opportunities available to me. I am grateful to be able to be connected to entrepreneurs in my personal and school life that are willing to be honest with me about all aspects of entrepreneurship. I am grateful to also be exposed to entrepreneurs in various fields because as I mentioned earlier diversity leads to well-rounded learners and entrepreneurs.

Next, I did not necessarily learn about the extent of entrepreneurship, but I was reminded of the extent of entrepreneurship beyond just owning a business. Paula Anderson wished she had known all that entrepreneurship entails earlier in her journey. Everyone has heard that experience is the best teacher, but if mistakes can be prevented, most people would want to learn how to prevent them. Mistakes in business can be costly whether it be money or clients. Paula Anderson created her magazine to teach people about entrepreneurship and highlight stories of others in their journey.

Then, I learned about the importance of reading. I already knew that reading is fundamental, but I did not realize just how much information I am learning now from videos on mediums like YouTube. Millennials and generation z's attention spans are shorter than generations before, so it seems as if the world is competing to see how much information they can squeeze into smaller time frames. People are also watching videos on YouTube and TikTok to receive information rather than researching the information for ourselves. My generation, generation z, is split between questioning everything that we learn and hear and taking everything as fact that we learn and hear. So, it was great to learn how the vehicles for media have changed and influenced our learning process. As Anderson stated, "watching a video does not replace reading."

Moreover, I learned about the impact of personal finances on an entrepreneur's business venture. Anderson described her credit score as a barrier to her because she was not great at managing money. I have an understanding that what is done in a professional's personal life most of the time will affect their professional life in one way or another. I just did not think that a personal credit score would affect business finances considering personal accounts and business accounts should be separate. I can see now that it makes sense that an entrepreneur would need to be good at managing their personal money so that they can continue to fund their venture, know their business numbers, make sense of those numbers, and be prepared in the case of an emergency.

In addition, I was pleasantly surprised to know that Paula Anderson was not stressed by her work, and she did not even consider her work as a job. She also sets boundaries to achieve work-life balance. She makes sure to shut down work at a certain time on workdays and take at least one day off a week for rest. It was refreshing to hear that life does not have to be stressful because you are starting or own a business. There is a phenomenon of hustle culture in the U.S. that is leading to burnout because hustle culture is focused on work while letting leisure time and sleep take a back seat. I am a part of generation z and work-life balance is important to us.

Undoubtedly, the interview process went smoother than I had originally thought it would. At first, I was nervous to ask Paula Anderson or any entrepreneur about their business because I thought that I would be met with a somewhat negative demeanor as in I thought they would be too busy to talk about their business to someone who can't give them publicity or feel that I was asking for too much information with my questions. I realized that it was all in my head, and she was very receptive to talking about her business and wanting people to know about the entirety of the entrepreneurial process. I also was so busy trying to retain all of the information that I was receiving while doing the interview that I wasn't as present as I could have been. I also need to work on my eye contact when talking to individuals because I know I take eye contact as a nonverbal cue of whether a person cares about what is being said.

Finally, I learned about the importance of others in the success of a business. When asked about her exit plan, Paula Anderson, owner of Writing by Design Media, Inc. stated, "Having people that can run the business for you when you are not there is what makes a business." She mentioned that she was developing her team. Most people only talk about what they did for their business. They make it seem as if entrepreneurship is a one man show even after the launching phase. She also mentioned her mom, son, and aunt being significant in her entrepreneurial journey. Whether it is friends, family, or colleagues, having support must be one of the most important parts of a business becoming successful or growing.

In conclusion, I learned how fortunate I am to be exposed to the resources for entrepreneurship, and I need to take advantage of these resources since entrepreneurship is something that I see myself doing. I also learned about the importance of finding my information in other places than social media platforms and through videos. Most importantly, I loved to hear that other people contribute to the entrepreneurial journey besides the entrepreneur. It lifted a weight off my shoulders to know entrepreneurs need other people to succeed, and it does not make anyone less self-made if they do accept help from others. I also value that it is now being pushed for a balance between work and nonwork life even amongst entrepreneurs where the stigma of overworking is accepted. A lot of things that I learned about entrepreneurship in my interview with Paula Anderson I feel I can apply to me as a person as well. I am thankful that she sat down and took the time to answer my questions honestly as an entrepreneur to teach the future generation of entrepreneurs. Adrianna Hardy is a student at the University of Memphis. She is a business information and technology major.



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