

# Down To Business

A publication of the Southern Good Faith Fund Business Development Center

## Client Spotlight: Business Thrives From Training And TA

**Julee Johnson and Melissa Watts**  
**Class 'A' Apparel and Graphics**  
**2901 Pines Mall Dr. Suite 312**  
**Pine Bluff, Arkansas 71601**  
**870.536.4155**

Among home-grown businesses in Pine Bluff, Class 'A' Apparel is a rising star. Julee and Jay Johnson started their business in 1988 with a small print shop. They moved the business several times before landing on Olive Street as Graphics R US. Business was great at this location, but growing the business presented major challenges.

“Our sales really grew during the time we were located on Olive Street,” says Julee. “I have always been a creative person and found myself focusing more on production and very little on managing the business.”

By 2003, Julee knew she needed help. “Despite having taken many business management classes, my time and money management skills were falling far short of what was expected,” says Julee. “I used all my savings and found myself in debt.”

Julee signed up for Southern Good Faith Fund's Next Step class, an inten-

sive 11-week training program, and hired an experienced business management consultant from alt.Consulting. “It was a difficult time. We had to totally reorganize the business and learn how to manage our finances so we could pay off our debts.”

Julee's daughter, Melissa Watts, who has a wealth of retail and management experience, was brought on board as a principal partner and the business was re-opened under the new name of Class 'A' Apparel. With a new business plan in place, they expanded their

product line to include school uniforms, corporate wear, and services like logo design, sewing, and monogramming.

In 2004, the business made a strategic decision to relocate the store to the high-

traffic Pines Mall. “It was a frightening move, but we took the risk,” says Melissa. This time they were prepared for the business growth. Revenue currently approaches \$1 million and sales between January and July of 2005 doubled compared to the same period last year.

“It was not the journey I expected when I started, but it certainly has begun to pay off,” laughs Julee.



Julee Johnson and Melissa Watts

## Growing Business With An IDA Account

Julia Ishie, owner of Ishie Lawn Service in Marvell, Arkansas, attended the BDC's 11-week First Step® FastTrac™ training program and learned about a special matched savings account that helps entrepreneurs. The Individual Development Account (IDA) is offered by Southern Good Faith Fund's Asset Builder program where every dollar saved is matched with three dollars, up to \$2000.

“I never considered a business plan an essential document,” says Ishie. “Attending the training opened my eyes to the importance of having one. The BDC staff also gave me lots of guidance in management, budgeting, day-to-day operations, and how to run my business profitably.”

Julia saw the benefit of using an IDA account to help expand her business. “The IDA is an excellent investment,” she says. “Where else does a business owner receive a three-to-one match for investing their money?”

With her savings Julia purchased a new riding lawn mower which will let her increase her commercial accounts. Contact Ishie Lawn Service at 870.829.3769.

**Interested in an IDA to start or expand your business?**

Call Tara at 870.535.6233 or  
Mindy at 870.816.1104.

## Come Celebrate A Grand Opening!

Sheilah's Designs announces its grand opening and "dedication to the North Side" ceremony that will be held on Friday, October 21 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at its new location on 3318 West Pullen Street in Pine Bluff. Various dignitaries from Pine Bluff will be in attendance and a light lunch will be served.

Formerly located at 2206 West Pullen, the business was ready for an expansion. "Our business had grown to the point that we knew we had to find a larger and more prominent location," says Sheila Waddell, owner. "We have seen our sales more than double compared to this same time last year."

The new location, prominently visible from Interstate 530, will be easier for customers to find. "We wanted to continue to cater to the needs of our clients by offering the full range of arts, crafts, oils, candles, and ethnic

products," she explains. "At the same time, we know that improving our visibility and accessibility we can boost business."

Waddell is also dedicated to strengthening business on the North side of the City. "This dedication is also a tribute to those businesses that have chosen to stay on the North Side of Pine Bluff," says Waddell.

You can RSVP for the event by calling 870.575.0302 or by visiting Sheilah's Designs at 3318 West Pullen.

*Sheila Waddell is a graduate of the BDC's Next Step Business Training Program and a member of its Advisory Board. She is also featured as a speaker for BDC's First Step® FastTrac™ business training program each quarter.*

## Don't Underestimate The Power Of Word Of Mouth Marketing

Word-of-mouth advertising can be more effective than your most expensive advertising campaigns. Not only is it cost-effective, but having your customers tell their friends, family, and co-workers about your product or service can generate new customers and increased sales.

There's even a Word of Mouth Marketing Association ([womma.org](http://womma.org)) to promote this effective marketing strategy.

Consider one of the best examples of a company building its business through word-of-mouth advertising—Starbucks Coffee.

When was the last time you've seen an ad for Starbucks? In fact, they don't advertise much but rely heavily on word of mouth advertising, in-store experiences, and repeat customers.

So the next time a customer walks in your door, make sure their experience is meaningful enough to tell others.

But simply providing an excellent product or service is not enough to bring people to your door.

Some Word of Mouth marketing strategies:

- Develop and maintain customer satisfaction with products through exceptional quality and service.
- Create opportunities for people to talk about your products or services. Encourage them to contact you and take the time to listen and respond.

Consider Starbucks again. When Starbucks first opened, they gave away free coffee samples. The coffee was good and it generated a buzz. People started telling their friends. And the rest is history.

## Keep Us Up To Date

Have you moved? Do you have new contact information?

To ensure that you continue to receive our publications and flyers, please call us with your new contact information.

We depend on your success to keep the funding for the BDC ongoing. We want to continue to provide our services to you at little or no cost for many years to come.

If you are in the Pine Bluff area you can contact Angela Austin at 870.535.6233 or 888.323.6233 ext. 13 or e-mail her at [aaustin@southern-goodfaithfund.org](mailto:aaustin@southern-goodfaithfund.org).

If you are in the Forrest City, Helena, or West Memphis areas you can contact Pat Scott at 870.816.1120 or e-mail her at [pscott@southern-goodfaithfund.org](mailto:pscott@southern-goodfaithfund.org).

## We Want To Brag On You!

You don't have to wait for us to call you to ask how you're doing. Give us a call anytime that you obtain a loan to start, expand, or improve your business, or if you achieve some other success as a result of working with BDC staff.

We want to tell your story and brag on you in this newsletter, which reaches over 2,000 entrepreneurs and other partners. It's also a great way to get some publicity for your business.



## Training & Workshops

Open To Women & Men!

### Understanding Business Insurance—Pine Bluff

**Highlights:** This workshop is designed to provide participants with information on business insurance. If you've wondered what insurance you should acquire for your business, this workshop is for you.

**Cost:** Free

**Date and Time:** November 7, 6p to 8p

**Location:** Southern Good Faith Fund, 2304 W. 29th Ave.

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### Basic Computer Training—Pine Bluff

**Highlights:** The Business Development Center in partnership with UAPB's Economic Research and Development Center and Development will be offering basic computer training to the general public beginning October 3, on Monday evenings. Come learn more about computer software and the Internet.

**Cost:** \$20

**Dates & Time:** 6p to 9p

- Oct. 3 Intro to computers and the Internet
- Oct. 10 Intro to Microsoft Word
- Oct. 17 Intro to Microsoft Excel
- Oct. 24 Intro to Microsoft Powerpoint

**Location:** UAPB School of Business Rm 209

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### Closing Out The Tax Year

**Highlights:** This workshop is designed to assist entrepreneurs in preparing for tax year ending 12/31/05. Small independently-owned businesses including those that are home-based, beauticians, barbers, child care centers as well as lawn care, trucking, construction and janitorial businesses.

Workshop Topics:

- Filing your Schedule C – Determining if your business has made a profit or loss.
- Form 8829 – Expenses incurred for running your business from home.
- Allowable and unallowable expenses
- Filing a W-2 & 1099

**Cost:** Free

**Time:** 6p to 8p

**Dates & Locations:**

- Helena: Tuesday, Nov. 15,  
Phillip Community College,  
Fine Arts Center
- Forrest City: Thursday, Dec. 8,  
East Arkansas Enterprise Community,  
1000 Airport Rd.

### To Register:

To register for training, workshops, or business counseling call:

Pine Bluff: Angela at 870.535.6233 ext.13 or  
toll free at 888.323.6233

Helena: Pat at 870.816.1120 or Vida at  
870.816.1126

Forrest City: 870.630.2005 or 870.816.1120

West Memphis: 870.735.1134 or 870.816.1120

Don't forget about our **FREE one-on-one business counseling**. Give us a call for details!

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## Help Us Keep Helping You

We look forward to visiting with you during our periodic surveys to find out how you and your business are doing. And remember, when you tell us how our services have impacted your business, you're helping us learn how to serve you better.

Staff from the Business Development Center will be calling you at intervals of 30 days, 90 days, six months, one year, two years, and three years after you receive our services to ask you to respond to a short survey. All information is confidential and will not affect your standing with BDC. The impact your business is making will also help keep the BDC funded.

## A Special Thanks To Our Funders

The Business Development Center thanks all of the funders that make our work possible:

- Department of Human Services' Division of Childcare and Early Childhood Education
- U.S Small Business Administration's Office of Women's Business Ownership
- U.S Small Business Administration's Program for Investment in Microenterprise
- The Walton Family Foundation
- The W.K. Kellogg Foundation
- Southern Bancorp

BDC is partially funded by the U.S. Small Business Administration's Office of Women's Business Ownership (OWBO) under Cooperative Agreement Number (SBAHQ-04-W-0032). The Office of Women's Business Ownership is established to help women become full partners in economic development through small business ownership. The Women's Business Ownership homepage is: [www.wbconline.gov](http://www.wbconline.gov). BDC is a public-private partnership of the U.S. Small Business Administration and Southern Good Faith Fund, a non-profit affiliate of Southern Bancorp. SBA's cooperation does not constitute or imply its endorsement of any opinions, products, and/or services. Reasonable arrangements for persons with disabilities will be made if requested at least two weeks in advance. All SBA programs are extended to the public on a nondiscriminatory basis.

## Offices

### Pine Bluff

Southern Good Faith Fund  
2304 West 29th Avenue  
Pine Bluff, AR 71603  
870.535.6233 or 888.323.6233

### Helena

First Bank of the Delta  
502 Cherry Street  
870.816.1120

### Forrest City

East AR Enterprise Community  
By Appointment. 870.630.2005

### West Memphis

West Memphis Chamber of Commerce  
By Appointment. 870.735.1134


e-mail: [bdc@southerngoodfaithfund.org](mailto:bdc@southerngoodfaithfund.org)

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