

BUSINESS CENTS

Winter 2009

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Special Points of Interest

- Local MED Week winners lauded.
- MED Week, at a glance
- In Remembrance: George Muhlberg
- Spotlight: The Mainstay at Saxonburg an SBA success story

Helping small businesses **start, grow** and **succeed**.



Your Small Business Resource

Community lauds MED Week business and advocate awardees at 26th annual celebration



Pictured are (seated from left): Peggy Carpenter; Fant Uku; Twanda Dennis; Rebecca Elstner. Standing (from left) Carl Knoblock; Benjamin Butler; Eugene Ritter; Frederick Douglas and Raymond Vargo

When Shelley Fant Uku walked into Duquesne University’s Power Center on Oct. 10, her colleagues began congratulating her. After Fant Uku glanced at the 2008 Minority Enterprise Development (MED) Week Program, she suddenly understood the praise. Fant Uku, of FCG Solutions, had been named the Small Business Administration (SBA) 2008 Minority Small Business Person of the Year.

“It was quite an honor to have the recognition of the SBA...it was memorable event,” Fant Uku said. “I’m honored and pleased and it’s the first time my team has won an award.”

While Fant Uku maintains the award took her by surprise, Barbara Fisher,

Lead Business Development Specialist for the SBA Pittsburgh District Office, stated that Fant Uku personifies the struggles and triumphs of minority business owners in the region.

“FCG and Shelley Fant Uku not only provide corporations with long-term staffing assistance, but, the company also helps persons find good-paying jobs,” Fisher said. “FCG has provided personnel solutions to large government agencies, as well as health care insurers and real estate developers – she is really giving back and helping the local economy to grow.”

More than 250 business owners and advocates observed the 26th annual MED Week celebration. The theme “The Power of Strategic Alliances in the Global Economy” gave speakers and guests the chance to participate in a mar-

MED Week participants pack the Power Center

MED Week from Page 1

keting/trade fair, as well as listen to local speakers and keynote speaker DeLores Pressley – noted presenter; trainer; author and consultant. Fant Uku was not the only business person basking that day. Rebecca Elstner (Elstner Construction) received the SBA Minority Small Business Person of the Year Runner-Up Award and Calvin Graham (Graham and Graham, Inc.) was the 8(a) Graduate of the Year.

The Minority Business Opportunity Committee (MBOC) honored Frederick Douglas (Cosmos Technologies) as its Minority Business of the Year; Peggy Carpenter (C.P. Environmental)/Woman Business of the Year; Carl Knoblock (SBA)/Veteran Advocate; Twanda Dennis (Office of Surface Mining)/Government Advocate of the Year; Allegheny County Councilman William Russell Robinson/Leadership Award and Raymond Vargo (University of Pittsburgh SBDC) Resource Partner of the Year.

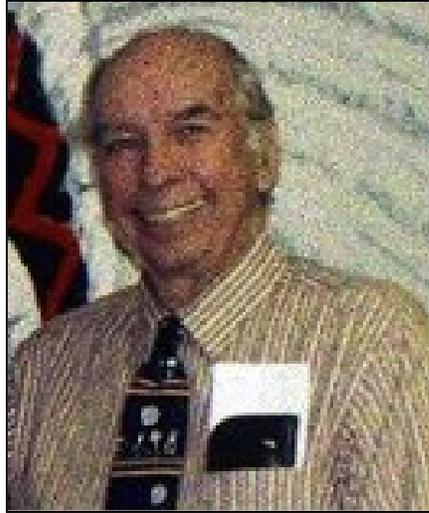
“It was quite an honor to have the recognition of the SBA...it was a memorable event.”

**– Shelley Fant Uku
2008 MED Week
Minority Small Business Person of the Year**

Making MED Week Memorable...



District and small business community mourn loss of SCORE counselor George Muhlberg



George K. Muhlberg

George K. Muhlberg, 77, of Franklin Park, died Wednesday Nov. 12, 2008. He is survived by his wife of 54 years, Elizabeth "Betty" Muhlberg; three sons, Paul (Laurie) Muhlberg of Connecticut, Curt (Tanya) Muhlberg of Massachusetts, and Ron (Diana) Muhlberg of Ohio; daughter Marie Bartolomucci of Wexford; sister Irene Kerr, of Massachusetts; and grandchildren, Danielle, Christopher, Samuel, Steven, Nicole, Donny and Tony. He retired from Westinghouse and was a Marine Corps veteran. A member of SCORE for 16 years, Muhlberg served as treasurer while lending his government contracting expertise to numerous clients. Additionally, he was lauded as the District's SCORE Volunteer of the Year.

"What started out to be a short meeting about my business plan turned out to be 12 years of true friendship. George really got my business heading in the right direction. I owe him tremendous gratitude. If it weren't for George, I don't think I would be where I am today. I am so grateful to him and for knowing him."

— Calvin Graham

"George had a great zest for helping people successfully start small businesses. He gave unselfishly of his time and was an excellent role model for all SCORE counselors."

— Art Green

"Water is very hot at 211 degrees F. Water boils and creates steam at 212 degrees F. The one degree is the difference from good to great. George was a "212" person."

— Carl Knoblock

Glass Acts



Pittsburgh SCORE members held their annual meeting at the Pittsburgh Glass Center in Garfield. The group was treated to demonstrations; lunch and presentations. Secretary Ruth Bichey had the opportunity to create a one-of-a-kind glass posie during a "hands-on" workshop. Retired SCORE members Harry Corbett and Al Thompson received Counselor Emeritus certificates.





Brian Oxendale and James Stanek celebrate the holiday season at The Mainstay at Saxonburg,, a local bed and breakfast

SBA and NextTier Bank help ensure continued presence of local bed and breakfast

Clinton Township residents Brian Oxendale and James Stanek had always toyed with the idea of owning a bed and breakfast. But, they never took it seriously until visiting Saxonburg, Butler County, in 2006 where they found The Mainstay at Saxonburg for sale. With the help of the U.S. Small Business Administration, Oxendale and Stanek were able to purchase the 173-year-old building.

“I started looking at the building when I was in Saxonburg for an art festival,” Oxendale explained. “I started poking around it and looking at the feasibility of purchasing it.”

Oxendale began writing a business plan hoping to acquire the structure that was converted into a bed and breakfast in the 1990s. After completing the plan he began to

speak to commercial lenders, but he found many were not willing to work with him and his partner. “We were a start-up business and a lot of lenders really wouldn’t talk to us,” he said. “Even though I have a background in construction and Jim’s background is in design and hospitality.”

The SBA’s popular 7(a) loan enabled Oxendale and Stanek to see their plans for the eclectic building go from blueprint to fruition. Carl Knoblock, district director, SBA Pittsburgh District Office, explained the 7(a) loan program is the agency’s most popular lending tool. “It (the loan) allows a lot of flexibility in structure, loan usage and availability,” he said. “Saxonburg is a quaint, picturesque town and it’s nice to know they won’t be losing a bed and breakfast.”

NexTier Bank was willing to lend the money to fund this project, according to Arlene Petrosky, vice president, commercial lending for

the bank. Factoring into NexTier’s decisions were the SBA guarantee, the new owners’ backgrounds and their initial investment in the project. “After an initial interview with Brian, it became evident he and Jim brought a lot to the table through their complementary backgrounds,” said Ms. Petrosky. “They also put time and effort into their business plan, had a strong desire to run and operate a bed and breakfast and were willing to commit personal resources.”

Oxendale said he and Stanek used the loan to refurbish the bed and breakfast. “There’s an old charm about the building and we tried to keep that by linking the interior to the trim style,” he stated. “We also added modern conveniences like ice makers, air conditioning, satellite television and wireless capabilities.”

Editor’s Note: Submit your SBA success stories for our publication. Send all requests to