

If city helped GCAC it could build entrepreneurial spirit

Attending my first City Council meeting [Aug. 24] and leaving with a negative impression on how the meeting was conducted leaves me at a loss for direction. My adult life I have been a Marion resident; just in the past two years have I had businesses in the town limits of Crisfield. I am not eligible to vote; but my partner and I did choose Crisfield as the place to open our businesses.

The town that we all love and support is dying and if we don't work together to turn this ship around, we will be part of a town that is nonexistent.

In 2009 two ladies (one white and one African American) attended their first BNF (Business Navigation Fo-

rum) meeting in Crisfield. Ms. Charlotte Scott had a vision for our town.

Those two ladies I told you about were just naive enough to believe that with the help of BNF to train us, we could make our 2 year dream a reality. Ms. Scott fanned our flame for success, my partner and I now operate a company that has over \$3 million in assets.

Who would have ever thought that two ladies from entirely different cultures could be successful in the times we live in? Ms. Scott did, and Somerset County Economic Development Director, Danny Thompson did. Angela Hayes and I owe both of them a debt of gratitude for having the heart for a town that everyone loves and admires.

We opened our business in Princess Anne in 2011 and now fast forward to the year 2015. Our attention comes back to Crisfield to build a business and be a part of a community that is loved by so many. I partnered with my daughter, Kearstin Humphreys and we purchased Cutting Edge Hair Salon from a local proprietor. My daughter worked to have her license upgraded so she could have an apprentice in the salon. Along comes Tanisha Thomas, an African American lady. Once again we have broken the dynamic that people said could never happen. Kearstin and Tee have accomplished something to my

knowledge that has never been accomplished in Crisfield before. They have brought all ethnic groups together under the same salon.

My entrepreneur mindset kicked in again when my sister, Marcia, and I were trying to find the best qualified home health care for our mother after our father passed. We located in an office beside Circle Inn Restaurant. After many months of hard work [we] established Greenbrier Staffing LLC. One person from the City Council stopped by our office to "welcome" us and wanted to know if it was anything she or the council could do to help us grow? That person was Ms. Charlotte Scott. I thought that was the city's "job" to welcome and encourage new business to move to Crisfield and Somerset County?

I said all of this to lead up to the reason why I was disappointed in the City Council's vote. While sitting in the council meeting I could not understand the problem in not accepting the GCAC. Because of the GCAC's involvement with the local residents and surrounding areas, they have been able to gain support and momentum for our town.

I could not comprehend why a council representing the city they themselves live in would turn down free help from a group of professional business men and women who are offering their services free of charge.

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These are professionals who have proven over the years of their careers that they can get successful results. Wasn't it Moses who asked Joshua and Caleb to hold up his arms in battle? When his arms were raised, they won; when they were lowered, they lost. Right now I see Crisfield with its arms down. Vision Crisfield as Moses, the City Council on one side and the GCAC on the other for a business plan of triumph. The Coalition is not asking you for funds; citizens and businesses are freely giving of their time, talents and money to move forward.

Because of the entrepreneur spirit that Ms. Scott instilled in Angela and me, we were looking into a location to open a Christian bookstore. We could not find a storefront that would give us the "curb appeal" we were looking for to represent us. The town will not miss us. We are a small business. It seems the council is waiting for that one "big" company to come to town. Ten small businesses on our main streets would make our hometown spirit flourish and improve the economics in our county as well.

Our children are moving away to find jobs that will provide a higher standard of living. There is nothing wrong with being a town that retired

residents want to relocate to, but I, for one, would love to have our children and grandchildren to have a town they can be proud of.

From our first visit to BNF in 2009 to 2016, my partner and I have grown from one location to 3 H&R Block Franchises and three other independent businesses. It came from one woman's vision for the Business Navigation Forum. Just think if GCAC helped five or ten entrepreneurs accomplish that same vision. One hundred and fifty to three hundred employees could possibly be employed.

We are looking for great things for our town.

**Paula Green
Marion**