

Minority Business Week

1998

SECTION C

A word from Beverly Stein...



Beverly Stein, Multnomah County Chairperson

"I am extremely pleased to support Minority Enterprise Development Week in Multnomah County and throughout the State of Oregon.

Multnomah County's positive growth and continued prosperity depends on the full participation of all segments of our community in the local economy. Minority-owned businesses have emerged as a dynamic and vital force in the County marketplace, providing quality goods and services, jobs, and job training to the thousands of local residents.

I am proud of the achievements and accomplishments of minority business owners in Multnomah County. I am delighted to pay tribute to their contributions to the economic growth and diversification of the County and I thank them for their efforts.

The appearance of new minority-owned businesses and the continued growth and expansion among existing ones will be critical economic benchmarks in the coming years. These factors will play a major role in measuring the health of our local and state economies.

I will continue to work toward creating opportunities for minority enterprises. The new joint City of Portland/Multnomah County Sheltered Market program is a prime example of how government can make a difference in the economic success of the whole community. I encourage all of Multnomah County's community and government partners to encourage smart economic development by recognizing the significance of the minority business community and prioritizing its success."

Beverly Stein
Multnomah County Chairperson

CHEROKEE GENERAL CORPORATION

Cherokee General Corporation provides environmental construction and site support services to consulting firms, government agencies and private sector clients throughout the northwest region. They offer demonstrated expertise in environmental construction, environment field data collection, remediation system installation and operation & maintenance services.

How did your business get started?

My mother had started the construction company in 1985. I grew up in construction. In 1993, I wanted to go get a job. I felt it was time to move on to something different, more challenging. When my mother's company was still a corporation, I had reinstated it.

What were some of the challenges you had faced that were unique to being a minority-owned business?

Getting credibility. Reputation is so important in small business to succeed. Trying to get that first opportunity to show you could do a good job.

What were your company's growth challenges?

Cash flow was probably the biggest problem. You have to have money to make money. In this field, I get paid when the consulting firm gets paid. It takes typically 60 days to get the money needed for a return on my invoice. A lot of times, I didn't get a paycheck to pay my staff.

Another challenge was to get a line of credit with a bank. I went to several banks and I finally ended up with one that was willing to take a little bit of a chance on me. I was turned down many times before that.

As I got bigger, I had to pass responsibility on to others. That meant hiring people. In hiring, you have to realize just how important those people are with their quality of workmanship and because they represent your company in the field. Your reputation is based on



Rhonda Herschell, a Native American business owner of Cherokee General Corporation

that.

I had to find competent, qualified people who had my best interest at heart. I made a lot of mistakes in interviewing prospective employees - taking on people who I thought were qualified but weren't and may have stumbled a few times. Through the years, I've gotten a little more savvy. I now know the questions to ask, qualifications to require.

What could you have done differently to expand your business?

Establishing better relationships with companies that will keep using you.

Getting access to capital. I don't know that a bank would have loaned me money any sooner in the game. I had such a difficult time when I finally did try to acquire one. Most banks want 2-3 years experience before they'll ever consider you for a line of credit. You have to fund that yourself. That was a hard thing.

Any advice for other minority-owned businesses?

Don't give up. It takes a lot of hard work, lots of hours and determination. Anything is possible if you set your mind to it.

I want to encourage everyone to go for their dreams and make it happen!

Margaret Carter Kicks off Minority Enterprise Week



State Representative Margaret Carter will be the keynote speaker of the Minority Enterprise Development Week Awards Luncheon at the Oregon Convention Center on 777 NE Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd. The official awards ceremonies will be from 11:30 to 1:30 PM. This year's theme will be "Minority Businesses Facing the Challenges of a Global Economy."

A PROCLAMATION FROM THE GOVERNOR OF OREGON

Whereas: Minority and women-owned businesses comprise a substantial and steadily increasing percentage of Oregon's workforce and are necessary to the continued economic growth of the state; and

Whereas: The State of Oregon recognizes that the economic vitality of the state depends on the support and promotion of business and available contracting opportunities for minority and women entrepreneurs; and

Whereas: The participation of minority and women business owners in the Oregon marketplace has been keyed toward developing new standards for excellence and achievement in the business sector while, at the same time, reviving communities by generating jobs; and

Whereas: Minority and women entrepreneurs are committed to a partnership with all levels of the public and private sector to provide an arena in which all Oregonians are allowed fair and equal opportunity, including utilization of services and employment; and

Whereas: The continued success of Oregon's economy depends on the full participation of all citizens at every level, for Oregon takes great pride in the accomplishments of our minority entrepreneurs and their tremendous efforts and achievements.

Now, Therefore, I, John A. Kitzhaber, Governor of the State of Oregon, hereby proclaim October 4-10, 1998

MINORITY ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT WEEK

