



Moses H. Cone Memorial Hospital



Downtown Greensboro Hospitality Program Operations Manager Shawn Eisenbach (left) with team members Daniel Ziegler, Sxing Thanoulith, and B.J. Marshall.

Downtown Ambassadors program emphasizes hospitality, community

Martin Acevedo had parked as close as he could get, but it still wasn't close enough. Busy North Elm Street still separated his minivan, full of furniture, from his new office. Acevedo, newly arrived in Greensboro from Texas, and friend Michael Humphrey were facing multiple trips toting bulky furniture when some Downtown Ambassadors happened by.

Ambassador B.J. Marshall was the first to step up. "Let me help you with that," he

said, reaching to help lift a heavy tabletop from the rear of the van. Soon the van was swarming with strong young men wearing sporty blue shirts. The embroidered message across the back of each read, "Ask Us! Downtown Hospitality Team."

Acevedo wore an incredulous look on his face. With his hands free of furniture, he seemed about to reach for his wallet. No need for that, however.

"This is what we do," Marshall said. "It's free."

Minutes later, the van was empty and a grateful Acevedo was trading fist-bumps with the Ambassadors in the lobby of the Southeastern Building, where he's setting up his office.

Still smiling broadly, he couldn't believe his good fortune. "We don't have anything like this in San Antonio," he said.

For Marshall and his fellow Downtown Ambassadors, the simple act of lending a hand is part of their job de-

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Annual Dinner returns, featuring John McEnroe

One of the best-known athletes of the last five decades in American and international sports will highlight GMA's 2022 Annual Dinner on May 4.

John McEnroe – holder of seven Grand Slam singles titles and 10 Grand Slam Doubles Championships – will be the guest speaker as GMA resumes its premier annual event after a one-year hiatus.

GMA Board Member and Annual Dinner Chairman Richard Beard said that a sports celebrity of McEnroe's caliber is commensurate with "celebrating that we are all coming back together."

GMA's Annual Dinner, like so many other regular activities, was last held in 2020. The Annual Dinner, held at Koury Convention Center, typically draws nearly 1,000 members and guests. The Annual Dinner usually is held in February but was delayed



John McEnroe, tennis great.

until Covid-19 infection rates fell to safer levels.

"All the stars lined up to schedule the event," Beard said. "The great thing is that we'll be coming together" in person as before the pandemic.

McEnroe joins a list of superstar Annual Dinner speakers that includes former N.C. State and Notre Dame football coach Lou Holtz, NFL quarterback and sports analyst Terry Bradshaw, and boxing legend Sugar Ray Leonard.

McEnroe won his first

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Trends is a publication of the Guilford Merchants Association.



Networking, GMA-style

GMA volunteer Sue Falcone (right) passes out stickers for the "get-acquainted" exercise that is a hallmark of GMA casual networking events. With her are Martin Sexton of Aflac and Anisah Ferrell of Carter Bank & Trust. More photos, page 7.

Leadership redefined: Strategies to build a passionate, engaged team

BY MEREDITH ELLIOTT POWELL

There's a lot of pressure on leaders today. There's pressure to turn things around if your company is struggling, or pressure to stay on top if the last few years have meant growth and opportunity.

There's pressure with so much uncertainty in the marketplace – supply chain issues, inflation, interest rates ... the list goes on. As a leader, you're faced with a multitude of obstacles outside of your control that impact your ability to get ahead or stay ahead of the curve.



Powell

The one bright spot in this fast-paced, every changing world is that the one component you need most – the most critical factor necessary to navigate an uncertain marketplace – is the one thing you do have control over.

That one thing is your team! Your best defense, and your most important asset, is the quality and commitment level of your team.

There is very little that this

marketplace can throw at you that a team full of engaged professionals cannot handle. But, ironically, at a time when we need our team members to be more engaged than ever, we are suffering from one of the most disengaged workforces in history.

Gallup, the leading research firm, reports that 70 percent of today's employees are willing to fill out a survey that says they are not interested, not committed and only showing up to get a paycheck. That is two-thirds of your workforce!

I think that statistic is enough to say, "Wait a minute. As a leader, maybe I need to try a new approach, a different idea, or a radical strategy to lead and inspire my team." But if that is not enough for you, then read on.

Gallup also reported that if you do not change your approach to leadership, then that 70 percent is going to climb to 85 percent. How many then will struggle to hit your goals if 85 percent of your workforce is checked out, uninterested, and only showing up to get a paycheck?

BUSINESS GROWTH

No need to answer – you get it. So why are employees today so disengaged? Why did more than 4.5 million employees resign last November in what has been called the Great Resignation?

Because they're looking for something. Millions in the workforce believe there is something better out there. Leaders who understand that this lack of employee engagement is a great opportunity, not a problem, are positioned to reap the benefits of this unusual time in American business.

The strategies

Purpose – In today's marketplace, people want to do work that matters. They want to feel like they are making a difference, and they want to be a part of something bigger than themselves. In other words, they want purpose. Forget the job description and help every member of your team see the results of their work on a daily basis. Purpose is what attracts new team members to you, and purpose is what retains current team members long-term.

Ownership – Once people have bought into your purpose and want

to help grow your business, ask yourself if you are letting them do that. Or are you shutting them out? As a leader, understand that people want ownership and skin in the game. Leaders need to stop telling employees what to do and start asking them for their ideas.

Performance – If you want employees to invest themselves in your company, then you need to invest in them. Your investing in their growth and development gives them opportunities to learn new skills and exceed expectations. If your employees feel that you are committed to their success, they will commit to yours and that of your company.

Everything about this marketplace has shifted, so doesn't it make sense that your leadership style needs to change too? Your customers, your competition and your employees are changing – so it's time to be open to new ideas and new ways of doing things. Do that, and you can convert general uncertainty into your greatest competitive advantage.

Meredith Elliott Powell is an author, sales strategist and leadership expert. She has been a featured speaker in GMA's Workplace Workshop series.

Annual Dinner Continued from page 1

Grand Slam title in 1979 and, 20 years later, was inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame.

A three-time Wimbledon men's single's champion, he is still considered one of the greatest players of the game.

McEnroe led the USA team to five Davis Cup titles. Overall he has

more than 150 singles and doubles titles.

Known as a spirited and opinionated competitor, McEnroe has enjoyed a second career as a sports commentator. He has been a contributor on networks ranging from CBS and NBC to the BBC, ESPN and EuroSport.



In addition to his sports interests, McEnroe has a New York gallery where he showcases the work of

contemporary artists. The John and Patty McEnroe Foundation supports a wide variety of charitable causes.

GMA members may make Annual Dinner reservations at mygma.org.

For additional information, call 336-378-6350.




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The Guilford Merchants Association is a nonprofit organization founded in 1906. The Association is a business membership organization focused on supporting member companies with educational programming, lead generation activities, marketing opportunities, and overall enrichment while serving as a catalyst for community growth and prosperity.



RISERS lunch meet-up

Lunch meet-ups are a regular event for members of the RISERS, a GMA group especially for young professionals. Pictured at this recent gathering are (from left) Jennifer Wilson, LaQuinta Inn & Suites; Ashley Mitchell, Staff South; Trey Erb, Plybon & Associates, Inc.; Erica

Aronson, Tim Westfall Insurance; Holly Dickson, Modern Woodmen Fraternal Financial; Jonathan M. Parisi, Spangler Estate Planning; Valen Canoy and Alexa McHale, Graham Personnel Services; and Christian Heimall, High Point Rockers Baseball.

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ACC Tip-Off Party

GMA was a sponsor of the ACC Tip-Off Party March 1, held on the eve of the Atlantic Coast Conference Women's Basketball Tournament at the Greensboro Coliseum. Pictured with the N.C. State mascot are (from left) GMA staffers Holly Smith and Sharon Smith, GMA President & CEO Mark Prince, and Vice President Michelle Bolick.

A perfect time to review the benefits of ‘like, know, trust’ marketing

There is a well-known quote by Bob Burg (author of “The Go-Giver”):

“All things being equal, people do business with, and refer business to, those they know, like, and trust.” This has never been truer than in our current economy,



Jandler

and the statement has some great implications for small business marketing as we slowly make our way out of the pandemic.

All things being equal

There are very few products and services that are unequaled in the marketplace; however, there are numerous aspects of quality, delivery, service, and other features that provide value that tip the scales in the minds of potential buyers.

How well do you communicate your competitive advantage? In other words,

why should a prospective buyer choose your company instead of your competitor’s company? Focus on streamlining your marketing materials and messaging to spotlight the advantages you bring, and avoid simply listing every product or service you can provide. Remember that generalities such as “outstanding customer service” and “professional installation” do not communicate an advantage. They are over-used and can be (and often are) claimed by every business – including those that don’t actually provide great service. Instead, if your differentiator is the quality of your service, detail how you provide outstanding service and go the extra mile.

Know

By default, we turn first to people and companies we are familiar with, even if we don’t have a close relationship. One way to make your company better known



is by being seen in places important to your target market.

Take advantage of opportunities to speak or lead workshops, participate in, or advertise to business groups like GMA, the Chamber of Commerce, trade organizations, and clubs.

While lunch ‘n learns are less popular for the moment, webinars, guest appearances on relevant podcasts, and contributing blog posts and articles provide an opportunity to share your expertise and gain visibility.

Like

Let your company’s personality show through in your communications. From the tone and messaging on your website (First person? Third person? For-

mal? Conversational?) to any ads you run, voice mail messaging and even your team’s email signatures, you are projecting the tenor of your organization.

Leverage social media to build community with your customers, share stories, and let people get to know the type of business you run.

Spotlight key team members, share customer success stories, showcase charitable work your business supports, and let people get to know the human side of the work you do. It’s hard to feel affinity for a company that projects no personality.

Trust

Trust isn’t built in a day, but projecting trustworthiness can be. Make it easy for prospects to see the experiences others have had working with you by sharing reviews you have received.

There are plenty of ways to include reviews and testimonials on your website, spotlighted in your social

media, within your proposals, ads, and more.

In addition, partnering with other local businesses that complement your services can be a great boost for building trust with your (and their) customers while also expanding visibility. While promoting each other, the collaboration, as well as the sharing of resources and costs, are added benefits.

After three years of remote working, labor challenges, and a shift to online everything, injecting humanity and personality into your marketing can make a big difference. We all yearn for the connections we once had; help forge new ones by projecting yourself as a business that is known, likable, and trusted.

Adrienne Cregar Jandler is president of Atlantic Webworks.

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Name: Erica Aronson
Hometown: Augusta, Ga.
Residence: Greensboro
Education: Studied Medical Assistant/Nursing at Ultrasound Diagnostic School
Business: Tim Westfall, State Farm
Role: Multi-line rep



Responsibilities:

I just work with State Farm, and I can write property, casualty, commercial, life, health, auto, boat. Umbrella policies. I do short-term and long-term disability.

Pretty much everything except Medicare health supplements.

On Risers:

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Personal:

My husband and I have three kids.



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Downtown Ambassadors

Continued from page 1

scription: Be respectful and friendly to all. Offer assistance, including safety escorts. Tidy up. Report problems and concerns, large or small.

The Downtown Ambassadors program, a project of Downtown Greensboro, Inc. (DGI), began last fall. DGI contracted with Kentucky-based Block By Block, a firm that provides similar Ambassador services in cities nationwide, including Raleigh and Charlotte.



Martin Acevedo (left) thanks Shawn Eisenbach for the Ambassadors' help moving furniture.

"Instead of us reinventing the wheel," said Zack Matheny, "we wanted to pick the best partner we could" with the appropriate operations background. Matheny is president and CEO of Downtown Greensboro, Inc.

The Downtown Ambassadors, he said, help make Greensboro's center city more welcoming for visitors, area residents, and those who live and work downtown.

"We're in the hospitality business," Matheny said. Ambassadors help people find parking, direct pe-

destrians to shops and restaurants, and provide a neighborly presence in the heart of the state's third-largest city.

More than 1.5 million people are expected to visit downtown Greensboro this year, Matheny said. The Tanger Center is on track to bring in more than 350,000 patrons in its first year of operation. Add LeBauer Park, Grasshoppers games at First National Bank Field, the Carolina

Theatre, restaurants, shopping and other venues, and the need for a welcoming environment has never been greater.

People who work downtown appreciate the Ambassadors.

Susie Davidson, Edward Jones senior branch office manager on South Elm Street, sees the Ambassadors pass by several times a day. They never fail to wave and smile; chats are frequent.

"When you see your friends every day, they become part of your work family," Davidson said. "It feels a little like May-

berry down here, a 'get to know your neighbors' kind of thing."

Shawn Eisenbach, a Block by Block employee, administers the Ambassadors program. The former New Yorker recruited and trained each person on the staff. All wear sporty shirts with logos and tan slacks. The uniform, along with ID badges and two-way radios, give them a semi-official presence designed to reassure. The Ambassadors don't engage in law enforcement, but can summon police when needed.



Downtown office worker Susie Davidson poses for a hug with her friends, Ambassadors Daniel Ziegler and B.J. Marshall.

Ambassadors are on duty when downtown is most active, which means daytime business hours until as late as 11 p.m. The team currently has nine Ambassadors.

Interacting with those Eisenbach calls "the unsheltered" is a big part of the job. The Ambassadors have built relationships with those who live mostly on the streets.

"They respect us," Eisenbach said, "because we treat them like people.

"We listen to them, and it makes our job easier when we have to ask, 'Hey, would you mind moving? This business is about to open.'"

Ambassador Sxing Thanoulith said he's become more outgoing since joining the team. Becoming an Ambassador "actually made me more understanding of people in general," he said. "People on the street just want to be heard."

Ambassadors have helped a couple of unsheltered people transition into housing. They watch, as well as listen. They've been the first to summon medical assistance when a person was stricken with chest pains



Ambassador Sxing Thanoulith logs a hazard on South Elm Street, which will be reported to the city for repair.

in Center City Park.

An Ambassador spotted an unfamiliar young woman hanging out downtown, Matheny says. On the second day, he learned she was a vulnerable runaway. Working with the appropriate Greensboro agencies, the Ambassadors quickly got the woman into a sheltered environment, where she received additional help.

The woman now is reunited with her family in Arizona. "She's back on her feet," Eisenbach said. "We have a lot of stories like that."

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Banker looking forward to expanding his networking contacts with GMA

Piedmont Federal Savings Bank, founded in Winston-Salem in 1903, moved into the Guilford County market about two years ago and established a branch in High Point near the intersection of Eastchester Drive (N.C. 68) and West Wendover Avenue.

Ken Esposito, a senior business banker with Piedmont Federal, works out of a Greensboro office where he services existing clients and cultivates new relationships. Though he's relatively new to Piedmont Federal, he's a veteran of the banking industry in the Piedmont Triad.

A UNCG graduate, Esposito began his banking career at Central Carolina Bank. Its eventual merger with Georgia-based Sun Trust was the first in a series of corporate consolidations that stamped Esposito's career passport with the logos of numerous financial institutions, large and small.

Along the way, he developed a network of banking colleagues and business relationships that he treasures today.

One of those relationships is with



Ken Esposito, senior business banker with Piedmont Federal Savings Bank.

GMA's Sharon Smith, who handles membership development for the organization. They are both members of the High Point Rotary Club, where Esposito is the incoming president. The two met, he says, when Esposito was with High Point Bank, several mergers and acquisitions ago.

"Sharon knows everybody in High Point," he says. "I know Sharon really well."

Piedmont Federal, with almost \$1 billion in assets, is the largest mutual bank in the Carolinas and Virginia, Esposito says. Piedmont Federal has 10 branches, serving customers from the Piedmont Triad to Boone in northwestern North Carolina. Esposito explains that, as a mutual bank, Piedmont Federal's first obligation is to its depositors, not shareholders (because there are none).

NEW MEMBER PROFILE

Though Piedmont Federal is a new member, Esposito knows GMA well. While employed by yet another bank that was a GMA member, Esposito took part in GMA networking events, attended Workplace Workshops, and built relationships that continue to this day.

"One of my good referral sources, I met at a GMA event," Esposito says.

He's looking forward to introducing his younger Piedmont Federal colleagues to GMA so they can start building their own networks.

And he's ready to become active in GMA and refresh his networking chops.

"I love to get out and shake hands and talk to people," Esposito says. "I'm ready to get my feet wet again."

Ken Esposito

*Piedmont Federal Savings Bank
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Relationships were made, strengthened during his term as GMA's chairman

Chester Brown was still several years away from entering college when Brown Investment Properties – the family business started by his great uncle – joined GMA. The year was 1983.

Fast-forward 39 years, and Brown is now president of the

commercial real estate firm that has business interests throughout the Carolinas as well as Virginia. And the firm continues its relationship with GMA.

Brown knows the organization well.

In 2013, he served as chairman of the GMA/FirstPoint board of directors. His long-standing relationships throughout the community have only been strengthened through GMA.

Brown, who earned an undergraduate degree from UNC before attending the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School for an MBA, says he and Nathan Duggins (GMA/

FirstPoint chairman in 2020) grew up together in Greensboro.

Brown mentions several other recent chairs and board members who have worked to strengthen

GMA and FirstPoint and, as a result, have reinforced the organization's impact on the community.

The creation of the GMA/FirstPoint Foundation Fund stands out as a particular high-water mark.

"It was (former chairmen) Worth Holleman and Tom Berry, and their vision to set up the foundation," Brown explains. "That's going to be a tremendous legacy."

The GMA/FirstPoint Foundation Fund was created in 2016 with a \$1 million investment that is managed by the Community Foundation of Greater Greensboro.

The foundation fund's mission is to support projects with the potential to make a significant impact on the local economy and enhance life in Guilford County.

The foundation fund expands on GMA/FirstPoint's community impact, Brown says. Organizations including the Greensboro Police Foundation, the Greensboro Sports Council, and the Wyndham Championship have long benefited from GMA/FirstPoint support.

All those organizations, he says, have a hand in building up the greater community.

The state and the Piedmont Triad, Brown says, are well positioned to benefit from "positive demographic trends" in the years ahead.

"North Carolina is going to be the beneficiary of significant immigration," he explains.

Recent announcements of major job-creating investments by Toyota and aircraft manufacturer Boom in



GMA mementos in Chester Brown's office include a red boxing glove signed by Annual Dinner speaker Sugar Ray Robinson.

the local economy put the Piedmont Triad in an excellent position.

"We're lucky that we live where we do," Brown says. And lucky to have GMA, "a first-class organization."

*Brown Investment Properties, Inc.
336-379-8771
www.bipinc.com*

LOYAL MEMBER

Member always looking for opportunities to reach out, serve

It was about 15 years ago when a career opportunity brought Teresa Class to Greensboro. Her employer, a bank, was a GMA member, and she quickly incorporated GMA networking events into her schedule.

As time passed and she changed jobs, GMA remained a constant in her work life. So much so, that she volunteered to be a presenter at Teach Me Tuesday events, the GMA series in which member professionals offer tips on a wide variety of topics.

Class, a trainer for Dale Carnegie at that time, shared her knowledge about how to “make connection and really find out what your customers want and need.

“Too many people,” Class says, “are product-driven. They’re so focused on how to get their product out there, they don’t really find out who might need it and why.”

Class sees some basic tenets of

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Dale Carnegie training embedded in the way GMA conducts its member services.

GMA, she says, is “really interested in providing opportunity for business owners to take time out of their business – focus on it a little bit more, and become better at what they do. Not only for themselves but for the customers they serve.”

Class did two Teach Me Tuesday events focused on the “Five C’s of Selling.” Even though the events were several years ago, she still knows her material. The Five C’s are “connect, collaborate, create, confirm, and commit.”

“I love that the first part is connection,” she says, “because that’s where GMA is really great.”



Teresa Class in the lobby of Pinnacle Bank on New Garden Road in Greensboro.

Class has served as a GMA volunteer in several capacities. She has welcomed and registered members attending networking events. She’s worn flashing lights as a facilitator for GMA’s famous ice-breaker sticker game.

And she’s exercised her right as a GMA member to bring a guest to AM Center City Briefings, the early morning meetings where city employees and business people share information about new developments and other business matters.

Class, in a fresh role as a client

services advisor with Pinnacle Bank, is hopeful that GMA and the business community will soon be interacting more in person, as before the pandemic.

“I’m excited to be in a place where I can focus on supporting GMA and its members, whatever that looks like,” Class said. “I told them, ‘Call me. I’m ready for anything.’”

Teresa W. Class
Client Services Advisor
Pinnacle Bank
336-881-3955



Chloe Wooten, TRC Staffing; Scott Elkins, M7 Technology Solutions.



Jennifer McNeal, Modern Woodmen.



Toni Walker, Toni Walker Photography; Tonya Martin, Progressive Muscle Motion, LLC.



The Noontime Networking crowd enjoys a free lunch at every event.



Chris Babcock and Anisah Ferrrell, Carter Bank & Trust; Holly Dickson, Modern Woodmen.



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