



## Taking the lead and focused on developing East Greensboro NOW

The best views from the second-floor office suite at the corner of East Market and Murrow Boulevard look eastward, and that's entirely appropriate.

Mac Sims and Phil Barnhill, the executives at East Greensboro NOW, are totally focused on the economic health and community well-being of Greensboro's east side.

"Our objective is about driving new investment in East Greensboro," says Barnhill, executive vice president of East Greensboro NOW. The entity, founded in 1998, is a non-profit community development corporation (CDC). Previously it was known as East Market Street Development Corp.

The CDC began with a focus on the thoroughfare that had once been the heart of a thriving African American business community. But the passage of time and Urban Renewal programs in the 1960s decimated black businesses. East Greensboro NOW has a much broader scope and perspective, geographically including the Revolution Mill area, the White Oak community and Pyramids Village, all the way to Gateway University Research Park.

"We are responding to the needs of the community," Sims says. "We



Mac Sims (left) and Phil Barnhill in the offices of East Greensboro NOW.

**'The more participation, the better the result for all of us. We look at everyone as collaborators.'**

— Mac Sims

are hoping to address East Greensboro in its fullest."

Investment in retail businesses, housing, and commercial development, Barnhill says, will stimulate more economic activity in East Greensboro. Ultimately, he explains, that economic engine will attract citizens from other parts of town to largely African American East Greensboro to discover that "there

is value there."

Value translates as opportunities – opportunities for consumers to shop, dine, and spend; and opportunities for business owners and business starters to establish new enterprises and further expand the economy.

Sims has been president of the CDC since it was founded in 1998. His business card, however, lists

no title. His name appears last in a list of the three-person staff in the CDC's most recent "Report to the Community." Sims prefers to stay out of the limelight and give credit whenever possible to East Greensboro NOW's many community partners and their individual efforts.

Collaboration, he says, has been a hallmark of the organization throughout its history. East Greensboro NOW has worked in a variety of ways with diverse partners such as the city of Greensboro, private developers, neighborhood associations, the Greensboro Chamber of Commerce, universities, and the Welfare Reform Liaison Project.

"The more participation, the better the result for all of us," Sims says. "We look at everyone as collaborators."

The four pillars of the organization's interests, Barnhill says, are economic development, community development, affordable housing, and minority entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship efforts include programs for early-stage business owners to develop business plans, make wise site-selection choices, and develop marketing plans.

Rob Rogers and Crystal Pass are among the entrepreneurs who took

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*Trends is a publication of the Guilford Merchants Association.*



### Making way for music

Commerce Place was the site of the Lawn Stage, one of the N.C. Folk Festival's major venues when the event returned to downtown Greensboro Sept. 10-12. GMA and FirstPoint posted a banner to welcome music fans and the return of live music after last year's virtual festival.

## Membership provides professional, personal benefits to insurance agent

Jeff Shell took a new job in 2018 that came with a ready-made slot in BIZ-Links, one of GMA's three structured networking groups.

Shell, after a career in medical sales that kept him on the road, looked forward to strengthening his roots in the community as a representative for The Health Insurance Shoppe. The co-founder of the business allowed Shell to take his place in BIZ-Links as the only medical insurance firm. The leads

group meets weekly to share business tips, exchange general business information, and network.

Shell says he expected good things to come out of his GMA experience, but he had no idea how beneficial it would turn out to be.

Being in GMA and BIZ-Links, he says, "has offered me an opportunity to build local business relationships." Previously, his job in medical sales took him to hospitals all over the state and didn't leave

much time to delve into the business community in his wife's hometown.

The Health Insurance Shoppe specializes in representing supplemental Medicare insurance plans to senior citizens. The firm is unusual, Shell points out, because it represents all the major Medicare supplemental insurance companies licensed in North Carolina.

Supplemental Medicare insurance provides additional coverage beyond the basic coverage provided by the government program. Shell's role, he says, is to provide information so consumers can make "smart, informed decisions" about which plan is best for them.

Once he became familiar with GMA and BIZ-Links, Shell says, the benefits quickly became apparent.

The relationships he built became resources to refer to his clients with confidence. Their services range from other types of insurance

### PARTICIPATION = SUCCESS



Jeff Shell is an independent agent with The Health Insurance Shoppe.

to banking, pest control, and catering. Shell describes his fellow group members as "people that I can rely on to get straightforward, honest advice from outside my own expertise."

In BIZ-Links, members regularly present brief "elevator speeches" to describe their business focus. Shell says that regimen has helped him refine his presentations to make them "more understandable, clear and concise."

His GMA involvement has brought referrals that resulted in business, he says. Equally valuable are the personal relationships, he says, "that I hope will last a lifetime."

The tag line for GMA, Shell says, is "Where participation means success." And that is very true."

*The Health Insurance Shoppe  
healthshoppenc.com  
336-763-0775*



### Center City AM Briefing

Hanna Cockburn (left), director of the Greensboro Department of Transportation, was among the speakers at the August 10 Center City AM Briefing held at Transform Greensboro (formerly HQ Greensboro) on Lewis Street.



### TRENDS

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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.

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## Business coaching made the difference for long-term success

**R**ob Rogers occasionally is invited to speak to an entrepreneurship class offered by East Greensboro NOW. Rogers, founder of a property management firm that employs nine people, is happy to share what he's learned with other African Americans who want to start businesses.

More than a dozen years ago, Rogers was one of them – a person with an idea for a business, but lacking certain specific knowledge that would help ensure success.

Rogers, a Siler City native who grew up in Greensboro, spent 24 years in the U.S. Air Force. Retiring as a lieutenant colonel, he had a wealth of leadership and management experience, especially related to facilities management.

But starting a business, and making a go of it, he knew, takes more than just a good idea. A business plan is necessary, and so is execution. That's what led Rogers to Mac Sims and Phil Barnhill of East Greensboro Now.

At the outset, Rogers recalls, he and his classmates "didn't have anything solid" in the way of business plans, "and we really didn't have any money."

Barnhill, he says, "helped us put our thoughts and ideas together, and ended up with a business plan."

Rogers envisioned a firm that



Rob Rogers, founder of ESRA Facility Management & Consulting, Inc.

would relieve faith communities from having to worry about property maintenance so that pastors and elders could devote more time to faith matters.

Today ESRA Facility Management & Consulting, Inc. provides its building repair and maintenance services to congregations as well as light commercial customers.

Rogers is a licensed mechanical engineer and general contractor. His firm also provides energy audits and energy efficiency improvements and retrofits to commercial and residential customers.

"What Phil and Mac did for me was ground me in what I needed to be an entrepreneur," Rogers says.

He's had to tweak his business plan over the years, because that's what successful businesses do. "We're just working and growing through this process," he says.

*ESRA Facility Management & Consulting, Inc.  
ESRAfacilities.com  
336-201-0201*

## Pass The Cake, Please: Entrepreneur's recipe doubles up on knowledge

**C**rystal Pass sometimes describes herself as a perpetual student.

She has an undergraduate and two master's degrees from N.C. A&T State University. She earned an associate's degree from Johnson & Wales University, a private culinary arts school.

But the classes that truly prepared her to succeed in business, she says, were offered by East Greensboro NOW.

Pass baked for private clients for years while pursuing her degrees, working for an international commercial food products company, and teaching high school. She opened her specialty bake-



Crystal Pass in her shop at Four Seasons Town Centre.

shop in 2020. Located at Four Seasons Town Centre, it's called Pass The Cake, Please.

The shop has a prominent, display-window location in a

large shared space formerly occupied by a pharmacy.

"I started baking with my mom when I was 8," Pass says. "I just took a liking to it."

## East Greensboro NOW

Continued from page 1

advantage of the CDC's coaching in getting their businesses up and running. (See sidebars, page 3.)

Mark Prince, FirstPoint and GMA president and CEO, serves on the board of directors for East Greensboro NOW. It's an honor, he says, to promote the economic development of East Greensboro.

"GMA/FirstPoint has a long history of working with East Greensboro NOW to assist in providing our networking and professional development resources to enhance entrepreneurial opportunities in Greensboro," Prince says.

East Greensboro NOW is itself a housing developer. The CDC owns and manages 26 units of multi-family housing, as well as a duplex. Every new unit helps in a city that needs 1,000 new units of affordable housing annually, Barnhill says.

Currently Barnhill and Sims are working with the developer of Pyramids Village to expand retail and housing development at the site in the city's northeast corner.

Another partner is developer Andy Zimmerman, one of the backers of the Rhythm Works Music Makers project on Pastor Anderson Way.

### East Greensboro NOW 'is the voice of East Greensboro.'

*– Andy Zimmerman  
Developer*

Pass earned a bachelor of science degree in food science from A&T in 2002.

Her first job, with Nestlé, turned out to be more manufacturing and management than kitchen magic. Her remedy for that sour experience was to enroll at Johnson & Wales, where she focused on baking and pastry arts.

Hotel internships led her to rule out the hospitality industry, so she returned to A&T to earn master's degrees in nutrition and family and consumer sciences.

Pass taught for eight years before the pandemic and other factors convinced her to be her own boss.

It was time to take what

she learned about financial management and marketing from the East Greensboro NOW and put it to work.

Pass bakes at home, stocking the shelves at her shop with generous, packaged servings of several types of cake. Customers may order whole cakes.

And what does the baker prefer?

"I really like to do cupcakes," she says. "But in the mall, people don't care about cupcakes."

*Pass The Cake, Please  
Hours: 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.,  
Wed.–Sun.  
Facebook.com/passcake  
(336) 456-6090*

# Membership created business ownership opportunities, continues to pay benefits

**R**ich Reid is a numbers guy, the sort who can take a deep dive into the financials of a business and spot profit potential where others might have trouble paying the bills.

That talent served him well when he worked in the copier business more than 20 years ago, and it gave him the opportunity to become a business owner a few years later.

"I've always had a knack for the financial side of things," says Reid, owner of All Star Chem-Dry, a carpet cleaning franchise.

A successful numbers guy can quantify just about anything related to his business. He knows what his costs are, and he knows what his profit margins are.

But when it comes to

## LOYAL MEMBER

GMA's value-added proposition, Reid is stumped.

"From a business perspective, the knowledge that the CAN group and GMA gives me is .... I can't put a price on it," Reid says.

"Everything that GMA offers has impacted my business in some way," he explains. "And all of that's been positive."

Reid was introduced to GMA in 1998 while working for a company that sold office copiers and fax machines. It was a small organization that allowed Reid to become familiar with all sides of the business, from sales to the back office.

Best of all, the company belonged to GMA.

Reid recalls that Josh Seibert of Sandler Training urged him to get involved and join GMA's Competitive Advantage Networking (CAN) group, which had an opening for someone in the office machines business.

Also in the CAN group was the owner of a carpet cleaning business, the very business that Reid purchased in 2005.

Had he not been in GMA and the CAN group, Reid says, he never would have known of the opportunity.

Today Reid views all of his CAN group colleagues, including those who have moved on, to be resources for advice, counsel, and support.

"That has been, by far,



Rich Reid, owner of All Star Chem-Dry and a member of GMA's CAN group since 1998.

the biggest advantage," Reid says.

All Star Chem-Dry has grown under Reid's leadership. He's added a second franchise, Nhance, which refinishes wood floors and kitchen cabinets. The two businesses employ about 14 people. Like many businesses owners these days, Reid struggles to fill open positions with both companies.

No matter how busy he is, Reid still makes time to

keep his GMA connections strong.

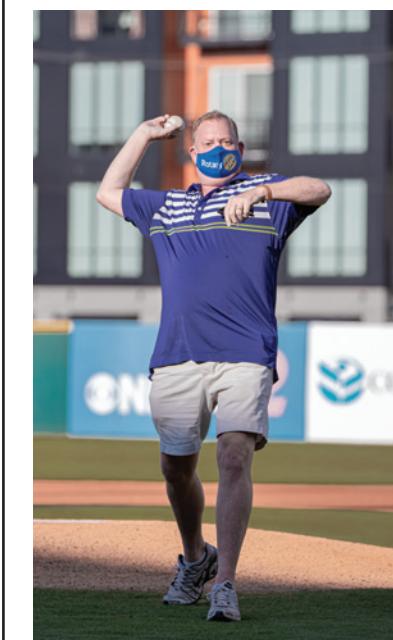
"I love GMA, and I love the CAN group," he says. Membership, he says, has enabled his businesses to grow and thrive. "We wouldn't be as big or as strong in the community," Reid says, "if it wasn't for GMA."

*All Star Chem-Dry  
[www.triadcarpetcare.com](http://www.triadcarpetcare.com)  
336-396-8646*



## Commemorating 20th anniversary of Sept. 11, 2001

**P**andemic restrictions prevented GMA from its usual practice of providing meals to firefighters in Greensboro and High Point to commemorate the events of 9-11-01. This year, signs at each station said it all.



### With the 'Hoppers

GMA & FirstPoint Chairman of the Board Ford Bowers (BB&T now Truist) threw the ceremonial first pitch at GMA's annual member night with the Greensboro Grasshoppers on August 20.



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# Reconsidered Goods

*Creative reuse center stepped up in 2020 to become supplier of PPE for healthcare professionals and essential workers*

**W**hen you have a reputation for transforming castoffs into reimagined treasure, and there's a national shortage of protective gear during a pandemic, crazy things can happen.

Like the time in 2020 when a physician from Cone Health contacted Paige Cox out of the blue.

Face shields, needed by healthcare workers treating Covid-19 patients, were impossible to find. He showed her an article from Maryland about homemade face shields.

Could Cox make some for Cone Health?

Cox knew she had the necessary supplies at Reconsidered Goods, the non-profit she started in 2016. Elastic,



Laura Maruzzella, education director, restocks containers.

clear overhead projector sheets, staples, and staplers.

Cox made prototypes for the physician, and the face shield design quickly was approved by the Centers for Disease Control.

"So I just started making them all night long," she recalls. "And then I started getting random calls from hospitals all over the country."

Healthcare facilities were desperate for face shields

Cox and an army of volunteers with sewing machines already were making face masks for essential workers, using recycled T-shirts from Reconsidered Goods.

Cox put together instruction sheets and assembled kits of face shield

supplies that she hung on the fence outside her Greensboro home. It was a no-contact operation. Volunteers picked up bags of elastic and projector sheets, then returned bags of completed face shields. Cox boxed them up and shipped them to desperate healthcare workers nationwide.

Cox called the volunteer effort the PPEopleBrigade. Soon the idea was copied in other cities.

Donors started sending cash to pay for shipping and to buy supplies after Cox had run through the stock at Reconsidered Goods.

"So, it was just cool. It was terrifying, and I don't remember a lot of it," she says. "But everybody came to me later and said, 'It got me through that time. It gave me a purpose.'

"I felt like I was doing something," Cox says, "because we all felt so helpless. It was a really cool, dark history. But it just brought the community together."

Building community around a purpose is the reason Reconsidered Goods exists.

"We're a creative reuse center," says Erin Stratford Owens, a longtime board member who is taking over from Cox to become executive director. Cox will remain on staff as operations director, but co-founder Martha Hughes-James is retiring in September.



Paige Cox wears a homemade face shield. Volunteers made thousands for healthcare workers around the nation.



Bags of face mask kits outside Cox's home, ready for pickup. Volunteers returned bags of finished face masks to the fence for distribution.

Why not come to a four-day training session and learn all our secrets? Then go do your own thing.

Cox and the Reconsidered Goods staff had to make massive adjustments when the pandemic halted classes for crafters and field trips for students.

Now Cox and the staff are imagining new ways to engage the community, invite new people in, and keep preaching reuse.

Reconsidered Goods,

Stratford Owens says, is way more than just a store.

"We want to get back to the education piece," she says. "We can be the experts on what is reused versus recycled. We are the resource for folks who want to know how to stop climate change on an individual basis."

And do it all creatively. *Reconsidered Goods* [reconsideredgoods.org](http://reconsideredgoods.org) 4118 Spring Garden St. Greensboro 336-763-5041



Books, frames, and decorative items are among the tons of items donated to Reconsidered Goods each month.



Founder Paige Cox (left), co-founder and associate director Martha Hughes-James, and new executive director Erin Stratford Owens.

## Passion for photos, history inspired media preservation business

**D**o you have a shoebox (or 10) overflowing with decades of family snapshots?

Are there reels of home movies hidden in a closet?

Or perhaps you have a drawer full of VHS tapes, precious recordings of all the kids' birthday parties.

If any of this sounds familiar, you fit the customer profile for Preserving Your Heritage.

Since 2013, Preserving Your Heritage has been helping individuals, families, and corporate clients organize their media and transfer the data to state-of-the-art media.

Dorothy Tucker operates the business with her longtime friend, Michele Doyle.

"I just have a tremendous passion for photos," Tucker says. "And Michele has a degree in library science. She's just as passionate about family history."

Customers may choose from a menu of services, Tucker explains. Some customers just want coach-

ing on how to tackle a preservation project on their own. Some may hire Preserving Your Heritage to digitize 35mm slides or scan photos.

Others want full service, she says. This engages Tucker and Doyle to make a deeper dive, which includes sorting through images

(prints and/or transparencies) and bringing order to the chaos before digitizing the files. Figuring out a family's chronology and organizing images by decades does add to the expense, Tucker says.

"But," she adds, "if they can do the organizing and give us the digitizing, it's not as expensive as people think."

The photo preservationists also tackle organizing digital photos that are resident on customers' cell phones, thumb drives, hard drives, and stored in the cloud.

"We've done a lot more digital photo organizing in the last three or four years because people real-



Dorothy Tucker (left) and Michele Doyle sort through family photos, slides, and movies to be digitized.

ize those photos are going to be just as lost as the ones sitting in boxes," Tucker says.

The preservationists urge clients (and everyone, for that matter) to use their 3-2-1 strategy for backing up digital media.

- Have the data stored in three different locations (computer, external hard drive, the cloud).
- Use at least two different types of media, such as a SSD (solid-state drive) and the cloud.
- Store one copy at a different location, such as a relative's home.

That way, one copy is likely to survive in the event of a fire or natural disaster.

Tucker and Doyle have preserved everything from 19th century tintypes to corporate media libraries.

Tucker was researching potential networking groups when she discovered GMA. "I realized immediately that it was exactly what we needed," she says.

*Preserving Your Heritage  
preservingyourheritage.com  
(336) 266-4606*

## Businesses leverage web chat to extend service amid staffing challenges

**V**isit any restaurant, and you're likely to see a sign either advertising jobs available or asking for patience due to staffing shortages.

While this is a well-known issue within the service and retail sectors, it's less visible within business-



Jandler

to-business organizations, though the same challenge exists.

Consumer expectations for service have not diminished; if anything, the desire for quicker response has increased when it comes to business services.

One way that companies are extending their availability and serving up faster response times is through the addition of chat on their websites. Web chat is a communication tool, often shown as a pop-up box on

your website, that enables real-time conversations with website visitors.

Web chat certainly isn't new; it's been used for years and is a staple on e-commerce websites. Now, a much wider range of businesses are adding it to their sites.

Why? The immediacy of response enables even the smallest company to provide excellent experiences and make customer service a differentiator.

### Affordable to implement

At one time, web chat was cost prohibitive for smaller companies. In recent years the functionality has become commonplace, with inexpensive basic options available, as well as more sophisticated features at a range of price points.

In addition to providing live, real-time communication, most chat services also include the ability to utilize bots to provide automated

## BUSINESS SUCCESS

answers to common questions, direct inquiries based on the type of information sought, or to route communications internally (such as between sales or customer service).

### Streamline efforts

Web chat is even more powerful when integrated with a customer relationship management (CRM) system.

Many of the leading online CRM platforms now include chat functionality, which enables the capture of chat conversations directly to a customer record as well as the ability to create a ticket or tasks should additional follow-up be needed.

Once in your CRM environment, you can further the engagement through sales, marketing or cus-

tomer support activity if warranted.

### Barriers are minimized

Some companies hesitate to implement web chat for fear they don't have adequate staffing to man it, or concerns that they might miss real-time messages.

While that can happen, it's not as likely as you'd think due to chat's options for ease of management.

For example, most chat services provide a shared inbox, through which the responsibility for responding to chat messages can be shared among a team. Dedicated staff are not needed solely for manning chat; you can capitalize on the availability of employees who are already online all day.

There is also a range of notification options that provide alerts when a message is received; on-screen and audio alerts, as well as email and text notifications, so that staff can work on

other things and still reply quickly if a message comes in.

Some chat services also include a phone app, which enables replying to chat messages from anywhere. And of course, the functionality can be set to only show the chat box during certain hours or when designated people are showing as being available.

Chat provides a great opportunity for small businesses. Done well, it can reduce operational costs, increase sales, boost customer satisfaction and engagement, and build brand loyalty.

If you are not offering live chat support on your website yet, it might be the right time to start.

*Adrienne Cregar Jandler is founder and president of Atlantic Webworks. atlanticwebworks.com 336-855-8572*



## Hilton Garden Inn

August 6, 2021



A patio shaded by a lush arbor provided the perfect venue for the mid-day networking event.



Trish Southard and Jody Clayton of Abbottswood at Irving Park.



Kathy Cates of PIP Triad and Julie Howe of McNeely Pest Control.



Dorothy Tucker of Preserving Your Heritage and Colleen Biedny of Carolina Cookie Co.



The float from Cone Health MedCenter in High Point, photographed in the 2017 Holiday Festival Parade.

## High Point Holiday Festival Parade returns on Nov. 21

**I**t's not too late, businesses and civic organizations. There's still time to register your entry and participate in this year's High Point Holiday Festival Parade.

Sharon Smith, parade manager since 1981, hopes to have the usual turnout of participants as the parade bounces back after being cancelled last year because of the pandemic.

She's also expecting good crowds. "Since it's outside, and people are eager for activities, we're hoping for a good audience," she says.

The parade begins at 3 p.m. at Main and Green Streets. The route goes north on Main Street to Montlieu Avenue.

To register and for more information, go to [www.highpointparade.com](http://www.highpointparade.com).

## Free tips for making the shift to big success

**G**MA's 2021 Workplace Workshop series has just two events left on the calendar. Visit [mygma.org](http://mygma.org) for details on how to take part. Workplace Workshops are a free member benefit, open to any employee of a GMA member company.

**October 20  
Kevin Snyder**

**Success Amidst Uncertainty**

Kevin Snyder's keynote introduces the concept of becoming a ShiftThinker™. As we all wrestle with unexpected challenges in these pandemic times, Snyder proposes that a shift in thinking is necessary to "create massive, breakthrough results."



Snyder

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Avery

a goal to become the World Champion of Public Speaking. Eight months later, he did it, becoming the youngest person in history to win the international competition.

Avery has now mapped out the process he used to move from goal creation to goal realization. He calls it the 4D Success Model™, and it can be applied in sales, leadership, and strategic communication. Avery offers "turn-by-turn guidance" to help you decide what you want, design a plan to get there, develop the skills to make it happen, and deliver the results you've always wanted.

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