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Women business owners find networking helpful

By Jason M.

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Staff Writer

An information technology consultant has set herself the goal of helping other women business owners succeed through networking.

"I wonder if we are being as connected as we can be," said Tekelia C. Kelly, owner of Sisters in Business. "There are innovative women doing things independently. Networking is the key."

Ms. Kelly started Sisters in Business four months ago to bring women business owners together for monthly networking meetings. She has worked as an industrial engineer in addition to serving as a computer trainer and manager.

Sisters in Business also conducts marketing. On Thursday, the company held the first of what will be an annual trade show. Nearly a dozen of Ms. Kelly's clients displayed their products and services to local officials and members of the public at the Bessie Smith Performance Hall.

The Thomas family participated in the trade show. Kimberly Thomas said her sister, Lugenia, and their mother, Cindy, distribute health care products, plus operate the House of Restoration International Ministries, a spiritual bookstore, and Restoration Travels, a travel agency for ministries. The health care products, made by Melaleuca Wellness Co., cater to people who want all-natural hygienic products, vitamins and health bars, Cindy Thomas said.

Dorothea Johnson was another vendor. The owner of Inner Glow Skin Care Services said getting the word out about her services has been her main challenge for the one-and-a-half years she's been in business. Inner Glow does facials, bodywraps and waxing, and specializes in weddings and women's night out parties, the licensed skin therapist said.

Owning a company comes with benefits as well as challenges, said Virginia P. Yarbrough. The owner of Massage Plus said she has flexibility to set her schedule. She works in the afternoon during the week at The Chattanooga Hotel, but does not work Sundays.

Mrs. Johnson said she agreed scheduling was the major benefit of running a business. Like Ms. Yarbrough, she doesn't work on Sundays. Instead, she works during the day and often into the night at parties.

"You've got to give your time to God," Mrs. Johnson said.
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