



Bicentennial Garden / Greensboro

GMA/FirstPoint launches economic development fund with \$1 million

Goal is to boost initiatives with major impact on Guilford County economy

GMA and FirstPoint have created a new foundation fund with the mission of supporting projects with the potential to make a significant impact on the local economy and enhance life in Guilford County.

The GMA/FirstPoint Foundation Fund was launched with an initial contribution of \$1 million.

The fund will be invested and managed by the Community Foundation of Greater Greensboro.

The announcement was made before a crowd of more than 700 people attending the 110th Annual Dinner on February 18 at Koury Convention Center.

The initial contribution will continue to be supplemented over time, said G. Mark Prince, president and CEO of GMA and FirstPoint. The intent is to preserve the fund's initial principle.

The foundation "is not a



President & CEO G. Mark Prince (left) with current and former board members at the fund announcement at the Annual Dinner.

small grant type of vehicle," Prince said. "This is for significant, major grants that will really make a positive difference in the community.

"This is a new, additional way for GMA to support the community," he said. "It's a work in progress."

GMA Chairman Tim Templeton said he expects the fund to stimulate creative projects. "What can our community come up with? We want ideas, and we want them to be substantial," he said.

Grant applications will be submitted to the GMA/FirstPoint board of directors.

The fund was born out of conversations between two former GMA chairmen, the late L. Worth Holleman and Tom Berry.



Holleman



Berry

A subcommittee will review applications and make recommendations to the board for approval.

The fund's priorities in-

clude education, entrepreneurship, and economic development. Initiatives focused on developing a high-quality workforce and

of benefit to small- and medium-size businesses are of particular interest.

GMA will continue its current and significant philanthropic and economic development programs and relationships in the community, Prince said. These include support for the Greensboro Partnership, Downtown Greensboro, Inc., ArtsGreensboro, Greensboro Sports Commission, and many other organizations.

The fund, he explained, "is another vehicle to sup-

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Trends is a publication of the Guilford Merchants Association.



Center City AM Briefing

Hanna Cockburn, Greensboro's planning director, updates GMA members at the February Center City AM Briefing. The Greensboro Historical Museum hosted the event while renovations were completed at GMA headquarters.

Success by the dozens: Carolina Cookie adapts to succeed, but never alters its sweet recipes

Gary H. Smith's formula for business success sounds simple.

"The key," he says, "is to adapt when you have to and where you have to. If you don't, you're probably going to be one of the casualties."

It's also necessary, he says, to stake out your turf. "We made it very difficult for people to compete with us, because we were willing to do what no sane person would do."

No sane person would agree to fill an order for 250,000 cookies in five days. But Smith and his crew at Carolina Cookie Co. did. It wasn't easy, but they knew it was possible to bake 50,000 cookies a day, on top of their regular production.

5,000 dozen a day

They were confident because during the busy holiday season, they regularly produce 5,000 dozen cookies every day. (For the math impaired, that's 60,000 cookies, each one individually wrapped, because that's the way Carolina Cookie does it.)

LOYAL MEMBER

Carolina Cookie's ovens have been baking treats for nearly 30 years. Smith started the business in 1987, fulfilling a yen to chart his own destiny after the employer that brought him to Greensboro failed.

He was young, he says, and at the stage in life "when I had nothing to lose. Of course, I had just bought a house, and had everything to lose."

Smith's first business model was to place Carolina Cookie stores in shopping malls. That strategy worked well for a time, but tightening financial markets convinced Smith to shift to direct marketing via catalogs. In the pre-Internet era, catalogs were the preferred avenue for specialty marketers to reach targeted customers.

The shift to catalog sales and, later, to the Internet, proved to be the right deci-

sion. The company still mails more than 1 million catalogs annually.

Many cookie purchases become business-to-business and corporate gifts, Smith says. The company has been a GMA member since 1995. GMA members are "our customer base," he says. "We've always been involved because it meets our marketing model every year."

Employment varies

Carolina Cookie's staff of 9 full-time and 9 part-time employees handles operations for most of the year. Employment ramps up to about 125 during the last quarter of each year, when the company runs two and a half shifts daily to meet holiday demand.

Nearly 100 percent of Carolina Cookie's products are shipped to customers in the lower 48 states. The most popular cookie: chunky chocolate, of course.

Virtually every order is shipped within six hours of leaving the oven. That's what fresh-baked means, Smith says.



Gary Smith started Carolina Cookie Co. in 1987.

"We know the difference between what is trivial and what is not," he explains. The bottom line: important things can't be compromised.

"I could have gone from butter to margarine or changed all kinds of ingredients," he says. "But at the end of the day, we're not willing to compromise on stuff like that."

Smith credits his staff for Carolina Cookie's success; most have been with the

company 10 years or more. Many seasonal employees return year after year.

"I am the luckiest guy on the face of the earth to have the people I have here," Smith says. "If you take care of your people, your people will take care of you."

*Carolina Cookie Co.
1010 Arnold St.
Greensboro, N.C. 27405
(336) 294-2100
www.carolinacookie.com*

GMA/FirstPoint Foundation Continued from page 1

plement those long-standing efforts in the community" with support for "significant grant opportunities."

The fund was born out of conversations between 2015

GMA Board Chairman Tom Berry, president of Berico Fuels, and the late L. Worth Holleman, an attorney and 2010 GMA board chairman. Berry and Holleman dis-

cussed how GMA might do even more for the business community and enhance general economic development.

The GMA/FirstPoint

Foundation Fund is the result.

Tax-exempt, non-profit organizations with an IRS 501(c)(3) status are eligible to apply for grants. The organizations must be based

in Guilford County or localities served by GMA members.

Preference will be given to organizations supported by or referred to the fund by GMA members.

GMA TRENDS

President & CEO	G. Mark Prince
Vice President of Operations	Michelle Bolick
Vice President of Sales	Susan Russell
Operations/Special Events Coordinator	Holly Smart
Operations/Special Events Coordinator	Lisa Daas
Membership Development	Sharon Smith

TRENDS is published for the members of the Guilford Merchants Association.

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www.mygma.org

The Guilford Merchants Association is a nonprofit organization founded in 1906. The Association's goal is to assist its members and the business community at large to grow and prosper.



Teaching 'soft skills'

Corliss McGinty of Soft Solutions Consulting leads a recent Teach Me Tuesday program on successfully navigating change. Teach Me Tues-

day programs are free and open to all employees of GMA member companies. See mygma.org for upcoming Teach Me Tuesday events.

GMA Board of Directors / 2016



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Piedmont Triad
Airport Authority



Tom Berry
Berico Fuels



Chester Brown III
Brown Investment
Properties



Pete Callahan
Wells Fargo Bank



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President/CEO

Mark Prince
Guilford Merchants Association
& FirstPoint, Inc.

Time to build relationships is before disaster strikes

When disaster strikes a home or business, the first call is for emergency assistance. If fire breaks out, the first call is to 911 and the local fire department. The plumber gets that call when a pipe bursts.

The next calls, only slightly less urgent, usually are to insurers and for suggestions on a company that can begin to put things back as they were.

That's when the phone begins to ring at Disaster Pros.

The firm, based in Rural Hall north of Winston-Salem, is a full-service restoration business. Disaster Pros specializes in stabiliza-

tion and mitigation, demolition of damaged areas, rebuilding and repair.

Thomas Comer is sales director for the family-owned business. Disaster Pros, he

says, began some 15 years

ago as a service of Professional Carpet Systems, a carpet and floor cleaning business owned by Jeff and Nanette Long. Disaster Pros was established as a separate business about two years ago, after Comer joined the operation.

Joining GMA was a priority for Comer,

who knew the benefits of membership thanks to previous experience with GMA while working with another firm.

"That's why they hired me," he says, "to go out and build relationships. So that when (a con-

tact) has a situation develop, they will at least consider using our service."

GMA's emphasis on networking and raising awareness about the capacities of member businesses was perfect for Comer's marketing plan.

He joined the Networking Gurus, one of

GMA's organized networking groups, at the same time the company's general membership began. "I'm really trying to take advantage of all the things GMA offers," he says, "the workshops and the speakers and the networking."

Business contacts Comer has made through GMA include insurance agents, who often are asked by policyholders for referrals when disaster strikes, as well as specialized construction firms.

For instance, Comer says, Disaster Pros has built a relationship with a commercial roofing firm that's also a GMA member. The

**PARTICIPATION
= SUCCESS**



Thomas Comer, sales manager for Disaster Pros.

firms direct business to one another.

Disaster Pros is on stand-by 24 hours a day and promises a one-hour response time. The company warrants its work for five years.

"I've made some really good connections and found some really good partnerships" through being active in GMA, he says.

Disaster Pros
336-969-0450
disasterpros.net



Name: Courtney Purvis
Age: 28
Hometown: Chicago
Residence: Greensboro
Education: San Diego State University
 Major: Communications/Public Relations
Business: Kelly Office Solutions
Position: Account Executive
Duties: I seek out organizations that need help improving their workflow or business process in general. It's hardware, software, document management – all initiatives within the workspace. I'm in the downtown Greensboro territory, so that's fun, too. We've been around since 1947 and are well known in the Winston-Salem area, our headquarters.
On GMA: I think GMA is incredible in the way it supports 'local.' We're a locally owned company. It's great that everyone can work together and boost each other. It's a nice way to network and get to know the community in general.
Goals: Traveling is huge on my list. I want to see as much as possible. Knowledge is power, and you learn through experience. Through work, I really want to engage and help as many businesses as I can through what we do;



assess situations and help growth within the community as well – kind of what GMA stands for in general.

Personal: I'm into music, theater, shows in general; hiking and anything to do with water. I like the arts and I read like crazy. I'm a huge nerd and do puzzles at night.

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 Greensboro, N.C. 27407
 (336) 725-2566
www.kellyofficesolutions.com

MEMBERS SHARE

What technology innovation has had a significant impact on your business?

"All of our technicians have iPads and are able to email invoices directly to the customer immediately upon completion of the job.



Our computer system emails photos of our techs to the customer before the techs arrive at their homes."
Daniel Schaeffer
 John's Plumbing,
 HVAC

"Cellphones allow us to interact with clients from anywhere. Visits/presentations from our cars – calling, texting, and emailing – cell-



phones have completely made our communication quicker and more effective."
Jim Keen
 New Garden
 Landscaping &
 Nursery

"The use of join.me and other apps has enabled us to conduct virtual meetings with clients and prospects, allowing us to be more efficient and



build and maintain relationships in other communities and states."
Scott Graham
 AXA Advisors

"E-signatures, such as DocuSign, allow for quick transactions, less travel, and reduced overnight shipping costs."



Jeff Craig
 Allen Tate Realtors

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Scenes from GMA's 110th Annual Dinner



Guest speaker Johnny Bench.



Valda Ford Boyd (public speaker) and Mary Lou Blakeney (retired).



More than 700 GMA members and guests attended the event at Koury Convention Center.



Outgoing GMA Chairman Tom Berry (left) and 2016 Chairman Tim Templeton.



David and Beverly McGill (Bradley Personnel).



S.P. Gladieux, G.M. Richey, Ed and Pat Cobbler (ELC Investigations), J.E. Hinson.



Pam Carroll, Arthur Jordan, Cole and Anna Hunter (Carpet Super Mart).



Courtney Dabney (Children's Home Society), Sherry Reitzel (Matthews Mobile Media), Barbara Vaughan (Wisdom Within Counseling), Betsy Seaton (Children's Home Society).



Anil and Reema Patel (Eagle One Construction) Laurie and Mike King (ATCOM).



Loretta Horne has been with Piedmont Natural Gas for 28 years.

Workplace Workshop fan loves to greet GMA members with a smile

Loretta Horne appreciates a friendly face and a genuine welcome. She says that's what she found when she first started attending GMA's Workplace Workshops.

So she had no hesitation in volunteering to welcome others attending Workplace Workshops, held six times a year at Embassy Suites.

"It's always good when you go someplace new to have someone help you and direct you," she says.

Sometimes she has found herself escorting newcomers into the auditorium to find a seat. "That probably comes from my years of ushering at church," she says.

The Workplace Workshops venue is convenient to Horne's office at the Piedmont Natural Gas operations center in Winston-Salem, on the east side of town. The trip back to work from Embassy Suites, located near the intersection of I-40 and N.C. 68, takes about 15 minutes.

Horne, an administrative specialist for the new construction department, has been with Piedmont Natural Gas for 28 years. She's worked at locations in High Point and Greensboro as well as Winston-Salem.

She first began attending Workplace Workshops regularly about five years ago

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

while working in Greensboro. She's been a fan ever since.

"I have never attended a workshop that I didn't get something out of," she says. "I remember vividly some of those workshops and what they did for me."

Horne smiles easily and smiles often when talking about her GMA experience.

"It is a gracious and generous organization," she says.

Proposals would alter overtime rules

Overtime rules and the employees they apply to will change if proposals by the U.S. Department of Labor are approved. How will they affect your business?

GMA's April 19 Teach Me Tuesday session will look at the proposed changes and offer tips on how to keep your company in compliance.

Presenter Mark Moser of The Davidson Group also will cover the most common errors in wage and hour management.

Breakfast and networking begin at 8:15 a.m. The session ends at 10 a.m. Attendance is free to GMA members. Preregister at mygma.org.

Q&A

with

GMA's President

Q Isn't GMA membership only for retailers and stores?

A Not at all. GMA was formed in 1906 by Greensboro's J. M. Hendrix, owner of a downtown dry goods store, in an effort to create a spirit of cooperation among downtown merchants.



Prince

Through GMA, a group of center city businesses joined together to promote downtown commerce, organize promotions, share resources, and champion community initiatives.

One service of the new organization was a "book of credits," which provided payment histories on consumers.

This service was the precursor to the credit information and collections company known today as FirstPoint, Inc.

In the late 20th century, as the retailing industry began migrating to the suburbs and to the Internet, the needs of GMA's membership evolved as well.

To meet new demands, GMA expanded its services and programs. This made the organization more appealing to a much broader range of enterprises.

GMA's bylaws allow any company or organization engaged in commerce in Guilford County to become a member.

A merchant by definition sells or provides goods and services, and that describes almost every company or institution.

GMA is proud that its name – Guilford Merchants Association – honors its long history and legacy in the retail industry.

G. Mark Prince

G. Mark Prince
President & CEO



Alison Huber (Sprint) and Jody Clayton (Heritage Greens).



GMA Headquarters

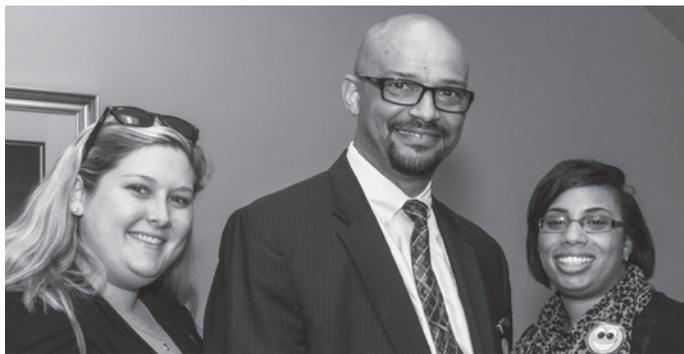
March 8, 2016



Anne Gundlach (State Farm), Amy Meineke (Window Works Studio), Alison Schwartz (All Pets Considered).



Jeff Coppadge (LIFESPAN) won a door prize, delivered by GMA's Holly Smart.



Samantha Garman (Employment Transitions), Brian Hall (Marriott Hotel), Alasha Jones (Employment Transitions).



Pauline Indalecio (Manpower), Laura Reine (Immunotec).



Anthony Troeger (Aardwolf International) broke into a big smile after winning a door prize.



Melissa Anderson (Berico Fuels), Denise Heiskell (Colonial Employee Benefits).



Sherry Geldner (Employment Transitions) and 2015 GMA Chairman Tom Berry.



Bill Howard (FirstPoint), Bart Lassiter (City Transfer & Storage), Carolyn Gallimore (FirstPoint), Phil Morgan (Piedmont Natural Gas).



Jewell Penn (Acclaim Federal Credit Union), Cynthia Reavis (Bank of America/Merrill Lynch), Monica Lee, (Caring Hands Home Health).

April 14 Workplace Workshop



Nancy Friedman,
The Telephone Doctor
on Customer Service



'Common Sense Customer Service is NOT Really So Common!'

with
Nancy Friedman

Thursday, April 14
Embassy Suites Hotel
204 Centreport Drive

7:30 a.m. refreshments
8–10 a.m. seminar

Free for all employees
of GMA member
companies!

Registration
deadline: April 12

Call 378-6350
or register online at
www.mygma.org

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FirstPoint recognized for sales leadership

FirstPoint Information Resources is the No. 1 sales agent for Equifax for the second year in a row.

“We are extremely pleased for our employees and for our clients to have been named the No. 1 sales agent by Equifax for two years straight,” said Scott Hall, FirstPoint senior vice president and leader of the Information division. “The criteria are based on overall percentage growth in revenues in the areas of mortgage, commercial, credit reports, and special projects.”

Equifax organizes, assimilates and analyzes data on more than 800 million consumers and more than 88 million businesses worldwide. Its database includes employee data contributed

from more than 5,000 employers.

FirstPoint’s relationship with Equifax goes back more than 35 years.

“It is gratifying to work in partnership with our clients to bring them solutions that grow their businesses and allow them to manage and minimize operational risk,” said G. Mark Prince, president and CEO of FirstPoint.

Hall added, “We look forward to continuing to work alongside our clients in bringing innovative solutions and new ideas that meet today’s ever-changing business environment.”

He credited “the wonderful staff of account executives and support personnel at FirstPoint who truly deserve the recognition.”



Someone in this group is about to become the winner of a cash door prize.



Kristin Johnson, Brittiany Wilson, and Nichol Walters, all with Jani-King of the Triad.

Scenes from February's Workplace Workshop



Workshop speaker Collette Carlson.



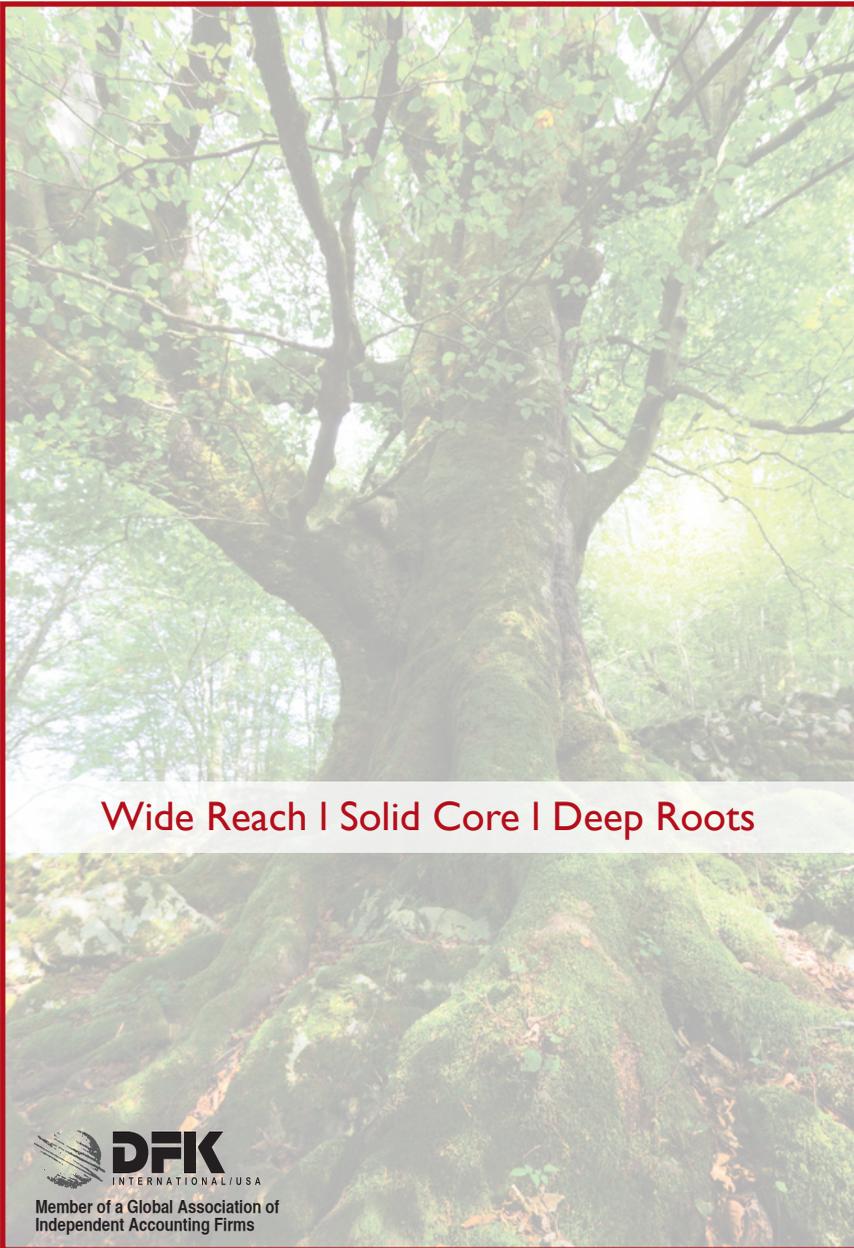
Betsy Lucas of Canopy Partners (right) won the \$50 cash door prize.



Workplace Workshops are a free member benefit, open to all employees of member companies.



Kiesha Madkins, Canopy Partners; Derek Whitefield, Triad Job Search Network; Donna Smith, Telecom Management Services.



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– Wade Pack, Managing Partner

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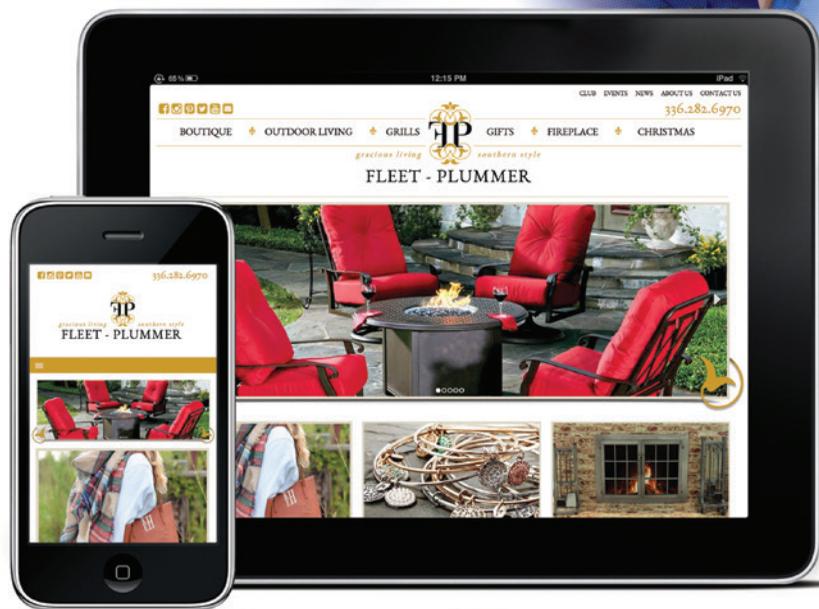
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