

BUSINESS

Conference helps businesspeople ink more contracts

By Clint Confehr
Special to Sentinel-Voice
NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Hundreds of African-American businessmen and women heard opportunity knocking recently in Nashville during the Black Enterprise/Bank of America Entrepreneurs Conference.

They also answered by seizing opportunities as they appeared, according to participants at Opryland Hotel and Derek T. Dingle, vice president and executive editor of Black Enterprise magazine. The publication organized the six-day conference. An example of successful networking apparently leading to substantial deals came Friday, Dingle explained. "It's not a done deal yet," he said at the Friday evening seminar, "but it happened in a matter of minutes.

"Bulldog Bikes of New York City is owned by James McNeal and he has, for the last two years, manufactured bikes for BMX Racing ... and is looking to mass market his bikes." McNeal met Joseph Wilson, president and CEO of Integrated Packaging of New Brunswick," Dingle said of the New Jersey company that is on the magazine's "BE Industrial Service 100 List." McNeal and Wilson "struck up a conversation and James McNeal told about his venture and Wilson told about his corrugated box.

"It just happened that McNeal needed boxes for his bike operations, so a conversation resulted in a deal," Dingle said. Wilson has fulfilled a need. I introduced them. "In addition to providing information and as it relates to financing and how to



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make business more cost effective, we see it as important to facilitate networking with the communication process and, from there, the natural entrepreneurial instincts take over," Dingle said.

Black Enterprise Unlimited President John C. Graves on Saturday told hundreds of entrepreneurs, spouses, partners, family and guests Black Enterprise "is reshaping America's economy."

Touching on the conference's theme, "Lead-

ing in a Changing Economy," Graves noted national leaders and economic forecasters speak in worried tones about the prospect of a recession. "What recession?" Graves asked. "Our very existence is within a recession economy. It's not what you do in good times, but what you do in difficult times."

As a practitioner in economic matters, Harvey Hoskins, a Nashville certified public accountant operating Hoskins and Co., said

on Saturday evening, "There's been some excellent networking opportunities here and we've made contacts that we feel will be good business for our company."

Saturday night's Sixth Annual Awards Gala Dinner in Opryland's Presidential Ballroom included recognition of several African American companies which rose from Black Enterprise's "BE 100" list of the biggest African American owned companies in America. "One of

our colleague firms does statistics for that report," Hoskins said. The State of Tennessee "presented" the gala dinner, according to the Black Enterprise agenda in the conference's magazine printed in Nashville.

Amber Gooding, Gov. Don Sundquist's special assistant for urban affairs, substantiated the networking opportunities.

"It stands to reason, when you look at history and the type of contacts made at other Black Enterprise conferences," Gooding said. "The fact that the Black Enterprise conference has come here is an indication." Tennessee officials have been attending Black Enterprise conferences at Disney World for several years with the purpose of luring the conference from Florida to Nashville.

Nordstrom seeks minority, women contractors

Special to Sentinel-Voice
Nordstrom, Inc., a nationally recognized specialty fashion retail store, has broken ground for its new store in the Fashion Show Mall, scheduled to open in 2002. The project has been floated to interested contracting firms that are owned by minorities or women.

"The inclusion of minority and women-owned businesses in the construction of our Fashion Show store is an

essential ingredient for its success," said Barb Valdez, director of the Supplier Diversity Program for Nordstrom. "Our goal is to provide a level playing field for all qualified companies that want a bid on the project."

From 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. today at the MGM Grand Hotel and Casino, 3799 S. Las Vegas Blvd., Nordstrom will host a preview of its new store. Interested bidders are asked to attend, but the na-

tional retailer is the only store in its field to stage such an event in order to attract minorities and women.

Nordstrom representatives will be on hand to meet with subcontractors and suppliers to answer any questions about the bidding process.

The Nordstrom Supplier Diversity Program is charged solely with developing partnerships with minority and women-owned vendors, sup-

pliers and construction subcontractors.

Last year's expenditures with these groups reached \$576 million, bringing total expenditures to \$3.7 billion since the program was launched in 1989.

Founded in 1901, Nordstrom is celebrating 100 years of service. It has 122 U.S. stores in 24 states, and 20 international Faconnable boutiques, primarily in Europe.

New York offering insurance plan for the poor

NEW YORK (AP) — A new insurance program will provide medical coverage to New York residents who earn too much income to qualify for Medicaid, Gov. George Pataki announced last week.

Family Health Plus will cover the 600,000 New Yorkers who aren't eligible for Medicaid and aren't offered employer-sponsored health plans. The state will begin enrolling participants into managed-care companies in September.

"This could truly be the most important health care program in America," said Tommy Thompson, U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services.

Appearing with Pataki at a New York City health center, he called New York the first state to allow a government

health insurance program for single adults who do not have children.

The program is expected to cost \$1.1 billion in the next three and a half years. Fifty percent of it will be federally funded, while the state and local governments will each contribute 25 percent.

A single, childless adult younger than 65 can make \$8,590 a year and be eligible for coverage. A family of four can earn \$26,000 and be eligible.

New York has enrolled 500,000 children in Child Health Plus, a free health insurance program for kids whose parents make too much money to qualify for Medicaid but who would not otherwise have insurance.

Black fraternity nixes regional conference in Mississippi

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) - Mississippi's decision to keep the Confederate battle emblem on the state flag has cost the state a second conference.

Alpha Phi Alpha, a black fraternity, nixed plans to hold its 2002 Southern Regional Conference in Jackson, convention director Floyd Williams said Wednesday.

The conference would

have attracted about 800 delegates and their families and was expected to generate about \$500,000, said Williams, who is also sales director for the Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Mississippians voted overwhelmingly in April to keep the current state flag instead of choosing a proposed design that replaced the Confederate emblem with

a cluster of stars on a blue field. An officers committee of the International Association of Black Professional Firefighters also has canceled plans to hold its 2002 conference in Jackson because of the flag.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's response to the Mississippi vote will likely come after its national con-

vention in July, state NAACP president Eugene Bryant Sr. said.

The NAACP has boycotted South Carolina for flying a Confederate flag atop the dome of its Statehouse. The state moved the flag last year to the Statehouse grounds, but the NAACP has vowed to continue its boycott until the flag is removed altogether.

Kellogg wants ads for black consumers

BATTLE CREEK, Mich. (AP) - Kellogg Co. is searching for a new agency to market its products to black consumers after its current agency severed a four-year relationship with Kellogg to work for rival General Mills Inc. General Mills, the Minneapolis-based producer of Cheerios, Hamburger Helper and Yoplait yogurt, announced this week that Burrell Communications Group is its new agency for marketing to black consumers.

Citing a conflict of interest, Chicago-based Burrell then severed ties with Kellogg.

Burrell will begin work on Betty Crocker products but is later expected to work with General Mills' cereal brands, General Mills spokesman Tom Forsythe said.

Kellogg began working with Burrell in 1997 and said its relationship with the agency was a positive one.

Burrell produced radio advertising for Frosted Flakes, Corn Pops and Apple Jacks. Kellogg is one of the nation's leading producers of cereal. Kellogg hopes to have a new ad agency in place this summer.

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