

Professionals make resolutions and plans for a great 2009

BY LYNN LOFTON
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A new year brings a sense of renewal and starting fresh, both personally and professionally. Just as personal resolutions about this time of year, some business people make resolutions for their work lives.

Small business owners wanting to do something positive to boost their bottom line can turn to the Small Business Development Center on the Delta State University campus in Cleveland where Director Christie Sledge is planning some workshops for 2009.

"With the economy in the state it's in, we need to help existing businesses, not necessarily start new businesses," she says. "It's a scary time to start something new but some are doing it, and we can help them too."

She's planning Quick Books workshops and web site development workshops at different times in the year. There's a nominal charge for the web site development but nothing for the other workshop. "We had one workshop on designing web sites and it went over very well. People love things from our area, and like to see them online. Many businesses in the Delta don't have websites and this workshop will help them."

Sledge also plans to start researching how to go green and market that concept. She will meet with various resources and try to figure out how to present it and market it to businesses.

"Our workshop attendance has picked up, but it's hard to get the word out since we don't have much money for advertising," she says. "This year we will try to reach more of our market and let them know we're here so we can help as many businesses as possible. We hear people say all the time that they didn't know we were here."

As for personal resolutions, Sledge

hopes to exercise more and cut back on spending.

Webster Franklin, executive director of the Tunica Convention & Visitors Bureau, has been thinking about 2009 for some time as he plans ways to bring more revenue-generating visitors to the area.



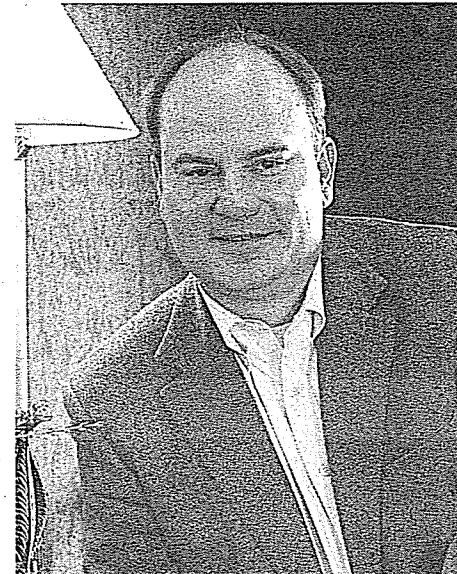
Ann Goss

"We've hired a new ad agency to represent Tunica, and we're in the process of developing a new brand identity," he says. "For the advertising campaign, we will include several major places in our feeder markets. The major focus in the past was education to let people in those cities know about us. We've been marketing Tunica as a destination for 11 years now and have high recognition. That's been confirmed through research."

Now, Franklin says, it's time for Tunica to be more emotional in its appeal to potential visitors. The area is more than gaming and will market itself as the gateway to the Delta blues product and for its museums, championship golf, outlet shop-

ping and other attractions. The campaign will kick off at the end of the first quarter this year.

"In this campaign we can take ownership of these things," he says, "but we realize the challenges are tremendous in today's economic times. We're very fortu-



Webster Franklin

nate to have gaming. Our core industry has spent millions on updates and additions and has fresh things to offer."

Part of that challenge is that tourists aren't going to travel as much because of the economy, according to research. "We have to show what we have and that it's affordable. That's our big challenge," he says.

Franklin has a resolution/aspiration that's dear to his heart. "I want to build a blues museum on Highway 61. I want to oversee and complete this gateway to the blues museum," he says. "The plans are all drawn and we just need funding. I've been working on it and hope to see it happen."

Ann Goss, CPA and tax senior manager

of the HORNE firm's Grenada office, usually makes professional and personal resolutions. She finds the beginning of a new year a good time to reflect on where she is and where she wants to be which leads to thinking about adjustments necessary to stay on track.

"As a tax professional, keeping resolutions from January through April 15 is especially difficult, so I am not always successful," she says. "There are many demands on my time during this period and non-essential activities are put on hold."

For those reasons, she doesn't beat herself up over laxity about resolutions. "The important thing is to recognize the areas in my life that could use improvement and do little things throughout the year to help meet these goals," Goss says. "Just because I may not have the time to work on resolutions or goals in the beginning of the year doesn't mean I should give up for the entire year."

Organization is always on her list of resolutions and 2009 is no exception. "I know I am more efficient when my office is neat and things are in their proper place, but that is a constant struggle for me," she says. "We have recently made the transition to a document management file storage system which has cut down the amount of paper around us, so I am resolving to work on keeping my office more organized this year."

Personally, Goss - like many people - makes the weight loss resolution but finds it next to impossible during tax season. This year she resolves to make healthier eating choices whenever possible and not worry so much about the numbers on the scale.

"I will also try to cook for my family more during tax season so my children will quit referring to this time of year as the season of microwavable meals!" she says. **DBJ**