



Where do I begin, as a child when growing up in a poverty stricken neighborhood you tend to believe what you see around you is TRUE for everyone. I didn't realize we were a family looked at by society as poor, because I had love from my family. Although there were many times when there was no food, we still had love and that love is what sustained us and made us closer. However when you grow older you think about your past and wonder how did our parents keep us happy on such little – and you realize it's the love and determination to succeed that rings so loud in your ear. It's the ability to work together and to help others, it's the community coming together to make sure everyone is taking care of.

My upbringing is really no different then so many of the young less fortunate families today that live from paycheck to paycheck in the housing authorities, or the families that are putting the pieces of their lives back together after a traffic event, layoff, or discharge, or even the business owners that lost their business and had to close their doors and are looking for a way to make ends-meet. This is the inspiration that makes us passionate about what we do at the Women's Business Center of Charlotte. Our grassroots approach keeps us connected to the REAL families within our 12 County region (Anson, Alexander, Cabarrus, Catawba, Cleveland, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, Rowan, Stanly, Union) and its partners like SUNTRUST through leadership with people like Matt Giddens that we get to help build the communities around us.

Through our partnership with SUNTRUST we are afforded the opportunity to help families get back on their feet through training and educational opportunities. We are honored to be an instrument of change through empowering, encouraging, and cultivating the talents, skills, and abilities needed to move their businesses forward. Our 90 plus FREE trainings offered throughout the year have had prodigious impact. With help from our supports and partners like SUNTRUST we have been able to provide over 1300 Entrepreneurs with professional and business training (i.e. HR Management, Financial Management, Legal Assistance, Capital Funding Training, Bonding, etc.), equating too approximately 4700hrs of training; as well as assist small business owners obtain over \$800K in capital. Financial support from partners like SUNTRUST give us the ability to offer our specialized trainings, conferences, and workshops, where we are building leaders through leadership and professional development, at a more feasible rate to business owners to enhance the capacity of their organizations.

Dreamers, pre-venture, startup, small business owners, stay-at-home moms looking to transition back into the workforce or marketplace, and women seeking support in navigating through Corporate America, seek out our services. If we are going to change the economic climate of our City, County, State, and Nation, we need partners and supporters like SUNTRUST. The Women's Business Center of Charlotte is truly grateful for the past year's support, commitment, and consistent engagement with SUNTRUST BANK and we are looking forward to our continued partnership with BB&T Bank; your leadership in demonstrating your pledge and promise to support small businesses is exuberated through the management and leadership teams and through the ongoing efforts, strides, and impact you so consistently make in our communities.

Below are some of the success stories that we would love to share with you – it would not have been made possible without your support.

Natalie Williams
The Women's Business Center of Charlotte