

Success Story

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VETERAN INSPIRES THROUGH HOME-BASED BUSINESS

How does someone expelled from school eight times become an inspiration for others? “I decided to be great,” said Terry Johnson, motivational speaker and CEO of The Champions Within, a home-based business designed to help develop leaders in schools, businesses and prisons around the nation.

Terry has always had a tremendous love for teaching and empowering others. He believes that “to whom much is given, much is required.” This love for others led Terry and his wife, Renee, to develop the business.

Terry recalls a presentation given to approximately 100 teenage boys at a high school in North Carrollton, Mississippi. “I was at the school to introduce the students to a five-week course designed to mentor those on the verge of “flunking” out of high school. “I explained how recess, girls and football were my chief interests when I was in high school, not much unlike them,” said Terry. At that time, he told himself that he didn’t need school, slept in the back of every class and didn’t do his homework, yet managed to pass because he could sack a quarterback. “I probably couldn’t spell quarterback,” Terry joked. But this was no laughing matter. He explained to the students that he had to get rid of years of “junk” in his head and get serious about living his life.



He told the group how enlisting in the U.S. Army on June 10, 1980, turned his life around. “I met people who were smart”. I found they read a lot and that challenged me to read as well. He told the group that he read his first book from cover to cover at the age of 21. He believes some of the kids act irresponsibly for reasons unknown. “I didn’t realize until many years later that the reason I was so angry and didn’t care about anything in high school was because my father wasn’t around for my childhood,” he said. “The Army helped fill that space.”

After retiring with 20 years of service and serving in some of the most elite units in the Army, Terry had developed his own unique leadership style. “I spent the last eleven years of my career serving in the Special Forces,” he said. “As a Special Forces soldier (Green Beret), I conducted nation building operations in South and Central America.” These efforts built his confidence to take on more challenges.

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Terry travels often booking events throughout the region. Through his and his wife's efforts, he has added five part-time employees and company revenue has doubled since its inception in 2002. He solicits sponsorships to offset his costs and has utilized the Mississippi Small Business Development Center (MSBDC) in Oxford, MS for assistance in recordkeeping and tax matters.

The MSBDC is a partnership between the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) and the university and community college systems in Mississippi. The MSBDC provides management, technical and business assistance to small business owners and would-be entrepreneurs.

"I honor and thank God for the opportunity to empower, to challenge and to help others find their gift and live their dreams," said Terry. Terry is from Marietta, Texas and is married to the former Renee Minor of Rayville, Louisiana. They reside in Oxford, Mississippi. In addition to running the business, Terry is also the author of a personal development book called "Train Like You Fight, The 8-Step Life Motivation Guide".

To contact the MSBDC office nearest to you for assistance on starting or growing your business, visit their website at www.olemiss.edu/depts/mssbdc/ or call toll-free (800) 725-7232. You will also find information and startup tools available on SBA's website at www.sba.gov/ms.

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Interested in having your small business highlighted as a success story? Send an email to Gary.reed@sba.gov.

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