



3 Independent Drive, Jacksonville, FL 32202 | 904.366.6600

[Click here to print.](#)

Apply for Athena Mentoring through May 31

May 17, 2009

Volunteer Advisory Panels Boost Business Potential



Mentoring

You're a woman business owner of an established company. Like many entrepreneurs, you often find yourself making critical business and management decisions on your own. After all, you're the owner, the president, the head cook and bottle washer - the buck stops with you.

What could you accomplish if you had access to a group of business gurus whose sole purpose was to help you reach your business objectives? The only way to find out is to apply for the Jacksonville Women's Business Center (JWBC) **ATHENA**PowerLink® mentoring program.

In this article, meet Kathryn, Dana and Joanne, entrepreneurs who applied for the program last fall and were awarded Advisory Panels this past February. Discover how the participants and volunteer members of their Advisory Panels are benefiting from this unique business mentoring experience. Find inspiration from their "ATHENA" stories then [apply for the program!](#) Applications are being accepted NOW through May 31, 2009.

Jacksonville's **ATHENA**PowerLink® mentoring program, one of only 27 in the nation, concentrates on women-owned businesses that are at least two years old and beyond the initial start-up difficulties. The program "links" the business owner with a panel of unpaid advisors who agree to work with her for a full year to meet her business goals. Business owners learn critical management skills and are shown how to implement best practices.

Kathryn R. Murphy, RN, MSN
Certified Geriatric Care Manager, Certified Senior Advisor

Business: **Comfort Keepers**
Industry: Home Healthcare
Company Type: Franchise



Kathryn Murphy

Year Started: Purchased first franchise in 2002; opened second in 2007

Number of Employees: 75+

Kathryn chose business ownership because...

“After a 24-year career in the Navy (retired as a Commander) and a great five-year corporate position with the Mayo Health Plan, Inc., I was at a point in my life that if I was going to make a “big change,” such as owning my own business, the time was then! I worked with a consultant who interviewed me and gave me a questionnaire to determine my internal motivation, passion and skill set. He led me to Comfort Keepers. It was the “perfect match” for me!

Kathryn’s passion is...

“...taking care of people. I wanted to be a nurse at a very young age. I also like variety and nursing is a profession that allows one to take many different directions. The Navy provided me with so many different opportunities within healthcare. I was always in a leadership position and enjoyed training other staff and watching them grow professionally. My position with Mayo taught me how to start a business from the start, since we were starting Mayo's HMO. I reached the point in my professional life - combining the many business skills I learned while at Mayo with my clinical and leadership experience in the Navy. “The stars were in formation.”

Kathryn applied for the ATHENA PowerLink® mentoring program because...

“I am positioning my company for significant growth over the next five to 10 years and need the expertise of many different professionals in order to meet my goals.

I decided to participate in both [Marketing Matters](#) and [Financial Matters](#) mentoring programs in preparation for being ready for the **ATHENA** program and build on what I learned. All the offerings from the Jacksonville Women's Business Center that I have attended (there have been many) have been outstanding!”

What Kathryn has learned so far:

“Surround yourself with excellence. I recently read a book that stated: ‘If you’re the smartest person on the team, you’re on the wrong team.’ With my **ATHENA** ‘team’, I have surrounded myself with excellence and clearly, am not the smartest on the team!”

Kathryn’s ATHENA Advisory Panel

Andy Laino, Laino & Associates – Panel Coordinator

Karen Bowling, Solantic

Greg DeVino, RSM McGladrey

Marianne Hillegass, Baptist Health System

Jeff Hoffman, The Hoffman Agency

Jonathan Oliff, Foley & Lardner

Eileen Ortega, Wachovia Trust

Andy Laino’s ATHENA PowerLink® Volunteer Experience

“The reason I originally agreed to sit on an **ATHENA** Advisory Panel was because my company, Prudential, is a JWBC sponsor. I wanted to support Prudential and its goal to help business owners improve their bottom line.

The first year fulfilled my corporate responsibilities, but once I got started I couldn't say no. This is now my third year of being involved at this level.

I can use my expertise and work with people who are really focused on goals and objectives. It's so cool to watch them achieve their benchmarks and be a part of the dramatic change that occurs over a short period of time.”



Joanne and Anthony Parks

Joanne Parks

Business: **Parks' Place Daycare and Learning Center**

Industry: Childcare

Company Type: From the ground up

Year Started: November 2005

Number of Employees: 20

Joanne chose business ownership because...

“I've been teaching for 11 years and always wanted to own a childcare center. It's a desire I always had. When the opportunity presented itself, I jumped right in. Preparation and opportunity came together.”

Joanne's passion is...

“I love working with kids and taking my message to a larger audience. I love getting children excited about education.”

Joanne applied for the ">ATHENAPowerLink® mentoring program because...

“... I had been in business for three years. With a growing company, I needed the support and the expertise to grow it effectively. I felt I did not have the management skills needed to handle the details. I hope this program will be helpful in that regard. The other **JWBC programs** and services in which I've been involved have given me moral support to do many things in my company that would have taken much longer to accomplish.”

What Joanne has learned so far:

“Oh, wow! I'm working with my panel in a series of sub groups and most recently met with my financial experts. They showed me different things I can do with the software I already own so I can gain more control over money management issues. We're touching on every aspect of business – marketing, human resources and more. They're showing me how I'm going through a natural progression and supporting me to take calculated risks.”

Joanne's ATHENA Advisory Panel

Paul Arrington, SBDC-UNF – Panel Coordinator

Randy Coleman, The Coleman Law Firm

Elaine Johnson, BCBS Florida

Michelle Patch

Michael Phinese, Prudential

Chantelle Quick, Ennis, Pllum & Assoc.

George Robbins, Vistage Florida
Marla Anderson Smith, Wachovia



Dana Stallings

Dana Stallings

Business: **Kilwin's Chocolates, Fudge & Ice Cream**
Industry: Confectionery and Ice Cream
Company Type: Franchise
Year Started: Opened franchise in St. Johns Town Center
in March 2005
Number of Employees: 11

Dana chose business ownership because...

"It's all I've ever known - this is my third business. I also own a childcare center."

Dana's passion is...

"My family: Emily, age 13; Haley, age 15; and my husband Vance... spending time together every moment we can!"

Dana applied for the ATHENA PowerLink® mentoring program because...

"...I want to be the best at what I do and I know I can not do it alone.

I have taken all the other classes the JWBC offers and have learned so many things about myself and about running a business. You can never stop learning. It's exciting because even my mentors tell me they learn from the business owners they are mentoring.

When we hear tips we learned years ago, it is so good to hear them again – we get busy and a little 'lazy' (if you will) and push off things that are important. Getting BACK TO THE BASICS of business is what a lot of companies are looking at now with the economy. We have all had to look at how we are running our company in different ways."

What Dana has learned so far:

It really amazes me how a group of 10 individuals can have such different views on decision making. I have learned to slow down and really look at all the options before jumping into a project: analyze the return on investment then determine feasibility. Is this worth pursuing or is it better to look at other ideas?"

Dana's ATHENA Advisory Panel

Snowden McFall, Fired Up – Panel Coordinator
Catherine Cosby, retired, Barnett
Gardner Davis, Foley & Lardner
Theresa Floyd, Wachovia
Jim Robinson, Leadership Mangmt. Institute
Anne Urban, Destination Planning Corp. - 249-3729
Neal Von Stein, LBA Group – 396-4015
Doug Wilder, Wilder Business Success – 880-8877

Snowden McFall's ATHENAPowerLink® Volunteer Experience

“It's been a true joy to serve as an ATHENA mentor. This is my second time through and the opportunity to help a fellow entrepreneur grow to the next level is very satisfying. I love the creative synergy of the team of professionals working together. I wish I had had this opportunity when my business was younger. The ATHENAPowerLink® mentoring program is a phenomenal learning group for all involved.”

© Jacksonville Regional Chamber of Commerce 2009.

[Close Window](#)