



TOOTING YOUR OWN HORN

By Michael George

February 9, 2011 – New York City – Despite the frigid temperature and weather condition, ParentJobNet’s evening of “Business Networking - Come Toot Your Own Horn,” hosted by Starbucks on 34th Street and Fifth Ave (The Empire State Bldg.), on Wednesday, February 9, was a rousing success.

With over 50 participants attending the unique event, which gave a few select entrepreneurs an opportunity to present their products, business or services to the attendees, several walls came tumbling down with enthusiastic presentations. With just three to five minutes each to pitch themselves, the presenters’ energy was high and well received, however, that doesn’t mean it was easy.

“It’s challenging to try and pitch something in three minutes, but I’m going to try my best,” said Manhattan’s Cindy Lai, who was there to push the Cindy Lai Fitness Boot Camp. “Here in New York City people get so busy they neglect health and fitness and forget to take care of themselves. I’m here to try and put a positive thought in the minds of parents. Parents get busy. If I can make a change in one person’s life, get their thinking caps on [about fitness] and get them thinking in the right direction, I can have a positive influence.”

PJN’s mission is helping parents with school age children, and others, to find gainful employment as well as sparking ideas to help people to employ themselves. The wide range of the presenters, products and services, was both interesting and stimulating. Delano Isaac, who was there to pitch his multi-vitamin and mineral products, has attended PJN networking events and workshops before, saw the opportunity as a continuation of what ParentJobNet does on a regular basis.

“I think this a great opportunity to speak and motivation to share,” said Isaac, observing the variety of entrepreneurs. “I can learn from this and grow from it. It’s just about educating people.”

Learning about something different, meeting new people, exchanging of ideas, that’s what PJN networking events are all about. The “Toot Your Own Horn” theme of the event was a chance to do that and more. Nzenga Waseme, a lawyer from Manhattan, had attended a PJN financial literacy workshop and came back for more, though this time she was pitching her services as a business consultant and attorney.

“I like working with businesses,” Waseme stated. “I love to see them succeed and build confidence.” Waseme follows PJN through their newsletter and website, but understands the value of meeting folks in person can never be understated. “Language is more than just words,” she said. “This is more intimate, actually connecting with people. Everything else is just public relations.”

That’s no knock on public relations, however there’s nothing like being there. That point wasn’t lost on Sheku Kef-Kamara aka Chosan, an entrepreneur and musician from Brooklyn. Kef-Kamara’s company, “Paintsoul - Create a life of color,” does customized, hand-painted clothing and lifestyle wear. Kef-Kamara works with an after school program at P.S. 205, and heard about the event through a posting on the board at the school.

“This is a great thing and great idea,” said Kef-Kamara, as he set up his product display. “In these economic times, this is really needed. I wish they could do it on a bigger scale. This opens us up to new audiences. We’re in Brooklyn, but this is on 34th Street in Manhattan. I’m thankful for the opportunity. This is priceless.”

Keeping a business or new venture going is tough enough, however getting started can be a daunting proposition. Debbie Brilliant, from Manhattan, was doing just that at the event. Brilliant’s month old business is about teaching voiceover techniques to people age 55 and up. Voiceovers are the voices you hear touting products on television and radio. Brilliant believes that the skill can be used for a job opportunity and as a tool to help listening skills and self confidence. Brilliant was a little nervous during her presentation, but she made her point.

“This was challenging, exciting and stimulating,” said Brilliant. “It’s good practice to tell people your story. There are big time actors doing voiceovers. I think senior [voiceovers] are the next big thing.”

Quinton Bailey, who has a business called Fluff’n’Stuff - Simply Baked Goods, enhanced his pitch with a mouth-watering variety of cupcake samples. “If you can dream it, we can bake it,” said Bailey, who also works as a job developer. “An event like this is a good thing.”

The New York City Fire Department was also in attendance, making a pitch for new recruits for the department and EMTs (emergency medical technicians). Lisa Morgan, who coordinated the event for PJN, was very pleased with the event and the turnout.

“This was a different format,” said Morgan. “Some people are introverted and this was a unique platform for people to come and speak out loud. This is our first time [this year] and it’s a lot of work. But this will determine how we tweak it going forward.”

For people attending and not pitching, the event was just as rewarding.

“I didn’t know what to expect, but was very impressed,” said Manhattan’s Jeannette Mcleod. “I really enjoy the entrepreneurial spirit and would definitely come to another event.”

For more information or questions call us at 917-546-9104 or 917--546-0971. Or e-mail us at info@parentjobnet.org.

Keep an eye open for future uniquely themed Networking events all held on Wednesdays.

March 9 - TD Bank
April 6 - Starbucks
May 18 - TD Bank
June 15 - Starbucks