

# From Start-Up to Staff of Seven, Tucker Enterprise Services Strengthens Business with SBDC Resources

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Small businesses are built through tenacity and hard work. As proven by Tucker Enterprise Services, Inc., a tree service and property management company operating out of Pinellas County, Florida, success can be traced through the steps a growing business takes to draw on its strengths, shore-up its weak spots, and find its niche. With help from the **Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Pinellas County Economic Development (PCED)**, LJ and Adelle Tucker have traversed a good many of those steps, building their company from a home-based start-up to an established business with a staff of seven.

Dr. Cynthia Johnson, Director of the SBDC at PCED, explains, "Rarely does a business hit the ground running. Almost never does it achieve success without a fair amount of time and effort. Every business has its own stairway to climb – and we're here to help them navigate the ups and downs of that journey."

Tucker Enterprise had its start in 2002, when LJ, frustrated with the corporate world, left his job and spent some time thinking about his next move. Living off of his savings, he eventually found himself down to his last \$40. He used that to buy a pole saw and the rest, as they say, is history.

"As a child, I helped my grandfather trim trees – I knew how to do that. So I knocked on doors, offering to help homeowners," he explains. "Back then, it was just about making enough to cover my monthly expenses. But I enjoyed the freedom of making my own money and setting my own price."

Since those early days of the business, LJ met and married Adelle, and Tucker Enterprise began landing commercial clients. Business was growing and it was time to start managing that growth. In 2011, the Tuckers began attending SBDC training classes to gain information about working with government agencies. Working further with the SBDC, the Tuckers participated in the annual **Finance Fair** and were encouraged to seek certification through **Minority and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) programs**, which provide opportunities for small local businesses to compete for government contracts.

“Minority and DBE certification was a great suggestion,” attests LJ. “By gaining certification, we had the opportunity to bid on contracts we might not otherwise have known about, such as a Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) project that will add substantially to this year’s sales revenue. And we were told that ours was one of the few businesses contacted that had all of the required bid paperwork in order – we have our SBDC Consultant, Yolanda Cowart, CBA, to thank for that! She spent many hours coaching, editing and guiding us through the process.”

Another key component for small businesses growth is the ability to network. Through partnerships with government agencies, business organizations and educational programs, the SBDC can provide clients with networking opportunities that can result in greater market exposure.

“Networking is a real area of strength for the Tuckers,” says Dr. Johnson. “They’ve opened new market opportunities for Tucker Enterprise by utilizing our resources and making sure their business is a contender for contracts.”

It was through such networking opportunities that the Tuckers were introduced to Tampa Bay Minority Enterprise Development (MED) Week. Drawing over 400 participants in previous years, MED Week brings together business and community leaders to network, engage in business training and discuss opportunities in the Tampa Bay business market.

“Attending MED Week helped us to realize that government contracts were attainable,” says Adelle. “That’s the sort of knowledge available through the SBDC and its programs that can really help a business find opportunities to grow.”

MED Week 2013 included a bus tour of local minority-owned businesses – and Tucker Enterprise was selected as one of two Pinellas businesses showcased on the tour.

“That was a terrific opportunity,” says LJ. “We’ve worked hard to build Tucker Enterprise into what it is today and it was an honor to be recognized for that.”

It hasn’t always been easy, but the Tuckers have proven that by combining their efforts and skills with the resources available through the SBDC network, success is pretty sweet.

“Business ownership is hard work, but definitely worth it!” attests Adelle.

Tucker Enterprise Services is currently serving the Tampa Bay area from its city of Clearwater location and can be reached at (727) 216-9538. Services include trimming, removals, porter services and stump grinding.

Learn more about the Small Business Development Center at Pinellas County Economic Development at [www.pced.org/sbdc](http://www.pced.org/sbdc).



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