



# CONNECTIONS

CELEBRATING DIVERSITY IN BUSINESS

OUR MISSION: To support and develop minority business enterprises and succeed in the open market.

JUNE 2009

## MBE SPOTLIGHT

### HPC HELP THOSE WITH POTENTIAL



G. Newcombe, CEO (center left) and sister J. Keener, Executive Director (center right) co-founded HPC in 1997, which has grown to 5 offices and 125 employees.

**IN THE EARLY DAYS** of running Human Potential Consultants, CEO Garnett Newcombe admits she ran her job-training and placement business with her heart and didn't worry about the money.

That is, until her husband, Eric, who loaned HPC money to stay afloat, said he would no longer help to keep the business alive; she would have to make it on her own.

Soon after she lost her lifeline, Newcombe won a contest for women entrepreneurs. The prize included financial counseling as well as the services of a career coach. That's when everything started to change for HPC, which partners with government agencies to help hard-to-place people get back to work, including parolees, military veterans, the disabled, and displaced older workers.

Her career coach helped Newcombe realize that her do-it-all-herself attitude was hampering the company's growth. "I hired people but didn't allow them to do their jobs. They had the skills and abilities to perform their jobs, but I wouldn't allow them to because I didn't trust them," Newcombe says, adding she was passionate about the company's mission -- helping those who had fallen through the cracks.

Newcombe's coach taught her to focus on putting systems in place, tailoring bids to each customer to increase the chances of success, selling her firm to banks to get lines

of credit and getting out of the office to network, which meant handing over day-to-day tasks to her employees. Meanwhile, the financial counselor encouraged her to frequently review HPC's business plan, evaluate finances and cash flow every week and restructure the organization.

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Six months later, HPC landed an \$800,000 contract with the Department of Corrections and soon became profitable enough for Newcombe to take a salary and pay off debt to her husband. Other contracts followed, including Twenty-nine Palms Marine Corps Base and Social Security Administration.

Today, the Carson-based business Newcombe started in 1997 with her sister, Joyce Keener, executive director, has grown from \$400,000 in revenue in 2006 to \$7 million in 2008, with contract commitments over the next five years worth close to \$14 million. The company has 125 employees working out of offices in Carson, Los Angeles, Lynwood, Moreno Valley, and Detroit.

Newcombe, a former sociology professor at Cal State Dominguez Hills, and Keener, who worked for the Department of Rehabilitation in Michigan, formed HPC to provide additional resources to individuals who are unemployed or underemployed, facing extraordinary challenges in obtaining employment and in need of assistance in staying employed.

Through referrals, about 300 job seekers walk through HPC's doors each month. The company has a placement rate of 68-70% and has put more than 1,500 individuals in a wide range of full-time jobs, including administrative, warehousing, information technology and construction.

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*HPC Help Those with Potential*

### A Link to Contract Opportunities

*SCMBDC to Launch Contract Opportunity Board*

The company offers training programs designed to help individuals reenter the workforce and cover such topics as pre-employment preparation, life skills, substance abuse education, anger management, and budgeting and money management.

Of HPC's success, Newcombe says, "We're not a typical staffing company. We're unique because we combine social skills with emphasis on barriers people are dealing with, help build their character and emotionally strengthen them and help identify their skills and abilities. Our model is a social development model."



*G. Newcombe cuts ribbon to HPC's new 30, 000-square-foot women's residential facility in Lynwood, which can house 30 women and eventually 90 women a year.*

The company recently opened a women's residential facility in Lynwood after Newcombe realized that single, unemployed women with no children have a difficult time finding a place to live. The 30,000-square-foot, dormitory-style facility currently houses about 30 women and will eventually have 90 women who can stay at the facility for up to a year.

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The building, a former hospital, was an eyesore and Newcombe, working with the city of Lynwood, says, "I wanted this to be a bright environment. We completely brought it up to living standards. And I had fun doing it, too."

Thanks to the counseling she received, "fate has taken a whole different turn," Newcombe says. She also credits

Southern California Minority Business Development Council for her success, particularly in helping her develop self-confidence.

"Through the council, I was introduced to other business owners, attended networking functions and leadership programs and became a part of the Minority Business Enterprise Input Committee," she says. "Being an MBEIC member has really given me insight into how other business owners do certain things. It helps me better understand what's going on in my business and seek advice," she adds.

**The whole SCMBDC community has really helped me stay grounded and helped me learn as I moved the company forward.**

The MBEIC is a liaison between member corporations and the minority business community at large and was created to provide feedback from minority businesses to board members on the effectiveness of SCMBDC programs and activities.

Newcombe recalls a time when she and MBEIC Chair Linda Stone worked on a council project together. "I learned so much from her that I came back to the office and changed things in my company. The whole SCMBDC community has really helped me stay grounded and helped me learn as I moved the company forward."

With HPC performing strongly despite an economic downturn, Newcombe is focused on sustaining and growing the company while continuing to help the unemployed find work. She's still running the business with her heart, but is now confident, financially savvy and no longer needs help from her husband or anyone else. Like the job seekers HPC assists, Newcombe has reached her full potential.

**COMING SOON...**

Contract Opportunity Board live and available for viewing and posting bid opportunities!



#### **ABOUT SCMBDC**

Southern California Minority Business Development Council (SCMBDC) is the largest nonprofit minority business advocacy organization in the region, serving more than 1,300 minority business enterprises and 200 corporate members throughout 13 counties. Based in Los Angeles, our mission is to support and develop minority business enterprises to compete and succeed in the open market. We are one of 39 regional councils in the National Minority Supplier Development Council.

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