

Marsha Smikle's business sense



IT'S not easy starting up a business, being pregnant and giving back to the community at the same time, but young entrepreneur Marsha Smikle was able to undertake all this when she established her own mail management and courier service business three years ago.

Smikle, a project management specialist with over 12 years' experience, took a chance when she left a lucrative senior position at the European Union (EU) to branch out on her own. Today she has no regrets and is reaping the fruits of her labour.

Delivery Solutions -- the business which she started with the encouragement and assistance of family and friends -- is growing nicely, much like her two-year-old daughter Alliana whom she has been raising as a single parent.

Smikle said the idea to start the courier service was planted while she was at the EU, where she spent several years working on their Banana Support Project. The job, she said, was taxing, so when a friend casually told her of the problems he was having with getting his mail delivered on time, it sent off a light bulb in her head.

"He said, 'Marsha, why you don't buy two bike like how you want to do something for yourself and come start up your company man and I'll hire you?'" she told the All Woman recently.

From then on, Smikle, whose father and brother are entrepreneurs, started developing her plan. Once her father assured her that he would support her financially and give her office space in New Kingston to start her business, there was no stopping her, and she took the big plunge into entrepreneurship.

"I got all my savings, all I had, got a small loan and decided to start. I got branded because I said I have to do it properly, I can't do it halfway," she said.

"I started with one bearer and then another bearer came on board and persons started hearing about it."

In the space of three years, Smikle's business has been able to attract over 25 committed clients, and with the launch of three new technological tools recently, she is expecting many more. She has been able to meet many of these clients through the Rotary Club of New Kingston and the Young Entrepreneurs' Association of which she is a part. She lauds the ability of both organisations to draw people together, not only to socialise, but to impact the lives of others.

Smikle is the former charter president of the New Kingston Rotaract Club and was the director of the Rotary Foundation last year. This saw her spending a lot of time with other members visiting children's homes and feeding street persons in New Kingston, among other social outreach activities. Her involvement in the Rotary Club has decreased, but she still finds time to assist when called upon.

"This year I said I can't take on the directorship, I have no time, because I am a single mother of a two-and-a-half-year-old daughter who is gorgeous and needs my attention, and she is young," she said.

The young entrepreneur describes herself as being shy, but underneath that exterior, she says, lies a passion for people and a knack for forging new relationships.

"You have to believe in what you do and you have to be honest about it and be sincere and people will buy into your sincerity and your passion for what you do," she said.

But even a passion for the job and the dedication to succeed has not sufficiently shielded her from the challenges that befall many young entrepreneurs.

"Sometimes I am moved to tears, where I get overwhelmed by the amount that I have to do," she shared, adding however, that family and friends have always managed to get her back on solid ground.

Although she holds a degree in Management Studies from the University of the West Indies and a Diploma in Marketing and Certification in Project Management from the Boston University, Smikle pursued a certification in Mail Room Management and Mail Services from the United States Postal Forum in Washington in 2009. She is also a member of the Mail Systems Management Association, which assists with the advancement of the mail distribution industry.