

**PASTOR LAUNCHES NEW MINORITY BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM**

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"Well, it's a lot of work but I am fortunate to have some highlycapable staff working and assisting me in these various business enterprises", he said.

A native of Bluefield, West Virginia where he studied drafting and architectural engineering, Oliver arrived in Winston-Salem some 21 years ago and found work in the city's street and paving department.

"I soon found myself in charge of street maintenance, resurfacing, paving and repairs and since I had a limited budget for maintenance, I had to figured out a way to get the work done so I came up with a rating or grading system that the city soon adopted. It is still in use today", he said.

After a co-worker remarked that he could be a billionaire if he went into business for himself, Oliver decided to do so. He started a company called Pavement Evaluation and soon found himself with a mushrooming business and 14 employees. And a wagonload of stress.

"The money was good. I was doing real well and working extremely hard. I wanted to be the first minority company in highway construction because I saw a need. We didn't know how to bid on those big contracts. And you didn't see, and still don't see many minorities in highway construction" he said.

The good money and dreams of a big, minority- owned, highway construction company came to an abrupt end when Oliver, stressed and overworked, suffered not one, but two strokes that landed him in the hospital.

"Nothing but God brought me through this", he said. Oliver closed his company, regained his health and went to work briefly for the Department of Transportation but soon developed the itch to go back into business for himself.

"You get spoiled after being self-employed", he said with a chuckle. To date, Oliver has helped build, design, construct or secure financing for over 100 churches and some 62 day care centers. But the Minority Entrepreneur Development Center is a dream that fires his passion.

"We need to put a greater emphasis on business development because everyone is not cut out for college. I was fortunate in that I went to a high school where I spent half of the time in a regular classroom and the other half at the trade school where I studied drafting and architecture, he said.

Oliver went into drafting and engineering work right out of high school. "I went to college at night and worked full time during the day" he said. His passion to help others get started in business is part of his upbringing which came from his father.

"My father owned a construction company and I grew up working around things...watching things being built. I've been drawing and building things all of my life. I've always wanted to be in business and enjoy helping others", he said. Oliver conceived the idea for MEDC because he knew from experience that many people would like to start or own a business but simply lack the necessary tools to get started.

"We take your business idea from a dream to reality. We are here to help those who want to go into business but do not know how to get started", he said

MEDC will offer day and evening classes in all aspects of business development, planning and organization.

In the business classes, subjects ranging from marketing, financing and sales to business plans, and bidding and estimating projects will be taught.

"Our mission is to triple the number of minority-owned businesses in the area", he said. "We must empower our future minority entrepreneurs to become efficient in all aspects of business procedures, practices and operations", he said.

If Oliver has found quality help in managing his various business enterprises, he can also rejoice at his good fortune in the pulpit. His wife, Malinda, daughter Masonne Monique and son, Lucious, 2nd, are all ministers. His company, MEDC, is located at 8064 North Point Blvd, Ste 102 in Winston-Salem.

And sounding every bit like a proud father who had done his job well, "my son preached for me last Sunday", he said with a chuckle.



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