

## *Tennessee Small Business Persons of the Year 2008*

### **Mama Turney's Pie Company**

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Michael and Barbara Turney, SBA's Tennessee 2008 Small Business Persons of the Year, named their company after Michael's mother, Georgia, whom Barbara just called "Mama Turney". For over forty years, Mama Turney baked pies for all the family gatherings, with sweet potato, chess, chocolate and pecan the leading favorites in the family. After one such Thanksgiving gathering, Barbara asked Mama Turney for one of the pie recipes and got it. At the next family gathering, Barbara presented her own version of Mama Turney's sweet potato pie, and everyone thought it was Mama's and not from Barbara's own oven. Mama Turney was very proud, and all the pies were enjoyed and disappeared quickly.

"We had no start-up capital at all—no loans, nothing but some things we already had on hand, and a paycheck from my job as a meat-cutter to buy supplies with," says Michael. "We bought the best ingredients we could find, just like Mama's recipe called for, and my wife Barbara added her own recipes for other pies and she just started baking pies in our kitchen," he says. Their first order came from a local Kroger store just a few days before Thanksgiving in 1996. "We baked pies for three days and nights, just Barbara and I, to make that order," recalls Michael.

Just after they met that Kroger order in 1996, Barbara and Michael were able to start a full time commercial baking operation. A little over ten years and two SBA loans later, Mama Turney's Pie company had sales of over \$1.1 million with over 1,000 commercial accounts. They also received assistance from the Nashville SCORE Chapter and their counselor, Bill Sutcliffe, still remembers Michael's ambition, since realized, to be a southeast region wide baking operation.

Michael and Barbara Turney have also offered their help and expertise to young entrepreneurs over the years. "We recently got a call from the three Green family kids that we helped almost six years ago—you should see their website, [www.greenspies.com](http://www.greenspies.com) and they even ran a story about them in "USA Today" when the youngest was only twelve years old," says Michael. "We're very grateful to the SBA and others who have helped us, so we have a duty to give back to our community whenever we can," he adds.

I'm working with the youth program, Project Return, thru the legacy program, a non profit program doing mentoring of youth who have been incarcerated or are on probation. More than anything we do one on one mentoring & we listen to them to help them better their lives. There was a young man, named Brent, I met thru the program that turned his life around & he ended up having two jobs, and has really turned his life around. He was recently killed in an auto accident that was not his fault. The other young people in the program have been inspired by Brent.

I got a call from Jesse Green, Green's Pies, [www.greenspies.com](http://www.greenspies.com) ---3 kids that were aged 11 to about 14 years old that started a pie business about seven or eight years ago. I got a call just after Christmas where he saw my webpage. My wife Barbara and I actually gave them some pie crust and other things and materials for about a year to help them out and get them going in their business—and it is just about the best apple pie I ever had. Here they are in 2007 and they are going strong, having moved last year to Chattanooga.