

**FORMAL WRITTEN TESTIMONY FOR THE U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON
SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP
“EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS: THE
FUTURE OF WOMEN’S SMALL BUSINESS PROGRAMS”
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2007
BY GALE KING, OWNER, TREATS BY GALE, LLC, BURKE, VA**

**Honorable John F. Kerry, Chairman; Honorable Olympia J. Snowe,
Ranking Member and other members of the Senate Committee on
Small Business and Entrepreneurship:**

My name is Gale King. I am the proud owner of Treats By Gale, LLC, a home-based business in Burke, Virginia. I was born in Barbados, and came to the United States with my mother when I was 12 years old. I attended local schools and graduated from James Madison University in 1990. When I was laid off in 2004 from my technician job at a local dot com, it was my third layoff. I was a single mom with two children in elementary school. And, I decided to start my own business. I wanted to be in control of my own livelihood. Since I’ve always loved baking, my friends suggested I start Treats By Gale.

Like many first time entrepreneurs, I decided what my product was. I’d sell cookies and cakes. I printed up my own free business cards online from Vista Print, and assumed that orders and money would come in. After six months, I had only made \$200. I realized I needed to do something different, but I had no idea where to turn. I was advised by several small business owners I had met through networking events, to seek out the resources of the Women’s Business Center of Northern Virginia. There I finally found the information and support that I needed.

Over the past three years at the Women’s Business Center, I have taken advantage of many programs including:

- The ABC’s of Starting a Business. In this class I learned about the various types of business entities, the importance of writing a business plan and protecting my personal assets, the commitment required by my family members, and the many resources that the Center had to offer.
- Business Planning and Financing for Growth, a class taught by the Senior Vice President of a local bank, where I learned the details of writing my business plan and the importance of developing a relationship with my bank manager,
- Tax Planning and Bookkeeping, and Marketing, Legal and Risk Planning, two other classes in their Business Toolkit Series, where I learned from CPAs, insurance experts and attorneys about various aspects of business development.
- The NxLevel for Business Start-Ups Class, a nationally recognized twelve week program, where I had the support of my instructor and classmates to help me write part of my business plan each week. In this class, I met my package designers, and lots of other great professional volunteers.

- QuickBooks Pro, where I used their computer lab to learn the software for my business accounting.
- 1st Friday Networking Breakfasts – a wonderfully safe place where I learned how to network properly and partner with other women business owners. For example, I met Emily Murphy of Emily’s Teas. For the past two years, I have provided the baked goods for her fun and educational tea parties.
- The free one on one Technical Assistance Counseling where I worked with counselors on my marketing plan, understanding my cash flow, and the importance of developing my own market niche by studying my client demographics.
- The SBA’s Small Office Home Office (SOHO) Loan Program where I received two loans totaling \$25000 which I used to purchase new equipment and a delivery van.
- The annual Women Entrepreneurs’ Expo where I learned how to effectively exhibit my products to other business owners.
- I also love that the Center rents out its meeting rooms at low cost for home-based businesses. It gave me affordable, professional meeting space for my open houses
- And, I’ve gotten great publicity and exposure. When “Recipe for Success” a program featuring Al Roker on the Food Network called my Center director, I got a telephone interview with the show’s producer and almost got on TV. And, here I am today, talking to you!

When I started Treats by Gale, there was no way I could afford the services of a business consultant or a coach. Through the Women’s Business Center, I learned from insurance agents, lawyers, bankers, marketing specialists, and accountants. These people all shared their areas of expertise with us. I cannot imagine what I would have done without this resource. The Women’s Business Center staff have been cheerleaders in success and motivators during challenges.

My business has grown over the years and I very proud of my customer list. I have long-standing contracts with the Shakespeare Theatre, the Folger Library, Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, and the Hyatt Regency Capitol Hill. I now have more business than I can handle on my own so I am in the process of interviewing baking assistants. I am happy that I am not only to support my family but I am able to employ others. In 2006, I grossed over \$45,000, and in the first eight months of this year, I’ve already grossed that same amount!

Whenever I meet someone starting out in business, I always recommend that they visit the Women’s Business Center. Starting a business is really overwhelming and there is lots of bad information out there. When I send someone to the Women’s Business Center, I know they will get all their questions answered, and they’ll get a good foundation on which to build their business dream.

Thank you.