

## Aspiring to Success participant and Black Pages South recognition



*Ale'ta Turner*

When Ale'ta Turner joined Jacksonville Women's Business Center's inaugural Aspiring to Success Circle she was a military wife and a young mother who dared to start her own business while working full-time in the nonprofit sector. Not surprisingly, she attributes her time management skills for her recognition as one of Florida Black Pages 2016 Top 20 Under 40 influential young people in Jacksonville.

Black Pages South's mission is to encourage, support and facilitate economic empowerment of the African American community through the development of a strategic local business network, educational initiatives and communication ventures.

Turner, 29, turned to JWBC last year for help launching Ale'ta & Allan Weddings & Special Events, which shares her first name and her husband's middle name. Glenn Turner Jr. was deployed with the Florida Army National Guard when his wife decided to use the experience she gained doing events for the Jacksonville Public Education Fund, where she was employed, to start her own business. She since transitioned to the corporate world where she works as a marketing and outreach coordinator for Quest Corporation of America, Inc.

About the same time, Tonisha Landry accepted the challenge of JWBC Director Pat Blanchard to resurrect, develop and facilitate its Aspiring to Success roundtable of small business startups. Owner of KAK & Co. Experiential Marketing, Landry chairs the JWBC's Emerging Markets Task Force and serves on its advisory board. She recalled that Turner, who has a 7-year-old son and a degree in public relations from the University of Central Florida, had talked about having a mentor and starting a business when the two were volunteer co-chairs of an event for Empowerment Resources, Inc., a nonprofit organization that serves at-risk youth and their families. "She was one of the first people I thought of to invite," Landry said.

The Aspiring to Success Circle provides women with an interactive forum to expand their business knowledge and develop critical skills to begin a business. In addition to an orientation, participants meet four times over approximately six weeks. Turner found the peer-to-peer mentoring of her five-member group beneficial. "I was surrounded with like-minded individuals who had the same determination to follow their dreams. We did not all have the same vision but we all had the same drive and tenacity to start a business," she said. "You can't do it alone. You need a trusted group of people to bounce ideas off of and work with."

"Aspiring to Success is a great first step. A small group around a table offers a different approach to developing an idea for a business," said Landry, also co-director of The Jacksonville Online Marketing Meetup.

Roundtable topics Turner found useful include understanding who your customers are, specific language to use to communicate your objectives, how to prepare proposals and determine fees, and how to use Quickbooks, software to manage needs of a small business. She maintains that she would not have had access to this knowledge and support without JWBC. "They truly want you to grow as an entrepreneur," she said. "The connections that you make are invaluable. It's all about getting outside of your comfort zone and going for it."

“Motivated and driven, she knew what she wanted to do. She just needed the opportunity to refine it. She made a commitment to her business, even though she worked full time. She is genuinely committed and interested in helping others grow. Without even knowing it, she can mentor someone else,” said Landry, who is so impressed by Turner’s qualities that she asked her to serve on the Emerging Markets Task Force. “Sometimes women get nervous about leaving their comfort zone or they don’t know how to manage a business and family and work. Diligent and organized, she is managing all three of those.”

“As long as you have a plan and work that plan, the sky is the limit.” Turner said.