

Williams promoted to president of W. Pa. Black Chamber of Commerce

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by Sonya M. Toler
Courier Staff Writer

In six short months, Doris Carson Williams achieved all the goals laid out for her as the first executive director of the African American Chamber of Commerce of Western Pennsylvania.

Robert Agbede, now chairman of the board of directors, thought she should be amply

rewarded—she was promoted to president of the organization.

Her first assignment was to open an office. She found an ideal spot in the heart of downtown Pittsburgh at the Regional Enterprise Tower (the former Alcoa Building) that opened Oct. 12, 1998.

According to Agbede, the move also reflects what is happening in other organizations

and companies, and he wanted Williams "to be seen in the same light as people in the same position in other organizations."

Williams' efforts elevated the chamber into a formidable force championing the cause of African-American professionals and entrepreneurs.

Among her accomplishments:

- Obtaining two pro-bono campaigns to get the word out

- about the chamber, one with Marc Advertising and the other with WPXI-TV;

- At no cost to the organization, developed a web site;

- Three "power breakfast" meetings she held produced a profit for the organization;

- Developed a full benefits package for chamber members;

- Secured a contract with the Urban Redevelopment Authority to market the Small Business Loan Fund;

- Raised approximately \$140,000 in grants and contracts;

- Recruited 75 new members;

- Obtained a contract with the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission on Team Pa. project;

- Hosted or co-sponsored a number of informational sessions for chamber members; and

- Developed a newsletter for the chamber.

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Recently Williams announced the chamber will market two new products for the Allegheny County Department of Economic Development and the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh.

One is the Allegheny County Minority Enterprise Fund, that provides subordinated, often-unsecured loans to small business for machinery, real estate, working capital and leveraged transactions. The maximum loan request is \$100,000.

The second is the Small Business Administration 504 Program that disperses funds for the purchase of land, machinery, buildings, construction and related costs. Loans can be requested for as much as \$250,000.

The chamber is holding an informational workshop about these new funding tools July 21, 3:30-5:30 p.m. at the Regional Enterprise Tower, 31st floor. Reservations can be made by calling 412-392-0610.

