



A Special "Thank You" from Our Founder

Words cannot express the amount of gratitude I carry in my heart for all those who worked diligently and supported us in the Grand Opening of the MSK Empowerment House and Graduation of the 2008/2009 Leadership and Life Coaching Focus Group on May 30, 2009. I must first thank my husband and number one supporter, Bishop Johnathan E. Alvarado for his commitment to help me realize every dream and passion for empowering women. He along with our three children, Johnathan II, Joshua and Ariel have made tremendous sacrifices for the women of MSK and will forever be appreciated for standing with us.

One of my life messages states "You never realize your destiny without the help of significant and authentic relationships". This message has never been more demonstrated than the partnership and team spirit that is exemplified by the MSK Board members: Ms. Sonya Hunte, Mrs. Tina Flowers, Mrs. Janyee Pleasant-Slater and Ms. Auma Reggy, Esq. Together with the collaborative efforts of the MSK Administrative Team: Mrs. Sandra Gartrell, Ms. Sherida Holmes, Mrs. Mercedes Larkin and Ms. Sharma Scott, we modeled the power of working together for a common goal and living for something beyond our own exis-

tence.

The day was filled with family, friends, supporters and well-wishers from near and far. We enjoyed food, fun and fellowship as we dedicated the house; gave away two scholarships from the MGB Second Chance Award; and graduated eight women from the 2008/2009 MSK Leadership and Life Coaching Program.

Several Atlanta area business owners served as our exhibitors for the day sharing information and tips from their various and diverse ranges of experience and expertise. MSK thanks Tasha Lewis (Taddah's Fitness Camp), Dr. Monica Jones Shareef (Spa Dental), Dr. Dominique Smith (Premiere Women's Health), Jestacia Jones (J'lore Wellness and Esthetics Center), Cleo Carrington (Elements Therapeutic Massage), Benjill and Dione Cubas (Leapin' Lizards Family Fun & Party Center) and Frank and Martha Arnold (ICI Financial Services) for helping to make the event a success.

A very special thank you is extended the community leaders who shared the day with us: Val Cater, Founder and Director of the Women of Gilgal House, Dr. Sherry Gaither, Co-Pastor of Stronghold Christian Church, DeKalb County District 3 Commissioner Larry L. Johnson, The Honorable DeKalb



Dr. Antoinette G. Alvarado
Founder/CEO

County Sheriff Thomas Brown and The Honorable DeKalb County District Attorney Gwendolyn Keyes-Fleming who served as our keynote speaker for this momentous occasion.

Please enjoy some of the pictures from the day that are interspersed throughout this issue of the MSK Newsletter. We look forward to updating you quarterly and ask that you continue to look for and celebrate with us in the work that we are doing.

It is with the prayers, donations and continued support of family, friends, and people like you who will make our dream live on as we are "Moving Women from Average to Excellence".

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MSK Empowerment House For Women



MSK House

DeKalb County based **My Sister's Keeper Foundation for Women, Inc.** proudly opened its doors at 4568 Covington Highway in Decatur, Georgia on Saturday, May 30, 2009.

Since 2004, MSK has served DeKalb County and surrounding Metro Atlanta communities through collaborative partnerships and development initiatives designed to benefit women. The goal of MSK is to equip and empower women to achieve their full potential as their motto states: *"Moving Women*

from Average to Excellence".

The foundation is actively constructing avenues and building partnerships to promote their goals. Obtaining a central location within the Covington Highway community, is an essential step in creating and strengthening those partnerships.

The MSK Board of Directors and administrative team hopes that residents and other agencies will view the MSK Empowerment House as a repre-

sentation of the potential that business and organizational leaders share in the enhancement and building of the community. My Sister's Keeper Foundation for Women will further their capacity by building activities from this new location.



Larry L. Johnson
DeKalb County District 3
Commissioner



Thomas Brown
DeKalb County Sheriff



Dr. Sherry Gaither
Co-Pastor, Stronghold Christian Church



Gwendolyn Keyes-Fleming
DeKalb County District Attorney
Keynote Speaker



Val Carter
Founder/Director
Women of Gilgal House



Sharpening Your Inner Leader

Lately I've been revisiting the question, "what does it take to lead in any situation?" When I pose the question, I'm thinking of it in terms of what's necessary to attain the results you desire. In other words, it is taking responsibility for your destiny, career, relationships, life results. For many of us that proposition seems bigger than anything we want to take on. It particularly feels like too much when things aren't going well. In my roles I have had the opportunity to work with established leaders, emerging leaders and everything in between. Each individual has to define their own ideal of success. Unfortunately we too often limit success to material things. When I interview leaders, they often talk most about intangible measures rather than tangible or material measures. When I summarize my observations it seems that our inner leader seems to be awakened by three aspects of self: 1) what we believe, 2) what we know and 3) what we do. Our ability to understand what matters most to us, assess what we know in comparison to what's necessary and then act in intentional and deliberate ways set the course for our inner leader.

WHAT YOU BELIEVE.

Sharpening your inner leader requires having a clear sense of what you believe. It's important that you define what your beliefs mean to you. Here's a list of beliefs that you might resonate with: *I can*

do anything I set my mind to, I am worthy and worthwhile, I control my destiny, I have what it takes, humans are complex and multi-faceted, failure is never final, there is something for me to learn in any situation, I'm smart enough. There is a converse to each of these statements. Focus on the set of beliefs that support and empower you.

These are steps I've found to be helpful in sharpening your inner leader in the area of what you believe:

Inventory the beliefs that guide you by writing them down

Gather or join with others who believe similarly

Identify indicators or recognizable signs when you've strayed from what you want to believe

When beliefs are strong enough they meld into what you know. You go from believing something is possible to knowing it is possible.

WHAT YOU KNOW.

What you know has relevance only in the face of your purpose, goals and/or vision. If I know I want to master anything in my life, I must first know what it is that I'm focused on. I then must assess my level of knowledge in comparison to what is required to be good in a particular area. Assessing the gap between what you know and what you need to know is important, but what I find to

be most significant for those who tap their inner leader is they lead with their strengths. Meaning they become good at leveraging what they already know to move toward what they want.

These are steps I've found to be a part of sharpening your inner leader based on what you know:

Start with a plan and a sense of direction – what do you want or want to accomplish?

Do a realistic, honest assessment of what you know in relationship to your goal(s)

Set a plan of action to close the gap between what you know and what you need to know

What you know tends to fall into three categories – technical, social and political. Your technical knowledge describes the information and understanding you need to perform a task. Your social knowledge describes what you need to effectively manage your interactions and relations with others. And, political knowledge is what you need to have influence and make an impact in the world.

These three areas provide the knowledge to execute and implement. They feed what you do by giving you the foundation and confidence to move from knowing to doing.



Deborah Williams
Leadership Edge Management
Consultants

WHAT YOU DO.

None of it matters until you're willing to take action. Taking the first step and being in action are empowering. There is power in the first step.

Set your plan and work it

Stay focused on what's most important to accomplish your goals

Learn from mistakes and adjust to stay on track

Celebrate small and large successes

Your results are measured by what you do. The leader in you emerges because of your beliefs, knowledge and actions.

2009 MGB Second Chance Award Recipients



Margaret G. Baker
RN, BSN
MGB Second Chance
Award Honoree

Bachelor of Science in
Nursing Degree Program
Governor State University
1991

Education is a key value of My Sister's Keeper Foundation for Women, Inc. Therefore, the scholarship named for our founder's mother Margaret G. Baker, assists women who desire to enhance themselves by furthering and completing their secondary, graduate and post-graduate education. Our goal is to provide academic scholarships that will be awarded to past, present and current participants in the MSK programming. Scholarship funds are provided to support the course work for bachelor's degree, master's degree, post-graduate or specialized training in technical/vocational or professional fields.

We are proud to honor the 2009 MGB Second Chance Award Recipients.



Sherida Holmes
2009 MGB Second Chance
Award Recipient
Administrative Professional
Program at Emory University
Atlanta, Georgia



Alice-Marie Hutchison
2009 MGB Second Chance
Award Recipient
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
degree program in Human
Services at Capella University
Atlanta, Georgia

Congratulations to the 2008-2009 Leadership & Life Coaching Focus Group!

MSK celebrates the dedication, hard work and accomplishments of eight dynamic women who completed the Leadership and Life Coaching Program this spring.



Errin Baugh



Tracy Carson



Crystal Culver



Alice-Marie Hutchison



Nicole Johnson



NaSheka Powell



Wanda Reese



April Thomas

Coping with Unemployment

Coping with unemployment means breaking away from the past and facing your future. It means dealing with the emotional, financial, and professional challenges unemployment can bring. Although this process can be painful, facing unemployment with a plan will help make coping with it easier.

Losing your job is an emotional experience--whether you are laid off or fired, whether you quit or retire. Your feelings of self-worth are tied more closely to your job than you realize. Although you're certainly entitled to relax awhile after your job ends, it's easy to let a few days of leisure turn into a few months of inactivity. Be careful not to use your need to relax as an excuse. The more time that passes, the more likely you'll feel anxious and depressed about your future. Here are three tips on what you can do to keep yourself moving:

- Pretend that you're still working. You've probably heard the adage that finding a job is a job. So why not pretend you're still working? Get out of bed at the same time, make yourself a cup of coffee, and get going. Keep moving, and you'll accomplish your goal of finding a new job with a lot less anxiety.
- Set daily and weekly goals.
- Get a calendar and write down what you want to accomplish each day for one week. Be specific. Write "call the human resource departments at five publishing companies." Then, write down your weekly goal.

Setting goals will help you feel in control of your fate and will ultimately help you get a job.

Reward yourself. Looking for a job is tough, so promise yourself that if you accomplish everything on your list by

three o'clock, you can go to the matinee of the movie you've been wanting to see.

When you lose your job, you may be able to rely on unemployment compensation to replace some of your lost income. And, if you don't have much money saved or are worried about how to survive financially, you should come up with a financial plan for unemployment. You should plan a financial strategy that will keep you afloat for six months. Hopefully, you won't be unemployed that long but if you are, you'll be prepared.

Make a list of ways you can save money and cut expenses. Prepare a budget that shows the least amount of money you can live on during your period of unemployment.

Find out what unemployment compensation you may receive if you are being let go. Find out if you will receive severance pay and what unemployment benefits you may receive. If you're laid off or fired, you may be eligible for unemployment compensation from your state. Your employer can give you the details. You should also find out when you will receive your final paycheck and if you are eligible for compensation for vacation or sick days you accumulated but never took.

Example(s): When Alice was laid off from her job as executive housekeeper, her employer gave her a final paycheck consisting of her last two weeks of salary and ten days' worth of pay for the vacation time she had accumulated but never took. She also received severance pay equal to one month's salary. In addition, her employer gave her the address and phone number of the nearest unemployment office, as well as information on how to apply for unemployment benefits in

her state.

If you work for a company with more than 20 employees, your employer must notify you and your spouse that you have the right to continue your group health insurance coverage after your employment has been terminated. Under COBRA, you can continue your benefits up to 18 months, and your spouse and dependent children may be covered up to 36 months. If you work for a company that has fewer than 20 employees, you'll have to check your state's laws to see if you can continue coverage. Some states have passed legislation that gives employees of small employers the right to continue their health care coverage for a certain period of time.

Tip: The Stimulus Plan provides that, involuntary terminations that occur on or after September 1, 2008 and before January 1, 2010, assistance-eligible individuals will only need to pay 35% of COBRA premiums for a period of up to 9 months. The remaining 65% of COBRA premiums will be subsidized. However, this premium subsidy may need to be repaid in some cases.

Determine how you will handle your retirement account or pension plan funds. If you will receive a lump-sum pension plan or savings plan distribution, decide where you want that money to go.

Find out whether your employer-sponsored group disability or life insurance policy is convertible or portable. When you lose your job, you may also lose your disability or life insurance coverage. Although disability insurance is rarely portable or convertible, your group life insurance policy may be.



Frank Arnold, Sr.
ICI Financial Services

Ask how the company handles inquiries about your employment. Many companies today will give only limited information about your employment.

Line up references. You should line people who are willing to give you a good professional reference. But, before you list any references, check with them.

It may take you a lot longer to find a job than you think. You will have to update your resume, research job openings, and interview more than once with a potential employer. You should expect the job hunt to last at least six weeks and be prepared for it to last at least six months.



Join our MSK Community

Leadership and Life Coaching Focus Group

If you are interested in maximizing your potential by understanding your unique life purpose, setting and attaining your life goals and developing authentic relationships with women who will forever impact your life, we invite you to join our 2009-2010 Leadership & Life Coaching Program.

Single Mother's Assistance Program

Through collaborative efforts with other organizations, we aim to address the growing childcare, educational and extracurricular needs of the children of single mothers. SMAP is also designed to impact the educational, financial and personal growth and development of single mothers through educational seminars and a network of support for women. By assisting single mothers, we hope to serve as a bridge to better and provide a larger network of resources and support. The program launch is planned for September of 2009. SMAP will be offered twice per year, in the fall and spring.

Applications for both programs are available on-line at: www.mskfoundation.org
For more information e-mail us at info@mskfoundation.org or call 404-534-9958.

Board of Directors



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Sonya Hunte, MSW



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