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Every year, hundreds of thousands of kids line up for Hershey's Track and Field Games

This year, a kid you know could join them

Hershey’s Youth Program is proud to announce the running of our 29th Annual Track and Field Games. Justin Gatlin knows how rewarding they can be. After all, he competed in them back in 1994.

At Hershey’s Track and Field Games, kids are encouraged to do their best, no matter what their skill level. Kids ages 9-14 participate in events such as running, jumping and throwing. The Games are held in communities throughout the United States and Canada in partnership with the National Recreation and Park Association, Athletics Canada, and USA Track & Field.

To enter a kid you know or to find out more about Hershey’s Track and Field Games, go to www.hersheystrackandfield.com or call your local recreation and park department.

Business

(Continued from Page 4)

“It seems like no one cares about Black small businesses,” Robinson said, his gentle voice absent of any hint of resentment. “They say they do, but they really don’t,” he added while swerving to avoid part of a house which had collapsed into the street.

In the half year since Hurricane Katrina came ashore and wreaked havoc with the lives and livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of the city’s residents, the 9th ward isn’t the only thing that hasn’t recovered; thousands of Black small businesses are still reeling from the storm, and the help which was so eagerly promised from the government officials hoping to insulate themselves from blame for a late and lackluster response has yet to arrive, leaving men and women who were once the core of the community to largely fend for themselves.

**Loans on Top of Loans**

Twenty-eight years ago Robinson started his security business while working as a guard at the Superdome, and eventually grew it into a four million dollar a year company which provided security for events like the Superbowl and the PGA Open. When the storm hit, the New Orleans native left town, something he hadn’t done in many years. While in Houston with his family he saw the damage on television and felt helpless.

During the three weeks he spent there before he was able to return, the anxiety only increased. “Not knowing if we had a home or even had a business was the worst thing in my life,” he said.

When he returned, most of his employees had evacuated just like he did, but had not been able to return. Even if they had wanted to, most of their houses had been totally destroyed in the flooding. Robinson’s first home, in which his daughter, who got married a week before the storm hit, resided, now was ruined, along with all her wedding presents.

For the next two months he and his employees had evacuated just like he did, but had not been able to return. Even if they had wanted to, most of their houses had been totally destroyed in the flooding. Robinson’s first home, in which his daughter, who got married a week before the storm hit, resided, now was ruined, along with all her wedding presents.

“For the next two months he neither his partner took a salary as they struggled to stay afloat. Their offices had survived the storm, but not the subsequent looting which claimed their vehicles, firearms and other equipment. Without electricity or phone service they were forced to rent another office at additional cost they could not afford to incur. Forced to use his savings to meet payroll, Robinson could have used the government assistance which was promised in the weeks after the storm, but none could be found. "They say all this money is coming but how do we access it?" he asked. Most of the assistance that is accessible has come in the form of loans, but for businesses already saddled with debt this is not an attractive option. "Everyone wants to offer us loans, but we’re all loaned out. We’ve got loans on top of loans," he added.

**Trying to Run a Business Out of a Truck on a Cell Phone**

Before Katrina hit, Arnold Baker was the perfect example of a successful Black small business owner in New Orleans. A self-described military brat, he fell in love with the city when he visited in college for a football game. When an injury left him unable to continue playing, he became interested in business, eventually working his way up the ladder of one of the nation’s largest mall development companies. When he got involved with redeveloping one of the nation’s toughest malls, he caught the attention of the city government and became an assistant to the mayor for policy, planning and development, helping to oversee public/private development deals. While in city government he led a trade mission to South Africa where that country was building large cement factories with foreign investment to help facilitate the rebuilding of the country. With high barriers to entry, the concrete industry is nearly all-white-owned, but in 2003 Baker invested in a startup Ready Mix Concrete, buying cheap land and securing private investment.

“Having worked for the city in an executive capacity, implementing hurricane programming, I could not grasp the results of our federal, state and city decision makers,” he said, though he noted he did not have access to the information on which they based their choices. While he was able to find a way back into the city, he found that flood waters prevented him not only from reaching his plant, but even his own house for nearly two weeks. When he did finally reach his factory he found it a complete mess. His concrete trucks were totaled, his facilities were in no shape to produce anything. His employees were not even in town yet; some were even naturalized they would never return.

“Where do you start?” he asked himself in the weeks that followed. “Where do you begin? My business is in a total shambles, my house is in total shambles, this is everything I’ve invested my life in.” Like so many other New Orleansians he decided to rebuild. Fortunately he had the resources to be able to. The money he planned to use for expansion was now diverted to keep his employees on payroll, rebuild his factory and buy new trucks, leaving him several years behind where he would like to be, but still in business.

As he discussed his struggles, fellow small business owner Robert Packnett, who owns a landscaping business, walked into his office.

“Nothing,” he replied when asked what help he had received from the government in rebuilding his business since the hurricane. “I just think no one cares about Black businesses...Today I’m still staying in somebody’s house, trying to run a business out of a truck on a cell phone.”