

# OPEN FOR BUSINESS



## MWDBE NEWSLETTER

Allegheny County Department of Minority, Women and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise

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Allegheny County MWDBE Nominee

# Oditza Carrasco

**Named SBA Woman-Owned  
Business Person of the Year**



Oditza Carrasco, Founder and CEO of 1<sup>st</sup> Vanguard Mortgage Company, has been named the 2007 SBA Woman-Owned Business Person of the Year. Ms. Carrasco was selected by a panel of local judges for her outstanding work as a woman in business.

Originally from Chile in South America, Oditza founded 1<sup>st</sup> Vanguard Mortgage Company in 1999. "It was a dream come true," says Oditza. Having previously worked for Equibank and Allstate Financial, Oditza has over 15 years of experience in the banking and finance industry.

In her previous employment, Oditza became inspired as she saw people coming in with business loan needs. She thought to herself, "Wouldn't it be great if I could service the needs that banks could not fulfill." According to Oditza, banks have very strict lending guidelines. Vanguard, on the other hand, can service those individuals whose credit is less than perfect.

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**"I worked 24/7 with no time to reflect on anything but my mission to be in business."**

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For Oditza, starting a new company was not without challenges. She financed the company with her own funds, and it required working endless hours. "While working at All State Financial, I saved for four years to start my business," she says. "I worked 24/7 with no time to reflect on anything but my mission to be in business." As a Chilean, Oditza also experienced challenges in coming to America and conducting business in English. It required her learning the laws, procedures and culture of America.

In spite of its challenges, Oditza finds satisfaction in meeting the needs of people. "We change people's lives – providing them with a better financial position and opportunity," she explains.

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**"I want to be an inspiration to young women with dreams – who want to work hard, have persistence and a mission."**

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When asked how she feels about being named Woman-Owned Business Person of the Year, Oditza responds: "I want to be an inspiration to young women with dreams – who want to work hard, have persistence and a mission... I am so grateful that I live in the U.S. – the land of opportunity. While things happen, and satisfaction comes our way, we cannot forget where we've come from. We cannot forget to help, share and be good to the next person. I certainly don't want to forget my roots. I was brought up with pride and integrity. Our customers are first above us and above the company."

Oditza received her award on May 25th at the Westin during a luncheon sponsored by the Western Pennsylvania Small Business Network and the Allegheny Conference on Community Development. The Allegheny County MWDBE nominated Oditza for this prestigious award.

# TMG SUPPLIES

## “Small on the Outside, But Operating Big on the Inside”

Black-owned businesses are the fastest-growing segment of new businesses, nationally and locally. A local example is TMG Supplies, a supplier of disposable paper products, janitorial supplies and cleaning products. This Homestead-based company has completed two years of operation. In a recent interview with its owner, Michael McClung, we obtained an inside view on how Blacks are creating their own success through business ownership:

**What inspired you to start your own business?**  
After serving for two years as General Manager of MAICA Products (a minority-owned supply company), I opened TMG Supplies. When MAICA Products sold the remainder of its company, I saw a need and an opportunity to fill that void in the supply industry.

**How would you describe the successful launching of TMG Supplies?**  
It was very tiring and exhausting. Today you may have the business. Tomorrow you may not, because there is no true commitment from corporations. TMG has obtained new customers based on the efforts of its salespeople and by searching for bid opportunities on-line.

**What were the biggest risks of starting TMG Supplies?**  
The biggest risk was the possibility of failing quickly before getting a good shot at succeeding.

**Did you experience any special challenges in opening your business?**  
Obtaining lines of credit was a challenge. I overcame that challenge through promissory notes. For example, I met a gentleman in Cleveland and promised him I would pay him back if he gave me an opportunity. I continue to have great relationships with the people who have helped me. The key is to ask for the opportunities.

**How would you describe your marketing and sales strategy?**  
We are the first wholesale club to offer home delivery. This is ideal for people with busy schedules who do not want to leave their home or office to make purchases. We are focused on pricing, and our business is tailored around the customer's needs. For example, we offer tailored delivery schedules. If a customer needs a delivery at 6:30 AM, we say, "No problem."

**You have said that TMG Supplies is “small on the outside, but it operates big on the inside.” In what ways do you operate “big”?**  
We do large volume. In year two, TMG supplies did over \$200,000 in sales, but if you drove past our building, you would not think that we are doing that much volume. TMG prides itself on not having its inventory sitting on the floor. Whatever we receive in products is going right out of the door in sales.

**What made you choose self-employment as opposed to working for another company?**  
I did it because of the challenge and the ability to put my years of experience to use for myself.

**Is it better to be self-employed?**  
Some days are better than others. When you turn the lights out at the end of the day, it's no problem if you are working for someone else. When you own the place, your responsibilities do not end at the close of the business day.



### What would you say are the steps necessary for a black-owned company to succeed in Allegheny County?

1. Make sure you have working capital.
2. Make sure you hire dependable employees.
3. Get involved in organizations that support minority businesses, such as the Pittsburgh Regional Minority Purchasing Council and Ruth Byrd-Smith's office, Allegheny County MWDBE.
4. Foster true relationships. Be personable. People feel more comfortable doing business with a friend.
5. Be flexible. A lot of people in business want the consumer to work around the company's operating procedures. You need to go back to the old way of thinking. "The customer is always right."

### TMG Facts

Products:	Janitorial, Food Service, and Related Paper
Special Services:	Competitive Prices & Timely Delivery
Unique Offers:	Over 3,000 Products Available On-line
Main Philosophy:	"We count on others to count on us." "We're small on the outside, but we operate big on the inside."

### Black Business Facts:

Nationally, the number of black-owned businesses grew 45 percent between 1997 and 2002, with revenue growth of 25 percent. The 1.2 million black-owned businesses in the United States employ more than 756,000 people and generate nearly \$89 billion in business revenues.

Locally, the number of black-owned businesses in the Pittsburgh metropolitan area equaled 4,368 firms in 2002, a growth of 38.8% from 1997 to 2002.

Sources: U.S. Small Business Administration Office of Advocacy, U.S. Census Bureau, the Corporation for Enterprise Development, and the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette "Black Business Owners on Rise." Elwin Green. April 18, 2006).



## A Message from the Director

As we approach the Summer of 2007, the economic picture appears bright for Western Pennsylvania business. The flurry of Downtown construction activity is evidence of a vital and stable region. Minority and women business owners must be diligent in pursuing the "American Dream" of owning a successful business enterprise. Part of having that dream come true is by aggressively looking for ways your company can compete and continuing to share your vision with those who can inspire you to the higher ground.

See you next time.

*Ruth Byrd-Smith*  
Ruth Byrd-Smith



## Temporary Meadows Racetrack and Casino Facility Scheduled to Open in June

June 2007 marks the official opening of a temporary facility at the Meadows Racetrack and Casino (Meadowlands, PA). As the first gaming facility in Western Pennsylvania, it will provide new employment and vendor opportunities.

The Meadows was purchased in July of 2006 by Cannery Casino Resorts (CCR). A temporary facility will hold 1,738 slot machines, a sit-down buffet area seating 400 individuals, a sports bar, snack shop and gift shop. The temporary casino is a smaller version of an upcoming permanent casino that will include 3,000 slot machines, 5 to 7 restaurants, and various entertainment venues. The permanent facility will open within two years.

The construction of the temporary facility provides employment and contracting opportunities, with 450 employees at the temporary structure and an expected 500 to 600 to be added in the permanent structure.

While the new gaming facility means opportunities, there are requirements for doing business with the Meadows Racetrack and Casino. According to Douglas Kaminski, Vice President of Internal Audit/Compliance for the Meadows Racetrack and Casino, the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board is very strict when it comes to hiring and contracting. "They require personal and financial background checks for employees and vendors; there is a 100-page application for key employees and

a 20-page application for non-gaming employees. The Pennsylvania Gaming and Control Board uses this process because they are looking for reliable candidates. They also want to protect their employees and the casino's assets," says Kaminski.

Through the work of the Meadows Racetrack and Casino Diversity Committee, a diversity plan has been created and implemented to meet the needs of employees, vendors and patrons; its owner, Cannery Casino Resorts, has a long and successful track record of hiring a diverse workforce.

Peter Speaks, Deputy Secretary and Special Advisor to the Governor for Minority and Women Business Development, commented that "The new Meadows Racetrack and Casino presents a tremendous opportunity for participation from minority and women-owned businesses. It also provides for job creation and a real economic boost to the area." According to Mr. Speaks, the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board will monitor participation to ensure that casinos are meeting the goals outlined in their diversity plans.

For more information about the Meadows Racetrack and Casino, visit [www.meadowsgaming.com](http://www.meadowsgaming.com).

## County of Allegheny Department of Administrative Services Division of Purchasing Supplies Commodity Expiration Report



If you are interested in contracting with Allegheny County, below is a list of expiring contracts for the next 90 days. Please contact the Purchasing Department directly regarding these contracts, 412-350-4495.

Expiration Date	Company	Contract Title	Spec Number	Number	Department	Amount	Buyer
7/31/07	Ward Building	Guide Rail Installation and Emergency Repairs	45493	5635	Public Works	\$108,451.57	Laura May
7/31/07	Rodan Inc.	Personal Computer and Printer Maintenance	64366	5788	Adm. Services, DCS	\$115,272.54	Frank Alessio
7/31/07	ABCO Fire Protection Co.	Fire Extinguishers	63375	5799	Various	\$ 2,291.07	TBD
7/31/07	Sargent Electric Company	Electrical Preventive Maintenance Program/Kane	44197	4956	Kane Hospital	\$ 1,239.62	Frank Alessio
7/31/07	BD Biosciences	Re-agent Rental Contract for Flow Cytometer II	52569	5656	Labs	\$ 16,406.95	Glenn Loper
8/30/07	The Baker Company, Inc.	3-1/2 Foot Class III Glovebox II	46655	5810	Kane Hospital	\$ -	Glenn Loper
8/30/07	Sterling Paper Co.	Paper	46653	5811	Various	\$ 12,770.00	Sara Kurpakus
	XPEDX	Paper	46654	5811	Various	\$ 9,100.60	Sara Kurpakus
8/30/07	All American Poly	Liners	46663	5812	Various	\$ 1,823.52	TBD
	Fordian Pkg Ltd	Liners	46664	5812	Various	\$ 2,833.62	TBD
8/31/07	Dukate's Lasting Impressions	Promotional Items	46272	5519	Various	\$ 14,085.96	Cindy Spence
	Authentic Promotions.com	Promotional Items	46275	5519	Various	\$ 1,148.00	Cindy Spence
	Scott Advertising	Promotional Items	46274	5519	Various	\$248,926.10	Cindy Spence
	Imagraphics Corporation	Promotional Items	46273	5519	Various	\$ -	Cindy Spence
8/31/07	Service Electrical Supply Co.	Electrical Breakers, Relays & Panels	46452	5660	Various	\$ 15,874.00	Frank Alessio
	Wesco Distribution	Electrical Breakers, Relays & Panels	46453	5660	Various	\$ -	Frank Alessio

## DiverseCITY Pittsburgh Festival Brings Entertainment, Education and Excitement to PNC Firstside Park

The First Annual Greater Pittsburgh DiverseCity Festival, a four-day celebration of ethnic culture, will be held August 16th through 19th at the new PNC Firstside Park, located in downtown Pittsburgh. The festival is designed to celebrate the various cultures and raise the region's awareness of Pittsburgh's African-American, Asian and Latino communities. The festival will incorporate the streets surrounding PNC Firstside Park.

DiverseCITY Pittsburgh is the leadership organization for this event. Mr. Victor H. Diaz, Second Vice Chair of DiverseCITY Pittsburgh, sees the festival as a way to highlight the cultural diversity of this area. "Pittsburgh was a cultural melting pot for immigrants who came here," says Diaz, "and the diverse population gives flavor to the city."

DiverseCITY Pittsburgh welcomes individuals and organizations who are interested in vendor, sponsor and volunteer opportunities.

For more information, call 412-628-8394 or visit [diversecitypittsburgh.org](http://diversecitypittsburgh.org).



Mr. Victor H. Diaz, Second Vice Chair of DiverseCITY Pittsburgh

### The DiverseCITY Festival will feature a variety of events and activities, including:

- Workshops and network symposium events on topics such as Diversity in the

Workplace and Human Resources, Minority Outreach, Health Disparity, and Healthy Living

- International and regional symposium for small to mid-size businesses
- Regional entertainers, plus a live national entertainer
- Cuisine from around the world
- An evening gala at the Westin Convention Center Hotel
- A business expo and shopping areas
- A youth area with educational and fun outside activities

## Minority Businesses Find Opportunities at Annual Trade Fair

With the new development happening throughout Pittsburgh, how can minority businesses take part in the anticipated boom? This was the question addressed at the Pittsburgh Regional Minority Purchasing Council's 31st Annual Business Opportunity Fair. The fair was held on May 10 and 11, 2007, at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center.

This year's fair included a *Hard Hat Forum* and a *Negotiation Forum*. "Both forums received rave reviews, and attendees identified them as the best thing that has ever been done," according to Alexander "Nick" Nichols, Executive Director of the Pittsburgh Regional Minority Purchasing Council.

The Annual Business Opportunity Fair is western Pennsylvania's largest minority business development trade show. Approximately 700 people and 90 corporate exhibitors attended this year's fair.

### Trade Fair Highlights...

- Theme: "The New Face of Pittsburgh: Piecing Together the Future"
- Keynote Speaker: NBA basketball player Walter Bond
- Chuck Sanders, owner of Urban Settlement, addressed the topic of "Bonding", which is an ongoing problem for minority businesses.
- The *Hard Hat Forum* allowed contractors to share information about upcoming projects.
- The *Negotiation Forum* included companies such as Turner Construction, Massaro, P.J. Dick Corporation, Macy's Dept. Store, UPMC, Sports & Exhibition Authority, Oxford Development and Highmark Standard Property.

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