



Wheels of Success -

A Service that Will Get You Moving

Story by Krystal Knowles krystalknowles@gmail.com

Susan Jacobs founded Wheels of Success in June 2003 to help families obtain reliable transportation in order to sustain a job or get a job. She saw a significant need for dependable transportation in the Hillsborough, Pinellas and Pasco counties because current local transportation does not keep up with the demands of most working individuals.

Jacobs used to run a staffing agency and noticed potential employees wanted to work but did not have reliable transportation to uphold the job. She said that most employees had transportation issues and public transportation did not meet their demands because some jobs were at nights and holidays. "The bus system

doesn't run all night or holidays and some jobs require them to work abnormal hours," said Jacobs.

After witnessing first hand the struggles the employees would have to undergo on a daily basis she decided to start Wheels of Success. Jacobs spent one year doing research and learning how to run a non-profit organization to make sure her organization would be successful. Wheel for Success provides several services such as programs on car repairs and maintenance, vehicle replacement, licensing services, down payments, car-care classes, etc.

In order to receive aide, clients must be referred by social service agencies, churches, board members or employers. Applicants must have a full time job or a written job offer from the employer. The income level must be above poverty level and they must not be receiving government assistance other than unemployed compensation, Medicaid and food stamps. Above all, clients must agree to "pay it forward".

The "pay it forward" philosophy was developed a few years ago by Jacobs due to a life changing experience that would make her want to help others. Jacobs left a domestic violence situation and her car got repossessed due to the inability to make the car payments. Jacobs was left without transportation until a complete stranger who owned a used car dealership decided to lend her a car at no cost. "I know how it feels to not have a car, and thanks to a complete stranger I got some help," said

Jacobs. She will be forever thankful to the gentleman who gave a complete stranger a helping hand. "Maybe he just wanted to 'pay it forward'," Jacobs said.

According to Jacobs there are several reasons a family might be left without transportation or the means to maintain the vehicle. The spectrum of catastrophic incidents range from abusive relationships, death of a spouse, loss of income to accidents. Jacobs feels that through her personal experience, she is able to relate to the people she wants to help. "I'm doing something I'm really passionate about, I'm fortunate I love what I do" said Jacobs.

Jacobs said the main reason Wheels of Success does not provide free cars is because she wants the clients to value the car and become a responsible vehicle owner. The clients have to agree to a small monthly payment they can afford and once they are done 'paying it forward' they are able to continue saving for the future. "Our goal is to help them and teach them all the important aspects of vehicle ownership," Jacobs said.

Wheels of Success is hoping to help 55 families at their annual Labor Day event on September 6, 2010 at 9 a.m. there are several ways the public can help make this event a success through car donations, monetary donations, volunteering, sponsorship and providing items on their wish list. For more information please go to <http://www.wheelsofsuccess.org> or call (813) 490-9443

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Old Social Club with New Name

Story by Krystal Knowles krystalknowles@gmail.com

45 years ago a social club for mature singles was established to provide a safe and fun place to meet new people. In 1965 "Bachelors and Belles" had its first dance and became a hang-out for singles 40 and older. For the past 45 years, the club has sponsored a dance every Friday night.

The social club is a not-for-profit organization and the club donates to various charities in the Tampa Bay area. "Bachelors and Belles" changed its name to Tampa Bay Dancing to open dances and various social activities to include everyone. Although membership and membership perks are only available for singles, active alumni of the club still partake in the social activities.

Letha Edwards, Vice President for the past two years of Tampa Bay Dancing, said there are approximately 200 members. Edwards said she's been involved with the club for about 22 years and seen the single social club grow consistently. She joined the club in 1988 to meet quality people after the death of her husband. According to Edwards, she learned about the social group while taking a bereavement class.

"I wanted to meet new people without having to go to a bar or club because I don't drink or smoke," said Edwards. Edwards met Jim Usherwood about 22 years ago when she volunteered at the Hospice.

Edwards said that three and a half years ago, she told Usherwood about Tampa Bay Dancing and convinced him to attend a Friday dance. Edwards and Usherwood will always remember that night because it was their first date.

"Bachelors and Belles gave me a whole new outlook on life, I look forward to Friday nights," Edwards said.

Four and a half years ago, Paula James, 62, saw a newspaper ad for the 40+ social club. James wanted to meet new people her own age. Although she was hesitant to attend the Friday dance, James went anyway.

"My mother who is 80 years-old met someone at Tampa Bay Dancing and they are still together," said James.

James met her future husband at Tampa Bay Dancing about three years ago. She said that JJ Handwerk was a very nice

and persistent man. James said what attracted her to Handwerk was his love for dancing.

"I was married for 34 years and didn't dance because of my husband. JJ and I love to dance," said James.

Betty Cowan, 83, started going to the Friday night dances about 18 years ago because she was single and wanted to meet new people. She said Tampa Bay Dancing is the ideal place to meet quality people who share similar stories. Betty and Donald Cowan were married a few years ago after knowing each other for more than 32 years. According to Betty, they were both married with different spouses and were close friends but throughout the years their significant others passed.

"We were all friends for years, our story is very romantic," said Betty.

The Friday night dances are held at Zendah Grotto. Drinks and snacks are available. Everyone 40+, single and couples are welcome. the dance is located at 4402 W. Ohio Avenue, Tampa 33614 (near Raymond James Stadium). Doors open at 7:00 PM with music and dancing from 7:30 PM to 11:30 PM. Donation is \$9.00.

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