

Grants to fill health gaps for children

From staff reports

The UnitedHealthcare Children's Foundation is looking for families who need financial assistance to pay for their child's health care treatments, services or equipment not covered by their insurance plan.

The health insurance company is now accepting grant applications and qualifying families could get up to \$5,000. The money could pay for everything from eyeglasses and hearing aids to physical and occupational therapy.

"We recognize some families experience gaps in coverage for certain medical treatments and equipment, and we are committed to helping fill this void," said UHCCF president Matt Peterson. "Since expanding our grant program nationwide in 2007, we have provided more than 1,500 grants to families in need of financial assistance."

The foundation awarded grants to more than 450 families last year.

To be eligible for grants, children must be 16 years of age or younger. Families must meet economic guidelines, reside in the United States and have a commercial health insurance plan.

Parents and legal guardians may apply for grants online at uhccf.org.

WHAT TO DO

Today

Divorce Practice with Larry Rice and Friends — A Two-Day Seminar: 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Thursday and Friday, Harrah's Casino & Hotel, Tunica. Cyndy McCrory, 526-6701 or e-mail cmccrory@ricelaw.com.

Entrepreneurs Roundtable: Panel Discussion on Funding for Early Stage Business: noon, Emergememphis, 516 Tennessee. Representatives from banking and venture capital firms will share information that entrepreneurs need to know about financing their business. Fee: \$25 (includes lunch). For reservations, call Pearson Crutcher, 682-9920 or pearson@soememphis.com.

Seminar: "Liquidity Alternatives For Business Owners: Buying and Selling Businesses": 9 a.m.-noon, Christian Brothers University, Spain Auditorium. Advance registration is required. Fee: \$50. Sponsored by Thompson Dunavant and Southard Financial. Information: 842-2773 or register at buyingandselling.eventbrite.com.

Social Media Club tweetup: 5-7 p.m. at Circa by John Bragg, 119 S. Main, Suite 100. Interested in social media? Want to learn more about how to use online networking sites to boost your business? For details or to register, go to march2010memphis.smc.eventbrite.com or contact Alys Drake at alys@howell-marketing.com.

MY PROFESSION | REDROVER SALES AND MARKETING

Dogged pursuit



Nikki Boertman/The Commercial Appeal

Lori Turner of Red Rover Marketing says her firm's "one-on-one coaching" makes it stand out. "She's just intelligent. She makes you smarter," says client Laurita Jackson, owner of Memphis Chemical and Janitorial Supply.

For Lori Turner, success means doing 'whatever it takes' for her clients

By LESLEY YOUNG / Special to The Commercial Appeal

AT THE AGE OF 7, while most of her friends were outside playing with their dogs, Lori Turner was busy cultivating her entrepreneurial spirit.

She decided to put on a dog show, charging 75 cents per dog and a quarter per spectator.

"I had seen others in the community do it, and I thought I could put on a better show. I made fliers with markers and crayons, and got my neighborhood friends to ride their bikes on the weekend and pass out fliers," said the now-39-year-old.

Though her mother made her return the roughly \$13 she made, her pioneering predisposition was set, and last year the managing partner of RedRover Sales and Marketing saw a 69 percent growth during a down economy.

"I thought it was a really good return on my investment," said the Belton, Texas, native of her first business endeavor. "At an early age I was a marketer, and as soon as I got anywhere close to college, I knew this is what I would seek out."

Boasting such clients as The Med Foundation, national hotel chains, and a major medical research and development company, among others, Turner claims she never shuts down.

"I work weekends, nights and whatever it takes to get the job done," she said.

That includes not just marketing, public relations and communications for her clients, but also sales training.

"I believe that's what sets us apart," she said. "We do one-on-one coaching. I'll ride around with a sales rep and act like a fly on the wall and watch his sales pitch and coach him between appointments. I'll be in a hospital canteen wearing a hair net listening to them pitch their product."

That's why Laurita Jackson, owner of Memphis Chemical and Janitorial Supply Company, sought out Lori and her 4-year-old company.

LORI TURNER

Age: 39
Business: Co-founder and managing partner, RedRover Marketing and Sales
Address: 516 Tennessee, Suite 124
Phone: (901) 266-2662
Web site: redrovercompany.com

"She understands your business first. She worked with us on our sales team, figuring out our strengths and weaknesses in our particular industry and how it applied to the differentiators we needed to push," Jackson said.

Since coming on board with RedRover just over a year ago, Jackson's company was also able to increase sales during a time when competitors are not.

"A lot of that I attribute to (Turner)," Jackson said. "She's just intelligent. She makes you smarter."

Turner has the résumé to match her roster of results.

For 15 years she led marketing and communications divisions for large national corporations before she decided to go out on her own.

"I knew I would be an entrepreneur at some point in my career, but I knew I needed big corporate experience to cut my teeth," Turner

said. "I worked with some of the top ad agencies in the country, and I was able to see what I liked and where they didn't deliver."

In the fall of 2005 she and co-worker Julie Lunn, now Turner's co-founder and managing partner, met for dinner to discuss their new business prospect, and over a game of pool and using a white board the two planned what would become RedRover.

"We knew we wanted to offer a combination of services, not just marketing, but also training and coaching sales teams," Turner said.

The name didn't come so easy. "We stayed up 40 hours brainstorming a name," Turner said. "It's so critical. We really wanted to do some innovative branding."

Their mutual love of dogs won over, and now their mascot, Rover, speaks for them on their Web site, in their e-mails, and even over the phone sometimes.

"It's all positioned from Rover's point of view," Turner said. "It's been fun. Even in it's simplest form, people think they know the brand. It has served us very well."

Her penchant for paws carries over into the company's pro bono work as well, with the Humane Society of Memphis and Shelby County as its sponsored client, and most days Turner's two dogs can be found lying on their dog beds at the office under the paw print stickers that decorate the walls and doors, interior and exterior.

When she's not busy generating ROIs for her clients, Turner is out in the community leading seminars, ghost writing for the Complete Idiot's Guide to Guerrilla Marketing, serving on the Sales and Marketing Society of the Mid-South board or helping to found LaunchMemphis.

"I frankly don't see how she does what she does," said client Larry Green, COO of Martin, Tate, Morrow and Marston law firm. "And she's still able to deliver such a high level of personal attention."

"I love a challenge," she said. "I thrive on adrenaline."

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LOANS

Shelton primarily sells menswear, but has offered custom-tailored women's suits since last fall and sells men's and women's clothing at the Westin Hotel gift shop.

"We have really been listen-

ing to what women want and are confident that we can extend the Shelton Clothiers brand to give women what they are looking for Downtown," Thomas Shelton said. That includes "quality clothes for a reasonable price, full-service tailoring and personalized service."

They plan to open this spring.

City Market was approved for exterior improvements that include signs, railings and lighting in a follow-up to earlier approval of a forgivable loan for new retail. The market aims to join Easy Way, 80 N. Main, and Miss Cordelia's at Harbor Town among stores selling groceries Downtown.

—Wayne Risher: 529-2874

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BOMA

"There's a tremendous need to begin to pay those bills and close that gap. And the case we're making is real estate is the area that creates value and jobs, and locally we're already paying 70 percent of the taxes.

"Our pockets are pretty much tapped out. It's important to have those incentives ... to help this economy recover," Chamberlain said.

The good news is there

are signs the economy may have bottomed out, they said. Retail sales rose 3.5 percent last month, rented-but-unused space, called "shadow space," is starting to stabilize, and far fewer jobs are being lost than during the depths of the recession.

"Those little green shoots are starting to pop up a little bit," Peck said.

For office jobs, December was the fourth consecutive month for job growth, netting 48,000 more workers, Chamberlain said.

The financial sector posted its first net increase in

employment since July 2007, adding 4,000 jobs, according to a Jan. 27 CoStar report.

"There's some hiring going on," Chamberlain said.

In Memphis, the managers and owners of office and commercial buildings pump \$117 million a year into the local economy just to operate the buildings, Peck said.

They also employ 2,254 people to help run the buildings.

"These are pretty powerful numbers," Peck said.

—Tom Bailey Jr.: 529-2388

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GAMBLE

Argosy Casino, which opened in 1996, with a new \$335 million Hollywood Casino.

However, Mississippi officials believe the real reason Indiana moved up in the rankings had little to do with new casinos and more to do with outside factors affecting their competition, particularly a statewide smoking ban in Illinois.

Indiana's reign may not last more than a year. It faces new competition from Ohio and possibly Kentucky, but industry watchers think other states, particularly Pennsylvania, may be poised to move up in the rankings.

Nevada and New Jersey continued to hold the top spots in 2009, reporting \$9.76 billion and \$3.9 billion respectively. However, even their long-

entrenched dominance may be on shaky ground.

"What we're seeing is a changing of the guard now," said David Schwartz, director of the Center for Gaming Research in Las Vegas.

For the past 10 to 15 years, there has been the Nevada, New Jersey, Mississippi hierarchy, Schwartz said. However, as the economy has gotten worse, more states have turned to gaming to fill budget gaps. The proliferation of casinos has affected the dominance of the old guard.

"People are gambling less, but they're doing it in more places," Schwartz said. "So that's why places like Las Vegas, Atlantic City and Mississippi have really been hit hard."

Every state in the nation, except for Utah and Hawaii, has some sort of gaming — casinos, lotteries, pari-mutuel wagering or charitable gaming, says the American Gaming Association.

PEOPLE IN BUSINESS

■ **Volunteer Marka Bennett** has been selected as the winner of the "Early Childhood" category for her outstanding leadership and work through Agape Child & Family Services as a board member, chairman of Agape's annual gala, and other areas of service.

■ **Crye Leike Realtors'** Web site crye-leike.com has been evaluated by Leading Real Estate Companies of the World and received a quality certification designation.

■ **Barbara Standing** has joined Mid-South Spay & Neuter Services as development director.

Previously she was a pilot for JetBlue. **Ginger Lord** has joined as clinic manager.



Barbara Standing