

# Empowered

*A monthly online publication published by Thompson Management Consulting, LLC for small business change makers – November 2014*

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Please join Austin E. Thompson, Jr., Co-host on the Carib & Company Show's Entrepreneurship and Economic Development segment for a discussion on **"If You Don't Have a Website, Then You're Not in Business"**. We will have Mr. Marc Hamm, Founder and CEO of Procurement Websites to share with our audience the importance of having a website and using it to effectively market and promote the **BRAND** of our small businesses.

Tune in Saturday, November 8, 2014 at 4:00pm on 1420AM, or join us online at [www.WATB1420.com](http://www.WATB1420.com), and click on listen live. Thank you very much for your support, and we look forward to a progressive discussion. We welcome you to call in with questions at (404) 292-1420.

## Black Friday Cometh Early

*Austin E. Thompson, Jr.*

Just days ago, we were enjoying the final days of summer with temperatures in the mid 80's and reminiscing about all the fun we had over the past six months. With the end of summer and approaching fall season, we are quickly reminded that winter is not far behind, and the holiday season is approaching. It is that time of year when businesses are opening positions for hire, stores are stocking shelves with holiday merchandise, people are taking on a part time job to cover holiday expenses, shopping lists are getting one final look over before being finalized, and retail outlets are expanding store hours to capitalize on the increasing discretionary income of shoppers who are excited to have additional dollars to spend.

The U.S. economy has grown slowly since the economic depression, which resulted in the loss of over 7,000 jobs, closed small businesses, and diminished sales and revenue from a decline in the volume of customers who contributed to the profitability of many small businesses. Recently, as the economy grew to 3.5% at the onset of the holiday season, and with retail expectations remaining high, this Christmas season is poised to be a tremendous success for small business owners. Gas prices have been falling since the summer, and now average about \$2.50 in Georgia. This is great for consumers, who have some additional cash to spend on holiday items from the savings on fuel costs. Businesses that offer delivery services may now be able to increase personnel, and lower their price points. According to a USA Today report, AAA projects that U.S. drivers are saving about \$250 million per day in lower fuel costs, which is great for the economy, and occurs just in time for the approaching holiday season when millions of Americans are traveling to visit loved ones. Rental car companies should see an increase in revenue, as families are more inclined to drive longer distances when gas prices decrease, and especially at these lower levels. Gas prices have not been this low since December 2010. With consumer confidence up, the desire to spend more as a result of increased discretionary income is a benefit for small businesses, many of whom are still climbing out of the economic depression. As we continue to see the Consumer Price Index showing promise in consumer confidence, we can only imagine what a success these small businesses will have this holiday season when shoppers enter their establishments or access their online retail outlets prepared to spend. Retail reports show Walmart, Best Buy, Amazon, and Dell already creating a "Black November", leading the way for retailers, and taking full advantage of early demand for consumer goods. This strategy is a result of careful market study, showing consumers are ready to spend.

It is only incumbent on small businesses to study the market and consumer spending trends, and prepare for increased sales volumes this holiday season. Online retailers and those with online services have to make sure their websites are optimized to handle increased or higher than normal online activity, and have the necessary bandwidth to accommodate increased volume. Also, having the required assistance to supply those orders will be helpful. Bricks and mortars should determine what inventory is required to accommodate the projected sales expected this holiday season. It will be advantageous to be prepared, and not fall short of any items which could help meet your revenue goals. If temporary or part-time workers are required to help reach those revenue goals and satisfy increased customer demand, then consider adding temporary workers to realize those projections. Consumers are confident, and with over 12 million people returning to work since the economic recession, they are ready to return to a normal life of spending and enjoying the holiday season. Small business owners must be ready and prepared to meet these demands.

## Fashioned and Artistic Scrolls

By Kenjie Davis



[Scrollture, LLC](#) creates works of art on an innovative canvas fashioned to resemble a scroll (the Scroll Canvas). These art pieces do everything from inscribing sacred text, to sharing artistic visions; from completing a room's ambiance, to celebrating life's treasured moments. Through our graphic services and on-demand printing, customers can capture thoughts, ideas, or any significant moment and have it laid on canvas. More cost-effective than framing and more aesthetically pleasing than stretched canvas, the Scroll Canvas adds a sacred element to artwork and can transform your art not just in presentation, but also meaning.



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Scrolls carry the prestige of being sacred and ceremonial, which makes it a prime platform to capture life's treasured moments. Whether it's a marriage, child's birth, loved one's passing, rights of passage, graduation, etc., a lovely scroll print is a great way to commemorate the occasion!

***[Scrollture, LLC](#) is the brainchild of Kenjie Davis from Atlanta, GA. The idea for the "Scroll Canvas" came from a gift that he developed for a friend. As a youth, Kenjie was a talented artist and a wiz at math. He combined these two fields by pursuing studies in engineering. In 2006, Kenjie graduated with a B.S. in Applied Physics from Morehouse College and a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering from Georgia Tech. His passions and engineering pursuit have led him down a road of service, with him becoming a teacher upon graduation, and then working for a non-profit engineering organization for 7 years. He has now come full circle back to his artistic roots, looking to provide a service to artists, photographers and the artistic at heart with this great development. Please visit our website at [www.scrollture.com](http://www.scrollture.com) or communicate with us at [www.facebook.com/scrollture](https://www.facebook.com/scrollture). Email us at [scrollture@gmail.com](mailto:scrollture@gmail.com).***

## Entrepreneur Spotlight



### The LONA Gallery



**EMP: What is the background of the owners?**

**TLG:** Business partners and sisters, Sylvia Culberson and Carolyn Wright are native Atlantans. Born to parents Ros and Jurrie Mayfield, they both attended Atlanta area schools in the communities of Summerhill and Kirkwood.

Sylvia, while a proud stay at home mom, owned and managed a successful daycare business and completed her college career with degrees in Business Administration, and Accounting and Finance. Sylvia is married to Sanford Culberson, a retired AT&T Sales Executive and is the mother of two adult children, Mallory and Corey.

Carolyn studied Music and Economics at The University of Pennsylvania, where she met husband Sinclair Wright, now a former Vice President at Equifax and retired Marketing Executive of Compaq Computer Company. Carolyn concluded a successful Project Management career at AT&T in 1995 when she took over the full-time management of C&S Properties, a real estate investment and property management company she co-owns with her husband.

Sylvia and Carolyn, prior to creating The LONA Gallery, worked together in the direct sales Home Décor business, Celebrating Home. The LONA Gallery is the realization of their dream to bring outstanding local art to the community.

**EMP: How did you meet each other?**

**TLG:** Well that's easy, we're sisters. I (Carolyn) was born three years before Sylvia and was ecstatic to have a little sister since our other sister is ten years older. I used to come home and teach Sylvia everything I learned at school that day. I always say that we had the very first head-start program. We both enjoyed school and were good students. We are a family of seven siblings, 3 girls and 4 boys. The eldest, Lillian is retired from Grady hospital after over 30 years. Willie is an accomplished artist, Barry is retired from the retail industry, Terry an attorney and director of a non-profit organization and Carl, a local courier, music aficionado and DJ.

**EMP: How did you arrive at the idea to open an art gallery?**

**TLG:** LONA is actually the fulfillment of a long time dream for both of us. We always talked about having a bricks and mortar business together. We were fortunate to be exposed to the arts as children. We were always involved in music, attended concerts and visited art galleries growing up. A few years ago we started to meet a number of local artists as we worked in direct sales for home decor. We thought it would be a great idea to start a gallery that highlighted the work of talented local artists and artisans, combining our love of the arts with our desire to open a bricks and mortar business.

**TLG (Cont'd):** We both love the Historic Downtown Lawrenceville square and decided it would be the perfect place to establish our business, as we identified a couple of buildings that would work well. We were excited at the prospect and I thought we would be ready to open the business in 6 months to a year. Little did I know that Sylvia had other ideas. A few days later I get a call that she has gotten a business license, starting working on a business plan and scheduled appointments to see the buildings we were interested in. After the shock wore off, I said okay, let's do it!

**EMP: How long have you been in business, and why did you choose the downtown Lawrenceville area?**

**TLG:** We chose downtown Lawrenceville because of its history, the fact that it is a true old fashioned square with well-maintained historic buildings. We opened our doors April 16, 2010 at 186 West Crogan Street in downtown Lawrenceville, a beautiful little shop of a bit less than 600 square feet. It was indeed cozy, but well placed near successful restaurants with good foot traffic. The LONA Gallery was born and we were able to establish, grow and brand the business there. But the lack of space to expand became an issue. We needed to expand to realize all aspects of our business plan. So at the end of our lease we secured a new location just a few steps away with 2400 square feet. On November 2, 2012 we celebrated our Grand Re-Opening at 176 West Crogan Street. At both locations we have been warmly welcomed by the community, Mayor Judy Jordan Johnson, other city officials as well as members of the business community.

**EMP: What is the significance of the gallery's name?**

**TLG:** As Sylvia and I were developing our business plan, we talked a lot about a name. We had three criteria, first we wanted Lawrenceville in the name, secondly we wanted a name that is easy to remember and had a lyrical quality, in other words the name should roll off the tongue easily, and finally, that name should have some relationship to the business we are in. Again, Sylvia got busy researching words and discovered that Lona is Spanish for canvas (as in painting canvas) and also the name of a Polynesian goddess who legend says married a mortal man. We liked the sound of Lona and from there, we decided it would be an acronym and Lawrenceville Original & Novel Art was born.

**EMP: What type of art do you host in your gallery and sell?**

**TLG:** We feature a very eclectic mix of art by design. Our goal is to provide a wide range of art styles so that the first time gallery visitor has enough choice to decide what they like and the seasoned collector will always seek out their preferences.

**TLG (Cont'd):** We have paintings in oils and acrylics, photography, pottery, decorative glass, hand-turned wood items, handcrafted jewelry and more. Our art selection spans the spectrum of traditional to contemporary, contemplative to whimsical, decorative to practical. At any given time we represent over 40 artists and artisans from the amazingly talented field of local artists we have to choose from. Sylvia and I are honored to work with our artists and customers. When an artist's work is seen and appreciated, and a customer finds a creation that they connect with and want to own, it is truly the completion of a wonderful creative circle and we are always happy to be a part of that process. It is why we do what we do!

**EMP: *What art shows do you attend?***

**TLG:** Sylvia and I love visiting museums and attending art shows and do so whenever we can. Metro Atlanta is fertile ground when it comes to great places to see established and emerging artists. You can't go wrong visiting The High and seeing the best art by old masters and well known contemporary artists as well. A recent show at The High featured works by Salvador Dali, a world class modern artist. Areas like Castleberry Hill, Decatur and Midtown are meccas for art enthusiasts looking for the best in local, regional and national artists with a variety of shows and venues to fit anyone's taste. The arts are growing in cities throughout Gwinnett County in general and specifically in Lawrenceville. The LONA Gallery is proud to be a part of the growth.

**EMP: *Is the gallery a mixed used facility?***

**TLG:** Our original business plan included having a space for classes and business/networking meetings. We started to get inquiries to use the gallery for social events and that was the beginning of a steadily growing segment of the business, event space rental. We have hosted birthday parties, baby showers, meetings, fundraisers and our first wedding. This part of the business has, for the most part, grown organically by word of mouth and through visitors to the gallery and our website who are in need of a venue. Our Main Gallery is available for more formal and elegant affairs. The Studio Gallery suits smaller meetings and more casual events. One or both spaces are available for rental. Clients can bring their own caterer or we can refer them to vendors we have worked with. Sylvia and I enjoy helping our clients create an affair to remember!

**EMP: *What were some of the challenges you experienced as a business, and how did you overcome those challenges?***

**TLG:** All new businesses experience challenges and growing pains and The LONA Gallery is no different. We opened the gallery at the height of the recession, and for some, that seemed a bit crazy. But Sylvia and I had a strategy...rents were lower at that time so we would be able to get established at a lower overhead, we selected a location that was close to restaurants with good foot traffic and we started with a small space to also help us control costs. One of our biggest challenges back in 2010 and even today after nearly 5 years is letting people in Lawrenceville and surrounding areas know that there are good reasons to visit, eat, and shop in downtown Lawrenceville. To help overcome this we advertise the gallery online and in some print media. We try to maximize our social media presence and also engage in a lot of networking. We are members of the Gwinnett County Chamber of Commerce, the Lawrenceville Tourism and Trade Association, the Gwinnett Association of Business Entrepreneurs, WOAMTEC and the Lawrenceville Woman's Club to name a few. We are active in the community and always look for ways to be of service. In 2012 we became the major sponsor for a fall festival called Fair on the Square which draws 5K attendees; the 2015 festival will be the 7th annual event and is a great way to bring new people in to experience the downtown area.

We are working with a consulting firm to help us further grow the business and maximize all its potential. The city of Lawrenceville has been accepted into the "Main Street" program, a state administered federal program which helps the officials of America's small towns to revitalize, renovate, and maximize their downtown areas. Part of that initiative will require marketing of the 9 block Lawrenceville downtown area in order to attract visitors and customers and spur economic growth. It is an exciting time to be a part of the downtown business community and Sylvia and I are delighted to be involved at the ground floor of this new growth and development.

**EMP: *Has any famous people purchased art from your gallery?***

**TLG:** I can't say that any famous person has purchased from us, at least that we are aware of. A few months ago we did have a visit from Shaquille O'Neal who was on the square having lunch that day and was strolling around visiting the shops. He mentioned that he is an avid art collector and said that he will be coming back. Perhaps not famous, but all our customers are very special to us. We have had visitors from all over the United States and have shipped art to many places including for example California and Switzerland.



**EMP: Any additional information you wish to include for our readers?**

**TLG:** At LONA we encourage the public to meet the artists..... learn more about their inspirations....learn the stories behind the canvas and paint.....and consider purchasing an original instead of mass produced pieces at the Mall. We specialize in original art. There is no better way to set a mood at home or office than with wonderful examples of original fine art.

Whether we notice or not, art is an important part of our lives.

- Original art is a one-of-a-kind creation that can remain a beautiful treasure for a lifetime.
- Display your personal style and taste. Place your favorite art where you will see it often.
- Much of what you spend with a local artist is returned to the local economy. In addition, a vibrant arts scene makes a community more attractive to local residents, visitors and businesses.
- Buy pieces that speak to you on a personal level. No one can guarantee the future value of art. However, should you decide to start a collection, you will be glad you invested in quality.
- All artists secretly hope that their work will evoke an emotion or meaning that goes deeper than mere words and speaks directly from one soul to another. ***That connection is the joy of sharing art.***

LONA Gallery features talented artisans with an eye for quality and unique style. Many items are one of a kind and no two pieces are exactly alike.

The LONA Gallery provides art classes for children and adults in drawing, painting, mixed media/collage and more. The LONA gallery receives frequent visits from home school groups, and art appreciation students from area colleges. Each year, The LONA Gallery partners with The Aurora Theatre to introduce local artists to the theater community.

When you think about it, everything around us has elements of art and design. Art is an important part of our lives. Why is art so important? Exposure to art and music at an early age improves the amount of brain activity in children. Art increases creativity, curiosity and helps create sharper minds. Engaging in art can help build self-confidence, self-esteem, motivation, cooperation, and communication skills. It helps us understand other people's opinions and points of view. Creating art helps sharpen problem solving skills, decision-making and allows us to explore our imaginations. Art can be as important as academics in the building of character, aiding us in better expressing ourselves and communication our ideas and opinions more effectively.

To Contact The LONA Gallery please do so at any of the following information:

Our website is: [www.theLONAGallery.com](http://www.theLONAGallery.com)

Address: 176 West Crogan Street (corner of Crogan & Clayton Streets)  
Lawrenceville, GA 30046

Contact: [678.349.2223](tel:678.349.2223) (Business)  
Carolyn Wright [678.984.5707](tel:678.984.5707) (Cell)  
Sylvia Culberson [770.601.9686](tel:770.601.9686) (Cell)

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**Tuesday, November 18, 2014**

**6:30pm – 7:30pm**

**The Fairburn Branch**

**60 Valley View Drive**

**Fairburn, GA 30213**

Author and speaker, Austin E. Thompson, Jr. leads a dynamic and thought provoking discussion on developing and maintaining a winning attitude to drive success in your life, and not settling for being an average individual.

***For Information: Contact each library location listed above or call (404) 587-3949***

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# Chamber Events



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### For additional information:

*Santiago Marquez, VP & CFO*

Email: [smarquez@ghcc.org](mailto:smarquez@ghcc.org)

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November 13, 2014  
8:00am – 4:00pm  
The Gwinnett Center

# Business Marketplace

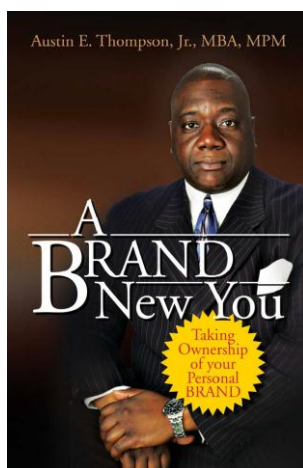
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The Lona Gallery

176 W. Crogan Street, Lawrenceville, GA 30046

November Meeting Dates: 11/10/14 – 6:30pm to 8:00pm

For Information: Carmelita Marcia (404) 509-0690