

PROPEL Mentor/Protégé Profile

Protégé: Rena Amerson, President, Anchor Contracting LLC

Mentor: Doug Downey, Operations Vice President, Messer Construction Company



Rena Amerson describes Anchor Contracting as a motivated and positive-minded young company with an entrepreneurial spirit. Anchor provides general contracting, construction consulting, audio/visual

installation services, and translation services to its clients. As president she is excited to learn from like-minded companies like Messer Construction, that know how to navigate the ins and outs of working on government projects.

"I believe the rewards of being a protégé in this PROPEL program will be abundant," said Amerson. "We are extremely fortunate to have been selected and expect our learning experiences to be vast this year!"

Anchor Contracting is always networking and seeking successful partnerships and procurement opportunities. "We know that communication with clients and prospects is imperative," Amerson said. "We have the confidence it takes to be successful in the competitive construction arena by providing quality work with competitive bids."

Anchor Contracting hopes to complete its application for 8(a) minority certification with the Small Business Administration this year, while participating in the mentor program. Amerson feels working with Messer Construction Operations Vice President Doug Downey will help her learn the ins and outs of

working with government agencies.

"I'm looking forward to mentoring Rena because I know I'll be able to help her with her professional and business growth," said

Downey. "A structured mentorship program provides a process where people can learn from those who've already 'been there and done that.' It also provides protégés with a partner that can be used to bounce ideas off of before committing resources and assets to something new."

For more information about PROPEL's Mentor/Protégé program, call the program director Doug Minter at (865) 246-2662 or email him at dminter@knoxvillechamber.com.



Chamber Cultivating International Business Partnerships

Doug Lawyer Helping Match Innovation Valley, Japanese Companies

Chamber Vice President of Economic Development Doug Lawyer recently traveled to Japan's industrial port city of Kitakyushu to meet with the city's business and government leaders. Lawyer visited with economic development and city representatives to outline the partnership potential between Knoxville-area companies and Japanese businesses.

"The goal of my trip was to identify how Knoxville-based companies can assist Japanese companies, and vice versa," Lawyer said. "I serve as a catalyst to coordinate conversations between identified companies. Ultimately we want Kitakyushu companies to establish an Innovation Valley presence."

Lawyer's trip was sponsored by the Japan External Trade Organization. Representatives from Kirakyushu have been to Knoxville twice in the past year. Lawyer visited with Kitakyushu science and research park executives, solar research and development companies, a number



L-R: Chief of Kitakyushu Industry Bureau, Kenichi Katayama; Mayor of Kitakyushu, Kenji Kitahashi; Doug Lawyer; Mark Dieker, American Consulate Office in Fukuoka

of manufacturing corporations, and members of the city's Eco-Town Center designed to promote a recycling-orientated society. He also traveled to Osaka for a meeting with Exedy Corporation executives. Exedy America Corporation's East Knox County manufacturing plant is located in Eastbridge Business Park.

In addition to visiting with Japanese corporations and manufacturers, Lawyer also presented during a seminar designed to help Japanese companies realize the value of investing in Tennessee. The presentation, entitled "Tennessee: The Green Energy State" featured information about Innovation Valley assets including the Tennessee Valley Authority, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, The University of Tennessee and its Cherokee Farm innovation campus, and area business parks.

"The seminar afforded me a platform to share this region's advantageous business resources with many Japanese companies that didn't know much about this area," Lawyer said.