

WINDMILL NURSERY

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# inGOODcompany

Dedicated to the affiliate membership of the LCIA.



LOUISIANA CONSTRUCTION AND INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

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# Jennifer Kutash

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

Welcome to In Good Company, the publication created specifically for LC&I Fund members. Inside our premiere issue, we are pleased to include features on three local small businesses that are doing some pretty big things. Don't miss our interviews with Todd Ellefson of Windmill Nursery in Franklinton, Sherman Bunch of One Bunch Hook Up, llc serving the Greater New Orleans area and June Marshall the *presidente* of Presidente Builders in the 9th Ward.

If you'd like to have your company featured in an upcoming issue, please share the story of how your small business is building something big in Louisiana by emailing me at [jennifer@lciassociation.com](mailto:jennifer@lciassociation.com). All submissions will be carefully considered for inclusion.

Please see the announcement on the back cover and enter our \$500 Visa gift card drawing. Just email me at [jennifer@lciassociation.com](mailto:jennifer@lciassociation.com) with your up-to-date company information. Also, be sure to check the LCIA website ([www.lciassociation.com](http://www.lciassociation.com)) for an updated list of free workshops offered to all LC&I Fund members, and if you have any ideas for upcoming workshops, please don't hesitate to let me know. Enjoy the issue!



# Barry White, White and Roberts Insurance Associates

West Monroe › Louisiana

“Service is key—I always go visit my accounts. Smaller trucking companies are a lot more loyal when you treat them right. Nobody gives them better service than we do.”

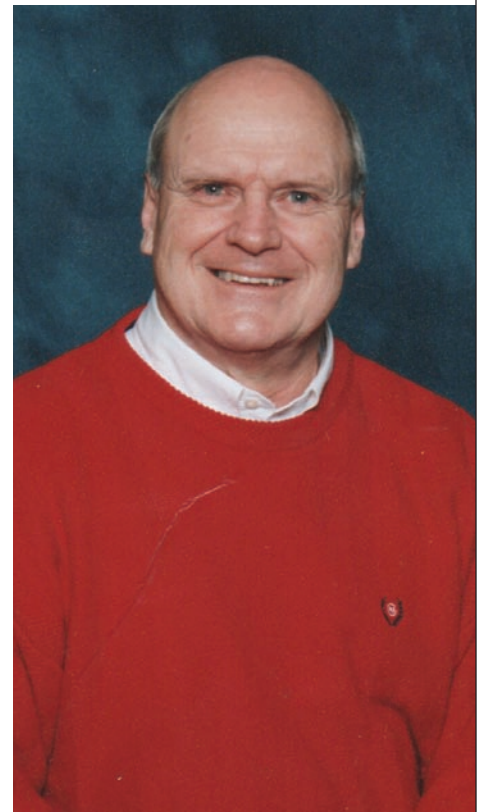
**WORKING AT THE LOCAL** Olinkraft paper mill while attending college at Northeast in West Monroe, a much younger Barry White believed that one day he would be a football coach. Upon graduation in '69 with his Education degree in hand, the first lesson Barry learned was that he would earn better money and greater benefits if he continued to work at the mill. As a young man with dreams of a home and family of his own, the decision to stay in the plywood and particleboard business was easy to make. Sometimes life doesn't go according to your plan. Today, at age 65, Barry looks back on those days fondly, “Nobody comes out of school thinking they will go into insurance sales, I was no different.”

Although he never did become a high school coach, Barry did receive the honor of becoming one of the first high school referees ever to work the Louisiana State High School Football Championship games held in the Superdome—an accomplishment he earned twice before retiring after 31 years because of bad knees. “I saw Kevin Faulk (currently a running back with the New England Patriots) play his last high school game in the playoffs at West Monroe High School. He played at Carencro and they were defending 5A state champs. West Monroe beat them 35-34 that night and went on to win state. Faulk was one of the best high school players I had ever seen. Jerry Stovall was the best.”

After getting his start working with State Farm in Shreveport, Barry moved back to his hometown of West Monroe and formed Scott White Insurance. It wasn't long before Barry wanted to start his own agency. His office manager Barbara Roberts thought it was a good idea. So good in fact, she decided to join Barry. In 1986, they opened their new firm, White and Roberts Insurance Associates. “At that time, nobody in North Louisiana understood the intricacies of writing commercial transportation policies. We're strictly a transportation agency.”

The larger insurance agencies that handle the huge trucking companies have a tough time doing all the things the smaller customers really appreciate. All too often these personal touches conflict with company policy. By design, White and Roberts has three full-time licensed agents and two part-time. Barry explains, “We are all family. Barbara Roberts, my partner, and her son, James Roberts—we are the three full-time employees. My wife, Denita White, and my cousin Dickie Jackson, come in as the need dictates.” Providing the personal service its customers expect, today White and Roberts specializes in commercial transportation insurance for companies with one to ten trucks.

Remaining committed to providing exceptional service to smaller trucking lines, White and Roberts also caters to owner/operators. Barry explains, “Service is key—I always go visit my accounts. Smaller trucking companies are a lot more loyal when you treat them right. Nobody gives them better service than we do.”



*Barry White is the proud father of three daughters, two stepdaughters, and a stepson. He spends most of his free time traveling to visit nine grandkids spread across four states.*





FAMILY  
*GROWN*



“The Windmill Nursery’s greatest strength is its sustainability. We’re a family-owned business that’s been here since we purchased the nursery early in 2003. I grew up in a family of nurserymen. We’re not going anywhere. We’ve been at this for far too long—five generations of nurserymen.”

- *Todd Ellefson, Windmill Nursery GM*

THE YEAR WAS 1882, Todd Ellefson’s great, great grandfather had just opened the Wight family’s first nursery in Cairo, Georgia. Little did anyone realize that five generations later, the family would continue in what has become a longstanding tradition of commercial cultivation. Today, with Todd at the helm as general manager, Windmill Nursery has blossomed into a regionally recognized nursery serving wholesale buyers across the entire Southeastern U.S.

Situated on just over 400 pristine acres in Franklinton, Louisiana; Windmill offers a wide assortment of shrubs, perennials, trees and ground covers. With 180 greenhouses and shade houses in cultivation, Todd’s goal is to make the nursery the primary plant supplier of every wholesaler they service, “Wholesale buyers can rest assured that no matter what they need, we either have it, or we can have it quickly by accessing our extensive grower network. Hackney Nursery is Windmill’s sister nursery located in Tallahassee, FL. George Hackney is my cousin. Like I said, it’s a family business.”

Serving a host of garden centers, landscape distribution centers and landscape contractors, what sets Windmill apart from other growers is both the diversity of their branded lines as well as the great variation in age/size of the stock offered. On their branded lines, Todd says, “We’re really known for Encore Azaleas and Knockout Roses. Right now, the roses account for the largest total of Windmill’s sales—a beautiful, very healthy line for us.”

For many premium wholesalers looking for finest stock and superior service, there’s simply no better value than Windmill Nursery. “Some of the top-quality, local nurseries we regularly



supply are Banting’s Nursery in New Orleans, and we also provide a lot of stock to Clegg’s in Baton Rouge,” Todd added.

President, George Hackney and John Wight Jr. (Todd’s grandfather) round out the management team with over 100 years of nursery management experience between them. The company’s leadership takes great pride in the quality of their stock—each carefully selected and among the very finest available.



Todd explains, “Since the root systems of our plants are so well established, there is a big difference. Each is rich in color, robust and healthy from the start.”

Todd Ellefson is a dedicated nurseryman. Throughout his career, he has enjoyed memberships in many professional organizations, including the Louisiana Nursery and Landscape Association and Washington Parish Farm Bureau. In 2007, Mr. Ellefson was named the Louisiana Nursery and Landscape Association’s Young Professional of the Year. Todd has also served as President of the South East Louisiana Nurserymen’s Association and is the current Senator for Louisiana with the American Nursery Landscape Association. This year, he was recognized as the Southern Nurserymen’s Association’s 2009 Young Nurseryman of the Year.

*Todd Ellefson has been married to his wife Stacy for 13 years. They are the proud parents of 14-year-old Chase, 11-year-old Lexi, 6-year-old Riley and Reese, age 4.*

# One Bunch that Hooks People Up



Sherman Bunch established OneBunchHookUp as a local, non-emergency medical transportation company. Today, the company provides handicap-accessible transportation to the elderly and disabled, enabling each to ride in security and comfort throughout the greater New Orleans area.

**SHERMAN BUNCH WAS TIRED.** Tired of just waiting around for something to happen. That's how he described his nights working for a local taxicab company. "I'd wait out at the airport, or on the street outside of hotels, sometimes from three in the morning to four in the afternoon, just waiting for a fare."

During the day, Sherman drove for that same cab company and was starting to build up a healthy clientele of senior citizens. This was right around the time the New Orleans

Council on Aging lost federal funding for a transportation effort aimed at helping seniors get to their medical appointments. Soon after, Sherman noticed that about 70% of his fares were senior citizens, "I was somebody they wanted to ride with. Somebody they could trust. They appreciate the fact that we're looking out for them."

Sherman's early passengers were people like Kristi Borges who found it extremely difficult to find a ride because her fare was only \$6.

Injured on the job, Kristi's workers' comp insurer paid the fare, but because the fare was so low, no one would take the call. That's where







Sherman came in. “I care about the people I drive, and my business is growing because of the good things I do.” Kristi appreciated the job Sherman did for her and let everyone know about it, including that workers’ comp provider who ended up making OneBunchHookUp, LLC its authorized transportation company in the New Orleans area.

Following the sterling example of Sherman, the company’s drivers assist passengers daily to board the vehicles safely. What’s more, it’s a company policy to take special care to ensure that riders are buckled in and comfortable for the ride ahead.

The professional and conscientious drivers of OneBunchHookUp serve the entire West Bank of New Orleans, Metairie and New Orleans proper. Operating out of a single West Bank office since Hurricane Katrina damaged the St. Bernard Avenue location, the local transportation company continues to defy the odds and expand under Sherman’s leadership. Mr. Bunch is quick to point out, “When I

started the company, I asked myself where I was going to be in 3 to 5 years. I thought 5 vehicles would be pretty good. Once I got my permits, we grew to four vehicles—in just under a year.”

Sherman plans to expand service to the whole of New Orleans East in the coming year, “We’re up to a staff of six, with three drivers now and we’re adding a fourth driver soon.” Sherman adds, “I’d like to get to the point where we’re working 5 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday.

Right now, we’re on until 2 pm, depending upon driver availability.” Considering the company’s future plans, Sherman smiles, “I had to come up with another goal, so now it’s to take over New Orleans.”

*Born and raised in New Orleans, Sherman Bunch has been married to his wife Simone for 12 years. Sherman and Simone are the proud parents of Sherman Jr. and Josiah. Napoleon Bunch is the family’s much-spoiled Toy Pomeranian.*







# Renaissance WOMAN

It is an early November morning at 5018 N. Priour as June Marshall surveys the worksite of Brad Pitt's newest Make It Right home in the 9th Ward. She leads her crew as they follow amid the scaffolding that surrounds the perimeter.





**TAKING A MOMENT** between phone calls and appointments, June smiles wide and describes an earlier conversation with Brad Pitt in which she described the post-Katrina landscape to the actor turned activist, “I’m concerned that locals aren’t getting the work, Brad. Out of town companies are being paid \$147/cubic yard for debris removal while the local contractors who were actually doing the work only received \$7/cubic yard.” June went on to explain, “I have a capable, local company, and I want to be part of rebuilding the city.”

June must have made quite an impression, because soon after speaking with Mr. Pitt, she received a call to meet with the CEO of his Make It Right Foundation, Tom Darden, and local Senior Architect John Williams. Remembering all of the amazing things that have transpired since that day, a faithful June Marshall shares, “I’m blessed. I know this. There is divine order. There’s no better feeling in the world than doing work that changes people’s lives. I absolutely love doing this. I love giving people the keys to their new home.”

Before starting Presidente Builders with her partner Irvin Butler, June was fixing-up homes and working locally in the movie industry. June smiles and says, “The name Presidente came from Irvin, really. At the time we started the company, I was President of the National Black Women’s Health Project, a Louisiana-based women’s health organization, and he liked to poke fun proclaiming, ‘Oh, Presidente is here!’ I wasn’t going to name my company BM (Butler/Marshall), and many of the more obvious names were taken, so we just went with Presidente Builders. True story.”

Today, under the leadership of Ms. Marshall, Presidente Builders is poised to accomplish something truly great. Because of her hard work, and the contributions of her entire ownership team, this woman-owned, minority business is well on its way to meeting all of the strict requirements necessary to qualify as a Platinum LEED Green Builder. The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System, developed by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), provides an international suite of standards for environmentally sustainable construction.



“It’s an honor to build housing that allows the lower 9th ward residents to own homes that are the highest in green building standards. These homes are non-toxic, have extremely low utility bills and even come equipped with solar-power capabilities. We’re working on what may become the first completely platinum LEED community in the U.S., maybe even the world,” a beaming June Marshall says.

On the future plans for Presidente Builders, June shares this, “All of us are really looking forward to our next building project. The design belongs to a Japanese architect, and we’re all so excited and proud to be part of its construction. It’s very, very, very important for us to always use local people.”

June Marshall’s story is deeply rooted in the city she loves. Born and raised in Algiers, June attended O. Perry Walker High School and attended USL in Lafayette. Her mother, Barbara LeFlore was a registered nurse at Charity Hospital in New Orleans before retiring. These days, Barbara is an avid volunteer with the local AARP and Red Cross organizations.

*June Marshall is the proud mother of Maya, age 23. June’s mother Barbara still lives in Algiers and enjoys frequent visits from her daughter and granddaughter.*

# *Stay Local!* *New Orleans* *& LCIA:*

working together for Louisiana businesses.

theurbanconservancy  
WWW.URBANCONSERVANCY.ORG



“Stay Local! New Orleans raises public awareness of the importance of shopping locally and provides support for local businesses. Business owners can submit their information for listing on our website. For many of the 1600 local businesses listed, it’s their only web presence.”

–Dana Eness, Urban Conservancy



Dana Eness – Photo © Rising Road Media, Inc.

NATIONAL INSURANCE companies alternately embrace and abandon the Louisiana market whenever it suits their bottom lines, but as a Louisiana-based organization dedicated to its local membership, LCIA is here to stay.

Both the LCIA and the Urban Conservancy’s Stay Local! New Orleans are focused on connecting local businesses with each other, new markets and valued resources. While Stay Local! [www.staylocal.org](http://www.staylocal.org) supports a five-parish area around New Orleans working to help raise the visibility of Louisiana businesses and market them locally, the LCIA serves members throughout Louisiana by providing host of support services for small businesses, including free workshops on tax and legal matters at [www.lciassociation.com](http://www.lciassociation.com).

Moving forward, the two organizations plan to start a joint continuity workshop to show local business owners how to bounce back after the next big hurricane. Together, they remain dedicated to the issues that most directly affect their individual association members.

The partnership gives the Urban Conservancy the opportunity to reach out to the LCIA’s 2,000 members, expand the Stay Local! initiative and provide much needed education and outreach throughout the entire state.





Win a \$500 gift card with the push of a button.

Enter to win a \$500 Visa Gift Card by simply verifying your company contact information with [jennifer@louisianacomp.com](mailto:jennifer@louisianacomp.com). One entry per LCIA member, please. Include your company name, address and phone number in the body of your email. Of course, you can just drop it in the regular mail if you wish. All submissions must be received by February 1st. The winner will be notified by February 5th. And please, when sending your email, do not include a link to the dancing wedding party video. She's already seen it.



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