

LSBDC helps Community Activist Reopen for Business



Owners, Monica & Jason Horne

(New Orleans) Jason Horne’s journey to create a martial arts studio aimed at saving inner city youths hit numerous pitfalls and a major roadblock- Hurricane Katrina. But through it all Horne says, the Louisiana Small Business Development Center at Greater New Orleans Region has been his GPS system, guiding his way to success.

Jason and his wife Monica first started their company, **XS Martial Arts Dojo**, in his garage with only 10 students in 2002. With more than 17 years of experience as a martial arts practitioner, instructor, and studio manager, Jason is dedicated to keeping kids off the streets and teaching them the importance of discipline, self-respect, respect for others, the value of a good education and a great attitude.

“I grew up in a high crime neighborhood in New Orleans and martial arts saved me. I was mentored by men who became my father figures, and I want to provide that same positive influence for other kids growing up in the inner city,” said Jason.

With that mission in mind, Sensei Horne came to the LSBDC for help to secure a SOHO loan to open his martial arts dojo in the heart of New Orleans’ high crime district. His studio on Earhart Blvd. in Mid-City was just taking

off, when Hurricane Katrina hit and flooded out his studio. As a National Guard member, Horne was distributing ice and supplies to other victims, while his own studio sat under more than three feet of water.

“I could have just taken my insurance money and went home. But I saw how much the kids needed me since there were no after school programs. I knew I had to reopen for their sake,” said Horne.

LSBDC consultants helped Horne develop a new business plan and marketing strategy, helped him secure bridge loans and a LRA grant to reopen, and provided training on running a small business more efficiently. The lessons LSBDC taught Sensei Horne helped him to increase his student enrollment by 133% and his summer camp enrollment by 211%.

His commercial success then allowed him to give back to his community in an even bigger way. He started a nonprofit organization called “Save One Now” (SON) which focuses on the families and youth of Metropolitan New Orleans. Currently, Sensei Horne is working with the City of New Orleans to help keep 20 students from Samuel J. Green Charter School off the streets. These students have been awarded scholarships. Sensei Horne has been able to turn many of his students’ lives around with his method of loving discipline, positive peer pressure and mentoring.

“I credit much of my success to the guidance and direction that LSBDC consultants have given me. They helped connect me with resources and programs, which grew my business. I would recommend the Louisiana Small Business Development Center to any entrepreneur who wants to start or grow a business or recover. It’s a very good asset for the small business community,” praised Horne.