

CELEBRATING BLACK ENTREPRENEURS

WHAT'S INSIDE:

The Write Juice	P. 15
Maye - Williams Active	P. 16
Firesnake Fitness	P. 18
Founders First Capital Partners	P. 19
Happy2Help Transportation	P. 20

PRESENTED BY

BCG | **JAMUL CASINO** | **BERKSHIRE HATHAWAY HomeServices** | **BIOSERO** A BICO COMPANY
CALIFORNIA COAST CREDIT UNION | **California State University SAN MARCOS** | **CBIZ** | **MHM** | **CLARK CONSTRUCTION** | **COMPUTERS 2KIDS SAN DIEGO**
CYMBIOTIKA | **EDF renewables** | **KAISER PERMANENTE** | **MOSSADAMS** | **THE JACOBS & CUSHMAN SAN DIEGO FOOD BANK**
Neighborhood House Association "A Neighbor You Can Count On...Since 1914" | **FOUNDATION MEDICINE** | **pillsbury** | **POSTALANNEX** YOUR HOME OFFICE
PETTIT KOHN | **PALOMAR HEALTH** Reimagining Healthcare | **QUIDEL** | **Rady Children's**
St. Paul's SENIOR SERVICES LEADERS IN SENIOR CARE | **rh Robert Half** Talent Solutions | **County of San Diego SDBCC** Black Chamber of Commerce | **sdccu.com**
Tri-City Medical Center | **UC San Diego** EXTENDED STUDIES | **University of San Diego** | **vcc 50 years 1972-2022**



A healthier workforce creates a stronger business.

Get the tools you need to establish a healthier workforce culture, helping your employees manage stress, sleep better, and exercise more. Learn more at kp.org/choosebetter.

Choose Better. Choose Kaiser Permanente.

Health is Wealth: The Write Stuff for the Body, the Community and the World

■ By KAREN PEARLMAN

Born into a family that paid close attention to their health needs, **Joshlyn Turner** spends much of her adult life helping others take better care of their bodies.

“I grew up drinking smoothies and being conscious of the things I would eat,” said Turner, who led an active life in where she was raised in southeastern San Diego.

Now 36, Turner owns and operates “**The Write Juice**,” a food truck that specializes in freshly made juices and lemonade; colorful, vitamin-packed smoothies; and antioxidant-rich fruit bowls.

Turner was a cheerleader, participated in track & field and was power forward on the girls basketball team at Lincoln High School, while attending classes at and graduating from San Diego School of Creative and Performing Arts in 2003.

She continued staying active and healthy, performing as part of the dance team at Hampton University in Virginia, a private, historically Black university where she earned a degree in Liberal Arts, Theater Production.

And while her post-college background includes working in the field of performing arts, the social justice world, managing youth programs for nonprofits, by 2017 she said was looking for a different way to help others -- and fill a missing link in San Diego.

“I saw that we didn’t have anything on wheels for smoothies,” Turner said. “I did research looking for one and saw there was a guy in Alabama who had one. But I could find nothing in California. I thought, ‘How is this not a thing?’”

So, with the support of her family and friends, Turner made it her thing.

Ambition Leads to Entrepreneurship

“I was always a pretty ambitious child,” she said. “I was always going after what I wanted. I knew I wanted to use my creativity. But I didn’t grow up thinking I was going to be an entrepreneur.”

The truck is a thing of beauty, a repurposed FedEx vehicle with a blue and purple backdrop with splashes of yellow and red, a vibrant hodgepodge of colors with graphic designs and “The Write Juice” name in large, bold letters on both sides of the truck.

Painted on the truck are community landmarks that pay homage to the Skyline area where she grew up and the front has the saying “The marathon continues.” That, Turner explains, is an important message -- one that the late rap star Nipsey Hussle embodied, that “life is not a race, it’s a marathon,” she said.

Inside the cozy confines of the truck is just enough room for Turner to work with bags of cut up fruit and vegetables, juices, organic granola and menu favorite add-ons like blue spirulina, hemp protein, chia seeds and maca powder that she said have great benefits for the immune system.

“My mission is to blend health back into the



Photo by Karen Pearlman

The Write Juice food truck owner Joshlyn Turner preparing items for customers at the Amazon Distribution Center in Otay Mesa.

community,” she said. “I know that for a lot of African-Americans in my community, they have a sweet tooth, they love sugar. I want to ease them into having a healthy option that tastes good.”

The Write Juice started in 2019 and was popular almost as soon as it began, booked early and often, she said.

Turner said The Write Juice struggled a little during the early part of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, but she used the down time “to sit and think about what I needed to do that would be good for me.”

Catering Helps The Write Juice Have Its Best Year in 2021

The Write Juice then had its best year in revenues in 2021, with more than half of its income coming via catering bookings.

One of Turner’s biggest contracts came at the end of last year when her truck was hired to serve patrons at the grand opening of the new San Diego Trolley line that heads up to University City.

“Blending health back into the community,” is the company’s motto and the side of the truck notes that it is “helping you rewrite your health story, one drink

at a time.”

The “Write” part of the name is an homage to Turner’s lifelong love of writing. She initially created a line of thoughtful, expressive fashion merchandise called “The Write Fit” in 2013, and the juice truck followed six years later.

Among other regular contract work, her truck is a contracted lunchtime visitor to the Amazon Distribution Center in Otay Mesa, where employees line up to buy acai and dragonfruit bowls and smoothies with names like “Ride Your Own Wave,” “California Dream” and “Year of the Glow Up.”

Since 2020, Turner has added to her business resume a greeting card/calendar company called “The Write Expressions,” which allows her to connect people through universal messages of love.

She also has a coloring book out, called “Black Girls Got the Juice.” The book highlights different career fields of pioneering Black women, and she is on the last page of the coloring book herself.

In a World of Her Own

Turner said she realizes she is in a unique market and sometimes feels like “I’m in a world of my own.”

She said that she knows she is helping to inspire and educate people as she continues along on her personal journey, and that she will continue to guide others toward “being authentic with your own story.”

She said in 2021 she launched “The Write Fitness,” which is a music and fitness pop up that offers “step aerobics and twerk fitness.” She said she hopes to open a studio where she can offer fitness classes and add a spin class.

Her ultimate goal is to have all her brands under one roof where people can “get a juice, buy a greeting card and take a class.” ■



Joshlyn Turner
Founder
The Write Juice



Photo by Karen Pearlman

The Write Juice food truck in the Amazon Distribution Center parking lot in Otay Mesa.

The Write Juice

FOUNDED: 2019

FOUNDER: Joshlyn Turner

HEADQUARTERS: Downtown San Diego

WEBSITE: <https://www.thewritejuicetruck.com/>

INSTAGRAM: <https://www.instagram.com/thewritejuicetruck/>

NOTABLE: Turner sits on the board of the nonprofit DETOUR/F.A.N.C.Y., a group that helps mentor and empower young girls in underserved communities

Maye-Williams Active: Making Clothing for Overlooked, Underrepresented Fitness Fans

■ By KAREN PEARLMAN

When Covid-19 scrapped their fairytale wedding plans in 2020, **Mycah Bacchus Maye-Williams** and **Shaun Maye-Williams** didn't let the setback stop them from working together to create something special.

Foregoing a large destination wedding in France and another one in the U.S. and opting instead for a civil ceremony at the courthouse in San Marcos, the pair decided to use the money they saved toward a different kind of team adventure.



Mycah Maye-Williams
Owner
Maye-Williams Active

They started a new business – **Maye-Williams Active** – which was, literally, fitting, as both Shaun and Mycah Maye-Williams have long championed the active life.

“We took the money we had for the wedding, invested in the business and we made \$13,000 in the first month,” said Mycah Maye-Williams, 26. “We kept going from there and we’ve been doing well.”

Shaun Maye-Williams said the company is looking at a 20 percent year-over-year profit with e-commerce alone.

The couple's line of apparel is specifically designed for people the couple says are often overlooked and underrepresented in the world of fitness. Their brand, the couple says, helps bring diversity to an area where they felt it was missing.

All-Inclusive Clothing

The Maye-Williams line at its deepest roots has the intention of representing myriad skin tones, ethnicities, ages, shapes, sizes and genders.

The clothing line, that includes bras, hats, compression pants, cropped zip-up jackets, shorts, socks, hoodies, leggings and shirts, is all inclusive and non-gendered, so “everyone can get active comfortably and in style,” Mycah Maye-Williams said.

“We call our customers our family members,” said Shaun Maye-Williams, 29.

The couple says they want to especially promote healthy lifestyles in the Black community as well as encouraging people to take control of their own destiny, as they themselves have done.

“It's important in the Black community, and in all communities, to have a healthy lifestyle,” Mycah Maye-Williams said. “Be mindful of what you're putting into your body. We want people to see our Black faces and know that being healthy is a good thing, that taking care of yourself, keeping your body healthy gives you a good feeling and better life.”

The Maye-Williamses run their business and live in both Los Angeles and San Diego, depending on what works best on any given day.

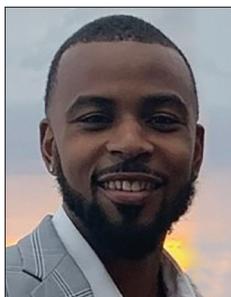
Being the Change

“We decided to be the change we want to see” in activewear, said Mycah Maye-Williams, who is an actress and model.

A gymnast and dancer since she was a young girl, Mycah Maye-Williams grew up in New York the daughter of immigrants from Guyana, and earned a spot at one time for **Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater**. She danced with the troupe for seven years.

Shaun Maye-Williams grew up in San Diego, and started playing baseball for Lincoln High as a sophomore. He attended San Diego City College and it was there on the baseball field that he caught the eye of a college scout and earned a scholarship to Midland University in Fremont, Neb.

There, while working on his degree in business administration, the southpaw was the school's first-ever Black pitcher.



Shaun Maye-Williams
Owner
Maye-Williams Active



Mycah Maye-Williams and Shaun Maye-Williams in the doorway with packages.

Photo courtesy of Maye-Williams Active

The two initially met through social media in 2015, which Mycah said she compares to “a cosmic meeting where the stars collided.”

Shaun was responding to photo after photo after photo that Mycah was sharing on her Instagram page. Noticing his relentless interest, she reached out to him privately, and the rest is matchmaking history.

Shaun Maye-Williams said he has always been concerned about the health of those in the Black community.

“Where I come from, minority health is not taken care of properly, and not taken seriously,” he said.

Mycah Maye-Williams said the couple is looking for investors to continue to scale bigger than their current e-commerce business.

She said they are looking toward pop-up shops in malls, looking to woo some “influencers” and may try to connect with stores like Walmart and Target in the next three to five years. They run ads through

Shopify.

As they put more focus on brand exposure, the couple said they have set some realistic goals for reaching certain financial milestones.

“We're very close to net in the six-figure mark,” Shaun Maye-Williams said. ■

MAYE-WILLIAMS ACTIVE

FOUNDED: 2020

FOUNDERS: Shaun Maye-Williams and Mycah Bacchus Maye-Williams

BUSINESS: Apparel maker

WEBSITE: <https://mayewilliamsactive.com/>

INSTAGRAM: Maye-Williams Active™ (@mayewilliamsactive) • Instagram photos and videos

NOTABLE: Maye-Williams has business offices in both San Diego and Los Angeles.

THE POWER OF VOICE AND VISIBILITY

Celebrating Black Excellence at CSUSM



John Rawlins III
Director, Black Student Center

BLACK STUDENT CENTER DIRECTOR GUIDED BY PRINCIPLE OF UJAMAA

When John Rawlins III set out last fall to create an achievement program for Cal State San Marcos' Black Student Center, of which he's the director, he knew just where to turn for inspiration.

Ujamaa.

It might not roll off the tongue, but that word has served as Rawlins' guiding light for most of his adult life. It's a term from the East African language of Kiswahili and one of the seven principles of Kwanzaa. Literally, it translates to "familyhood." To Rawlins, it means the process of working together as an extended family to build and maintain a cohesive community.

He was first exposed to the word in college; it was the name of the residence hall where he lived at Cornell University. It grew to be part of his DNA during his second year when he became a resident adviser, a role he held for the rest of his time at Cornell.

"In that residence hall, it was about how we use the best of who we are to support one another and to foster this community," Rawlins said. "That's something that has

always stuck with me, and it's a lot of what I put into my work as I think about building community."

The spirit of Ujamaa has infused Rawlins' work during his 15 years as a student affairs professional, and he has made it a core piece of his philosophy at CSUSM since being hired to direct the Black Student Center in July 2019. Later this month, the center will celebrate its five-year anniversary, and Rawlins will have been in charge for more than half of its existence.

"We keep growing, and it's exciting to see," Rawlins said. "We've always had a strong Black Student Union, but these groups are giving students the opportunity to say, 'I want more out of my education that is attached to my identity.' And even though these are things that I've developed, they're really student-driven initiatives. We've put them in the hands of the students to be leaders."



[READ THE FULL STORY](#)



MEET THE LEADER

Dr. Gail Cole-Avent

Associate Vice President
of Student Life

For more than two decades, Dr. Gail Cole-Avent has served as a leader and instructor in higher education institutions and affiliated organizations across the nation. Her experiences and understanding of varying institutional, geographical and community needs has framed her outlook on the unique opportunity and responsibility that a university has to advocate for and support student success.

At California State University San Marcos, Dr. Cole-Avent was appointed to an inaugural role as the associate vice president of Student Life in July 2018. Since that time, she has established a collective vision and integrated operations among 10 departments, focusing on enhancing student success, contributing to retention, and redefining high-impact student engagement and the campus experience.

Among Dr. Cole-Avent's numerous accomplishments, she led the strategy planning, mission creation and renaming process of the existing Cultural and Social Justice Centers to the Student Life Centers for Identity, Inclusion, and Empowerment. She also collaborated in the development of comprehensive pathway program for Black Student Success and retention that launched in spring 2021. It includes a cohort-based achievement program, transition support, and a focus on graduation and career readiness.

Dr. Cole-Avent has presented on myriad research topics, including comprehensive crisis management, leadership development for career advancement, technology fluency, and collaborative identity culture-center initiatives.

Dr. Cole-Avent earned her bachelor's in speech from Northwestern University, her Master of Education from UCLA, and her Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Georgia.

CHECK OUT ALL THE EVENTS
THIS MONTH AT CSUSM

bit.ly/CSUSMBEM22

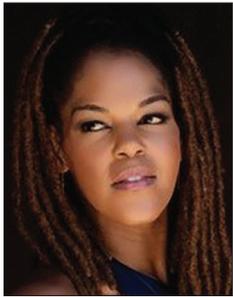


California State University
SAN MARCOS

Finding Your Inner Fitness Fanatic – In 20 Minutes

■ By KAREN PEARLMAN

A molecular biology major when she attended college at Nicholls State University in Louisiana and then at Cal State San Marcos, **Amy Minnick's** studies served her well doing research and conducting clinical trials during a high-profile 20-year career in the pharmaceutical business.



Amy Minnick
Owner
Firesnake Fitness

But she traded her time inside laboratory to put her science knowledge to work in a different way as a fitness trainer in East County.

Minnick, a tall, fit and lithe Louisiana native who now lives in Santee with her husband and teenage

daughter, has spent years helping others achieve and exceed their health and fitness goals.

Later this month, the 44-year-old will open a specialized fitness studio in La Mesa.

Minnick has been instructing fitness seekers from her home for nearly two years, and says she is the first fitness instructor in San Diego County to use the only U.S. Food and Drug Administration-approved Electro Muscle Stimulation-based fitness equipment.

According to the FDA's official website, the government agency considers them devices under the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act. Because of that, the FDA



Amy Minnick and clients Erica and Jeremy Beal of Del Cerro, working out at her Santee studio.

Photo by Karen Pearlman

is responsible for regulating their sale.

Minnick uses German-made miha bodytec equipment, including two computerized screens attached to aluminum stands with channels, dials and buttons that she turns while guiding clients through workouts. The machine is used to connect people wearing special vests, belts and other clothing with wires, cables and electrodes.

Contracting Muscles in Groups

With Minnick supervising clients' personalized routines, the machine contracts muscles in groups or isolated through impulses. The miha bodytec company calls it

the "whole body training method."

Minnick's "RapidSculpt" is a high-intensity total body strength training workout that utilizes EMS technology, which she says accelerates fitness results.

According to Minnick, RapidSculpt EMS activates 90 percent of the body's muscles, including some of the deepest muscle fiber that cannot be reached with traditional fitness practices, efficiently using electrical impulses to contract muscle groups while people go through functional movements.

Because the 20-minute RapidSculpt EMS session is equal to three hours of high intensity strength training, it can only

be done every fifth day, per FDA guidelines, she said.

Effective Training

"It is the most effective training for losing weight, improving your fitness level and building lean muscles," Minnick said. "It is the fastest and easiest way to achieve all your fitness goals."

RapidSculpt can also be used as a rehabilitation method after injuries, which the FDA's website also notes. EMS training can relieve the joints stress, reduce back pain and tighten the "trouble areas" in the body," Minnick said.

"I am happy and proud to be one of the first in San Diego to offer this service," Minnick said.

She is a master trainer for EMS in the United States for the German company that manufactures the equipment she uses. When someone in the U.S. purchases the product, she has the responsibility to train them.

She says changes can be seen in people's bodies – tighter, more toned and capable of greater endurance -- after six sessions for men, eight sessions for women. ■

RAPID SCULPT EMS/ Firesnake Fitness

FOUNDER AND OWNER: Amy Minnick

FOUNDED: 2019

LOCATION: 8127 La Mesa Blvd., La Mesa

WEBSITE: <https://firesnakefitness.com/>

NOTABLE: Founder Amy Minnick is from Abbeville, La., pop. 12,000, about 150 miles west of New Orleans.

Building Inclusive and Diverse Community

Clark Construction is committed to advancing inclusion and diversity for our company, our industry, and our communities. We embrace the opportunity to make a meaningful and positive impact by creating an inclusive and respectful workplace, supporting small businesses and workforce development, and giving back through community service.



CLARK
CONSTRUCTION

Founders First Capital Partners is Model of Success

By JEFF CLEMETSON

Founders First Capital Partners founder, chair and CEO **Kim Folsom** has always worked hard to shatter glass ceilings and overcome roadblocks in her career as a Black woman.

"I'm from a generation where women had three options – you were a teacher accountant or a nurse," she said.

But rather than acquiescing to norms, Folsom forged her own career path. With encouragement from her father—an engineer and Navy vet who served in Vietnam -- she studied accounting at and competed to get into the SDSU's information systems program and graduated with degrees in both.

Her accounting and technical degrees led her to jobs in financial technology banking systems, like ATMs. But, again, she hit roadblocks to overcome.

"I thought the first corporation I worked for I would have the chance to run it," she said. "And then I learned that's not the case so I had to learn as much as I can to start my own company."

Folsom started her first company, Seminar Source, in the late 1990s dotcom era. The company was "a kind of B2B Netflix" that allowed professionals, specifically physicians, to get continuing education through videos of conferences and seminars.

Seminar Source took eight years to launch, and Folsom said she didn't raise any money until after the company had \$1 million in revenue and was already profitable. She eventually raised over \$20 million in venture – and her success did not go unnoticed.

"Many of my investors said you should consider being on the other side of the table to help diverse founders with funding their businesses," Folsom said, adding that was the "seed" to fund other founders but at the time she felt she wasn't ready. "But over six companies and 25 years, I did not see a whole lot of change. Like my experience in school when I was a software engineer, I was the only one that had been doing things and thought I would like to change that because I had experience to do it."

Growing Diverse Businesses



Kim Folsom
CEO
Founders First Capital Partners

Folsom launched Founders First in 2015 with the mission of funding and growing businesses led by diverse founders. The fund focuses on growing small and mid-sized companies "so they can be the best employers and job creators and create wealth for the founders their community," Folsom said, adding that the goal is to grow these smaller companies three to five times once Founders First starts working with them.

"We do the hard work with some of the tiny companies most people don't want to do the work for," she said. "We say that while everybody focuses on unicorns, we focus on their cousins the zebras and the Clydesdales."

The zebras and Clydesdales Founders First works with are companies that are already

generating revenue of \$50,000 up to \$5 million, but need know how, access to capital and connections to hit that three to five times target. "And they need somebody to advocate for them all the time," Folsom said.

The need for funding is especially important for many of these companies because the founders often lack the usual friends and family round of seed capital to get started and most programs that help fund diverse founder companies only supply capital in the three or four figure range.

"Most programs that are targeted to diverse founders are providing so little and mostly no capital it's difficult for them to address the problem -- which is growing revenues, profits, jobs," Folsom said.

A Model of Success

Since its founding, Founders First has funded 550 companies nationwide and has committed \$135 million in capital to diverse founders.

"Over 70% of our companies grow over 25% year-over-year," Folsom said. "Many of them grow by going from transitional to recurring revenue and they add additional revenue streams. And that's what we really focus on -- teaching them how their business can be much more sustainable so that they can sustain themselves and then hire more people, too."

Locally, Founders First has helped grow San Diego companies like **Klarinet Solutions**, an IT services company that specializes in improving productivity of companies with remote workforces, to four times its size. With help from Founders First, **Elaine Swan** grew her business etiquette company to now having



Robert Carter
CEO
Carter Transportation Group

over 25 franchises. And Carter Transportation Group is becoming one of the largest minority-owned companies in the country, serving clients like **WalMart** and **FedEx**.

"Founders First has really been of crucial value to where our company is today," said **Carter Transportation Group** CEO and founder **Robert Carter**.

Carter described Founders First's Fast-Path program in operations, communication, finance and simulation exercises as key to helping his company's growth which now includes a Midwest regional office in addition to the corporate headquarters in San Diego.

"Additionally, the capital that we have access to through Founders First has been essential for a minority business like ours where access to traditional capital sources are mostly not available," Carter added. "Founders First has also brought value to our business by providing access to other sources of funding that have help our business expand. I am extremely grateful to Kim and her entire team; they are making a difference for minority small businesses like mine who want to grow." ■

Founders First Capital Partners

FOUNDED: 2015
CEO: Kim Folsom
LOCATION: Sorrento Valley
EMPLOYEES: 30
COMPANIES FUNDED: 550
COMMITTED CAPITAL: \$135 million
WEBSITE: www.foundersfirstcapitalpartners.com
NOTABLE: CEO Kim Folsom's first exposure to finance was lending money she made working in her school kitchen to her brother, who paid her back with interest.



USD 1972

Celebrating those who helped lead the way.



Foundation Medicine is a molecular information company dedicated to a transformation in cancer care in which treatment is informed by a deep understanding of the genomic changes that contribute to each patient's unique cancer.

For more information, visit:
www.FoundationMedicine.com



Happy2Help Transportation: Keeping Family Happy and Healthy

■ By KAREN PEARLMAN

Happy2Help Transportation's motto is "We're here because we want to be," but if the company's founder, San Diego native **Phil Fowler**, had his own motto, it might just very well be "Be the change you wish to see in the world."

In 2019 Fowler started Happy2Help Transportation, a non-emergency transportation provider with services tailored to traditional passengers, seniors and those with limited mobility who need reliable ways to get around.

The company's four employees help people safely and comfortably reach doctors, dentists and surgery appointments, dialysis centers, senior care and nursing facilities, independent living communities, and hospice centers. Happy2Help also helps transport children with special needs to school.

It was concern for a family member's crucial transportation needs that drove Fowler, now 31, away from a growing career in the sales and IT consultancy fields and toward entrepreneurship.

Fowler's first unofficial passenger was his older brother, Anzi Jonas Israel, who was born with muscular dystrophy and started needing a wheelchair when he was in seventh grade.

Fowler said he and Anzi are a year apart and their parents always treated them like twins. They grew up as roommates and the family's caretaking has continued into Anzi's adulthood.

"My brother is the inspiration behind our business," said



Phil Fowler
Owner
Happy2Help

Fowler, 31, who runs Happy2Help with his wife, **Beatriz Fowler**, and employs four drivers. "Growing up with someone disabled really just equipped me with a different mindset than others. Starting when we were young, I had awareness and sensitivity. With firsthand experience, I know what that entails."

While Fowler was one of the family's main caretakers for his brother most of his life, taking hours and days of work off to help his brother get to his medical appointments started to prove challenging when Fowler got busier with his own responsibilities.

He found it increasingly more difficult to balance the obligations he had for Anzi and started relying on other transportation companies to help his brother get around.

He said Anzi, who remains mentally sharp, relayed stories to him about how the drivers did not always treat him well.

Patience, Compassion is Paramount

"I didn't like what they were doing," Fowler said. "There was always a problem, one way or another. Some didn't have the patience. Others would leave him waiting outside in the cold, or they wouldn't show up and he would miss appointments. At the other end, sometimes he would have to wait for hours for someone to get him."

Fowler said it also bothered him when his brother told him that drivers would often have conversations on the phone and ignore him.

"I was thinking, 'Hey, that's not right. You have a passenger back there!'" Fowler said. "I think it's important that you engage with the person in your vehicle. It might be the only time that person has had a conversation all day."

Fowler, who studied mass communications and journalism in college, said he did some more investigation, and it didn't take him long to see that the transportation companies he had been trusting to care for his brother "lacked the professionalism and the customer care" his brother deserved.

He said he had considered leaving his comfortable sales job in 2017 but didn't make a move until two years later after a conversation he said he had with a company manager showed him he was wasting time getting his checks from that company.

"It was the scariest thing to just leave and start from scratch," he said. "But I looked at myself in the mirror



Photo courtesy Happy2Help Transportation

Happy2Help Transportation owner Phil Fowler stands at one of his specially equipped vans with customers of his services.

and said, 'If the business thing doesn't work out, I can always find another job.' My wife had to be OK with it and she signed off on it. My career in sales came to a complete halt."

Starting with a Prius

Fowler started out with one car, a Prius, then said he gained experience for less ambulatory customers with San Diego-based Marquee Medical Transport.

After driving for and learning from Marquee, Fowler added a specially equipped van set up for transporting wheelchairs, and now the company has a fleet of six vehicles – four vans and two sedans.

The business started off slowly but has been picking up steam.

"I'm guilty of saying 'Yes' to everybody no matter how busy I am, no matter how early it is," Fowler said.

The Covid-19 pandemic has been a challenge for the company. It did not qualify for any PPP loans, but the company has been heeding all the protocols and Happy2Help has carried on.

Working with the Multicultural Health Foundation

Fowler said that last year Happy2Help partnered with the Multicultural Health Foundation working to bridge the gap between underserved minority community members who were having trouble affording essential items and their necessary transportation needs.

The Multicultural Health Foundation seeks to bring health justice and wellness to San Diego County, focusing its resources on vulnerable populations with community-based wellness strategies, social-clinical interventions and research seeking to eliminate racial and ethnic health disparities.

"We were able to give people a special rate through the partnership with the foundation," he said. "I was able to talk to my own community members and it was the most Black families that I have ever helped. That was beautiful. Knowing I was helping out and possibly

extending their lives was so rewarding."

Fowler's San Diego ties run deep. He grew up near Lincoln High School and graduated from Madison High in 2008, attending Southwestern and San Diego Mesa colleges and earning a scholarship to play football and attend Missouri Valley College. He started as a safety on defense while earning his degree. He is also a member of the United States Air Force reserves.

Happy2Help's company's headquarters are in Mission Valley but Fowler, his wife and their three children live in Wildomar.

Fowler said Anzi now 32, lives by himself in Point Loma, and that a hired caretaker and other members of their extended family, help his brother manage his needs.

"I've got my house set up so that if the day comes when he needs to move and leave San Diego, I am prepared," Fowler said. "I do come to San Diego on weekends and when (family members) go on vacations to see him and help out."

He said Happy2Help clients are shown courtesy, respect and patience by his trained staff; they are treated as cherished family members.

"We end up being the additional family member for 70 percent of our clientele," Fowler said. We will hear from a son, daughter, father or mother, 'We cannot do this. Can you take this on for us?' That keeps us going." ■

HAPPY2HELP TRANSPORTATION

FOUNDED: 2019

FOUNDER: Phil Fowler

BUSINESS: Ambulatory and wheelchair accessible non-emergency transportation

WEBSITE: <https://happy2helpsd.com/>

NOTABLE: Founder Phil Fowler is a U.S. Air Force reservist.