

Channel Side



Shane Bonner

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Small business success stories sometimes go beyond the entrepreneur and the enterprise itself, and extend on to other local businesses and into the community. That’s the story for Shane Bonner, a founder and principal at Channel Side, the brand-new boutique venue on the water, set in the heart of Palm Coast, Florida’s 23 miles of saltwater canals.

Channel Side specializes in hosting weddings at a state-of-the-art facility in a strikingly beautiful, natural setting, but is also superb for Sweet 16 parties, anniversaries, and corporate meetings – any event that seeks to accommodate from 50 – 200 guests and chooses to be one to remember. What sets Channel Side apart is that its clients can create the atmosphere and the event of their dreams because they are able to bring in service providers of their choice – independent caterers, beverage providers, and other vendors of all kinds – and not locked into someone else’s food & beverage menu or event plan.

For Bonner, Channel Side was originally simply a real estate investment, and he believed a good one. “When we started out, I knew we had purchased a really great facility in a really great location but we weren’t certain how best to use it,” Bonner recalls. It was then that he turned to the Florida SBDC at UCF – Palm Coast (FSBDC at UCF) and its area manager Ray Peter for no-cost business consulting on how best to proceed.

“From what we were originally thinking to what we finally came to were two very different things, and the FSBDC was a huge contributor to us getting there,” Bonner says. “Ray Peter and the FSBDC were instrumental in re-framing our discussions and our persuading ourselves that leveraging the property’s legacy purpose – as a yacht club/country club – into an event space was our best course of action.”

“And then the FSBDC was there for us as put together our operational plans, and worked with the City of Palm Coast to get the permits and licenses we needed,” continued Bonner. “I couldn’t have done this without the FSBDC, in fact. There was so much that I didn’t know. Without their knowledge of how a business like this works and how to get things done locally, I don’t think we’d have gotten Channel Side off the ground.”

“But here we are! Less than a year in business, and we have hosted more than 100 events and have reservations for another hundred in the months ahead. We have surpassed our stretch goals by a huge margin,” Bonner remarked. “Originally we thought Channel Side would be a local concept, catering to Palm Coast and neighboring towns. Now we are getting calls from around the country. We’ve become a wedding destination!”

“Best of all, we have partnered with local businesses to serve our clients,” Bonner concluded. “Area florists, photographers, hotels, restaurants, caterers and others are all benefiting from spending by our local and out-of-town guests. Beyond the success of our business, we are so proud that Channel Side is having a positive economic impact here in Palm Coast. And I can’t imagine that happening without the assistance of the FSBDC.”

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