

## Villages-News.com



### META MARIE MINTON & JEREMIAH DELGADO

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There is no one formula for building a successful business. Certainly not one that creates the #1 digital news website in The Villages®, America's premier active adult retirement community located in central Florida and the fastest growing metropolitan statistical unit in the United States.

And Meta Marie Minton and Jeremiah Delgado, co-owners of Villages-News.com, will be the first to admit it. When she founded the news site back in 2013, she understood how hard it can be to start a business. "When we started, I knew how to do the news but I didn't know how to run a business," she says.

The Villages-News.com provides news coverage of government, crime, classifieds, and local events for The Villages®, Florida and surrounding communities. It is the only source that provides "Real News, Right Now" to the largest retirement community in the United States. Stories from Villages-News.com have been featured in local and national news syndicates, including CNN, NBC, CBS, USA Today, NY Post, and Huffington Post, among others.

Knowing what she didn't know, it was then that Minton contacted the Florida SBDC at the University of Central Florida's (FSBDC at UCF) Lake County satellite office, now in Mt. Dora. "A huge number of small businesses fail in the first year. I knew we had a tough mountain to climb," Minton continued. "But if you have some direction, and some guidance, then you can make it happen."

The first thing she did was take an FSBDC seminar about how to start a business. Then she began writing a business plan. Finally she met with one of the local FSBDC consultants, Stan Austin, to develop a strategy for making her business come to life. "I went to the FSBDC to take advantage of the resources they offer," says Minton. "It was one of the first things I did when I wanted to start a company and was probably one of the smartest."

An early step was finding and collaborating with Jeremiah Delgado, her co-owner and business development director. "I'm an old newspaper person. He's got this great understanding of digital marketing. With the help of the FSBDC, together we have made Villages-News.com the success it is today," Minton states.

Helping start the business was only the beginning of the ongoing services the FSBDC has provided. "Our FSBDC consultant helps us point our arrow in the right direction. He's that outside person who has the experience and know how," Minton went on. "He challenges us every step of the way, telling us we're good, but not good enough; that we can do more; that we can do better. He has lit a fire that has pushed us to succeed. It's been incredibly valuable."

"With the FSBDC, we went from being a small-time business to being the leader in our industry and our area," says Delgado. "We have a dominant social media presence and successful business because of help from the FSBDC. Our consultant gave us the insight and motivation to go out and succeed. The FSBDC is probably one of the best resources you can find for a small business," he concluded.

## Providing the tools, strategies, and expertise to help Florida's business community thrive.

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The Florida SBDC at UCF is a member of the Florida SBDC Network, a statewide service network funded in part through cooperative agreements with the U.S. SBA, Defense Logistics Agency, State of Florida, and other private and public partners; hosted by the University of West Florida; and nationally accredited by the Association of SBDCs.

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