



# Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce

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## Small Business of the Year 2005



## Genesis Christian School



Genesis Christian School, an independent Christian school, located in Remerton, opened its doors August 17, 2002. The development of an independent Christian school is not an easy feat. The challenge of converting an old nightclub into a Christian school is unheard of, however, Dr. Debra Tann, the owner of Genesis, used her faith in God and her skills in strategic planning, coalition building, and program planning to turn her vision into a reality.

Dr. Tann took a rundown bar, and with vision, passion, and determination, created a successful business. "Every successful business shows an increase in profit as the business grows," stated Andrea Johnson, Small Business of the Year selection committee member. "Not all businesses have to show a return of monetary value to reflect profit, and our selection for Small Business of the Year has shown a huge profit in return to society through the minds of young children that are educated at their school." That being said, Genesis also fits the top three criteria considered by the selection committee: growth, sustainability and overcoming challenges.

According to selection committee member Jodi Doss, Genesis has doubled the number of students and doubled the number of employees in less than three years. In addition, the passion with which she describes the challenges she faced in converting a bar into a Christian school painted a very convincing picture. "We could vividly see the struggle she faced and the determination she used to overcome her adversity," stated Doss.

While converting the bar, Tann faced a unique challenge: the typical nightclub elements (i.e. mirrors, dance floor, and stage), were not exactly education-friendly. She creatively looked past the surface and used these "great features" to further the educational goals for her students. The mirrors positively reinforce the emphasis on inner and outer beauty of the students, the dance floor provides an incredible common area/lunchroom, and the stage is perfect for school programs.

As an aside, the mirrors also provided a unique opportunity for Dr. Tann to think "outside the box" to solve a school problem. The following story was included in the packet submitted to the Small Business of the Year Selection Committee. "According to a news report, Genesis Christian School in Valdosta, Georgia was recently faced with a unique problem. A number of 12-year old girls were beginning to use lipstick, and would put it on in the bathroom. That was fine, but after they put on their lipstick, they would press their lips to the mirror leaving dozens of little lip prints. Every night the maintenance man, Mr. Tann would remove the prints and question Dr. Tann regarding the behavioral patterns of her students. Finally, Dr. Tann decided that something must be done. She called the girls to the bathroom to meet with Mr. Tann. Dr. Tann explained to the girls that Mr. Tann had a difficult time cleaning the mirror and he wanted to demonstrate his difficulty. Mr. Tann took out a long-handled squeegee, dipped it in the toilet, and cleaned the mirror with it. The girls shrieked and, needless to say, there have been no more lip prints on the mirror. Moral, there are teachers and there are educators!"

Genesis, only in its third year, has really begun to make a name for itself. The school is active in the community and donates time, talent, and funds to several area agencies. Most importantly, the school is concerned with the educational development of its students. Genesis has been able to be so successful because of the commitment of its parents, students, faculty, board members, and friends who believe in the school and its goals.

The school currently has several short-term goals, which include purchasing a school bus and gaining school accreditation (which is now in progress). As the school continues to grow, they hope to implement year-round schooling, implement the high school component and re-locate to an expansive facility.

Congratulations to Genesis on being named 2005 Small Business of the Year!