Customers look over the menu before ordering at the Great Harvest Bread Co. on Tuesday. Kim Green and her husband, Gregg, who have been owners and operators since April 10 of a Great Harvest franchise on Evans Street, said they have faced problems and rewards as small business owners.

BY MICHAEL ABRAMOWITZ
The Daily Reflector

The words on the wall greeting about a dozen people who turned out for Pitt Community College’s free monthly small business workshop said it all: “What’s your problem?”

Seminar participants came with at least two things in common: a passion to own and operate their own businesses and lots of problems to bring to the table for help from Shareen Berkowitz, PCC’s small business counselor.

Berkowitz considers herself a personal trainer for small business owners, offering free confidential counseling, among other services.

For Wednesday’s seminar — all about problem-solving — Berkowitz arranged an appearance by entrepreneur and philanthropist Fred Fletcher Jr., 68, co-founder, CEO and president of the Doing Good Network. Fletcher has founded and managed company operations in fields as diverse as revenue-cycle management, syndicated investments, direct marketing and sales, satellite communication services, and entertainment management and real estate. He has been there and done that, as he told the attendees.

“If you’re passionate about what you want to do and have a business vision to match your passion, you’re an entrepreneur,” Fletcher said.

As a marketing professional and strategic thinker, Fletcher combines a systematic visioning process with proven practical skills in planning, project management and execution. He is an avid student of new interactive and social media technologies, viewing them as essential

Great Harvest owner Gregg Green shows off his bread mixer. Starting the business required a big financial investment from Green and his wife, Kim.

See BUSINESS, A9
Entrepreneurial consultant Fred Fletcher offers free advice and lots of encouragement Wednesday to a group of people with the shared goal of owning their own businesses during a free workshop offered by Pitt Community College’s Small Business Center.

“Small business owners all have lots of plans and aspirations when they start out, but when you get down to the nitty-gritty of business plan writing and financial planning, the most important thing is to build a real relationship with people who can assist you with services and help you grow — a banker, not just a building,” Lee said.

“There already have been plenty of problems and rewards for Kim Green and her husband, Gregg, who have been owners and operators since April 10 of a Great Harvest Bread Co. franchise on Evans Street. “We’re still fine-tuning our menu to match what our community likes and wants,” Kim Green said. “Every day we have to predict what we need to bake for the next day and how much of each product, depending on the trends created by people’s tastes and habits. Sometimes we’re right, and sometimes we’re wrong.”

Starting out required a big financial investment for the Greens, and they borrowed quite a bit for their start-up. The good news for them was that the backing came from their family. They also got financial and business advice from a close friend with a strong business background.

“That was a big advantage for us, but knowing how much was on the line has been a big incentive for us to work hard to keep our costs down,” Kim Green said.

The couple then worked out much of their monthly expenses would go toward supplies, payroll for 23 employees and other normal costs.

“It took a lot of work and brain power in the beginning,” Green said. “After we worked through our first month, we sat down and looked at where the reality fit in with our projections. Sales were better than we projected, so we feel like we’re in a good spot, but we don’t want to sit back and rest. We want to keep it going.”

Green said she and her husband learned at least one very important lesson.

“Budgeting for your business isn’t like budgeting for your home,” she said.

Staying on course when the trip gets difficult is the most important factor for reaching success as an independent small business owner, Fletcher said.

“You can’t know what lies ahead of you when you head into a business, but you have to be passionate about what you do or you’ll fail in your commitment and quit when the going gets tough,” Fletcher said. “The sacrifices are high on your journey, but the rewards are immeasurable when you’re self employed and chasing your dream.”

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