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Pianimals Kids Club Named SCORE Client of the Year

Pianimals Kids Club of Mason was named a SCORE Client of the Year at its annual luncheon celebrating local small business successes.

SCORE is the volunteer arm of the Small Business Administration. Its working and retired executives mentor small business owners in the areas of business operations, marketing and finance.

The four-year-old company owned by Deborah Thompson of Mason uses stuffed animals to teach the musical concepts of piano to children as young as three years old. The organization is growing; it serves 100 students in 16 schools from Union, Ky. to Centerville and contracts with a team of nine teachers.

Not bad for a woman who had to resort to welfare when she first came to town.

Thompson was a pastor for 30 years and had no experience as a business owner or music instructor until she began teaching Pianimals in 2009 in Florida. When she moved to Mason with her daughter from Florida to take care of her elderly mother four years ago, she knew she had to do something to generate income for her family. Her savings

were quickly depleted after the move and she had trouble finding work. But a friend gave her an idea for the Pianimals business and she plunged into entrepreneurialism.

“The time was right for a career change,” she said.

As a child she had had six years of private piano instruction at the Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music. She holds a minor in music from the University of Redlands and a Child Care Professional credential issued by the State of Florida.

Her SCORE mentor is Thane Brown of Sycamore Township. Brown worked for P&G for 36 years in both engineering and manufacturing roles, retiring as director of North American Engineering.

“Thane has been with me from the beginning,” said Thompson. “He helped me organize my business, form a business plan, devise a marketing strategy and provides emotional support.”

Brown said the first time he met Thompson, he thought her business idea was unique and had an excellent chance of succeeding.

“She has passion, energy coming out her ears, focus, tenacity and is an unbelievable salesperson-- but she is nice about it,” he said.

Thompson operates under the philosophy that “every child can learn to play.” Her students are aged three through eight years old, and students include children with ADHD and dyslexia.

“Most piano teachers do not accept children for piano lessons until they are seven or eight years of age; however, studies have shown that children who begin private piano lessons in preschool test higher in spatial reasoning, which is fundamental for math and

science,” said Thompson. “Also, piano lessons help develop the preschool child’s eye-to-hand coordination, ability to concentrate and build the child’s confidence.”

For more information about Pianimals Kids Club, go to www.pianimalskids.com.

For more information about SCORE, its counseling and seminars, go to www.scoreworks.org or call (513) 684-2812.

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