

Small Business News

March, 2022



A COMMUNITY ANCHOR: RUSSELL'S PHARMACY

Story by Victoria Gonzalez | Photos courtesy of Darius Russell

For more than ten years, Darius and Terenisa Russell dreamed of opening an independent pharmacy in East Durham. Thanks to Self-Help Credit Union and the Angier Business and Children's Center (ABC Center), they were able to realize this dream in the form of Russell's Pharmacy. Since its opening in 2019, Russell's has had a profound impact on the community, on both a personal and practical scale.

Back when Russell's Pharmacy was still just a dream, there were no independent pharmacies in East Durham. For many members of the community, a lack of available transportation made it difficult to access the prescriptions and over-the-counter items they needed.

This is why, in 2019, Self-Help hoped to include an independent pharmacy in their ABC Center project. When they heard about the Russells' idea, it seemed like divine intervention. The Russells worked together with Self-Help to remodel and design a space within the ABC Center where they could bring their long-awaited vision to life.

Finally, there was a place within walking distance where East Durham residents could fill their prescriptions and talk with a trusted medical professional. Not only did Russell's Pharmacy fulfill a need, but this local, minority-owned business also serves as a point of inspiration and pride for East Durham residents. Russell's, along with the other businesses in the ABC Center, are part of a thriving economic hub created by and for the surrounding community.

The ABC Center is a commercial development of five historic buildings along Angier Drive in East Durham. Thanks to the investment of the City and Self-Help Credit Union, the Center offers 45,000 sq. ft. of affordable space to small businesses and non-profits.



Darius and Terenisa Russell

“Self-Help has helped tremendously to create a more equitable small business ownership by instilling and giving the chance to minority-owned businesses,” says Dr. Darius Russell, co-owner and Pharmacy Manager. “In the community, it provides that anchor.”

The sense of community created by the ABC Center is palpable within the buildings. It is not just an economic hub, but a social hub as well. The business owners all know one another, and cheer each other on during the good times as well as the trying times. According to Dr. Russell, “We help support each other, and that is a tremendous thing.”



Dr. Russell assists a patient

Without the assistance of Self-Help, this prosperous hub would not have been possible. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Self-Help has redefined the role of a landlord, and treated the resilient tenants of the ABC Center with support and grace.

“They’ve made it very plausible for us to survive during the pandemic,” Dr. Russell explains. “Without them...we probably would not have thrived.”

The patients of the pharmacy are grateful for its steady presence. The impact of independent pharmacies such as Russell’s is not to be underestimated. When asked to describe the difference between a traditional corporate pharmacy and an independent one, Dr. Russell was quick to respond: “We create that sense of family.”

Many patients of Russell’s state that they have never experienced service from a pharmacist like the services provided at Russell’s Pharmacy, where the staff strive to build trust. Oftentimes, the pharmacists come out from behind the counter to sit with their customers and offer explanations and medical advice. Additionally, Russell’s offers delivery services to make access to prescriptions easier and safer, and many of the pharmacists and technicians on duty speak Spanish, enabling them to assist Spanish-speaking customers in their native language.

“We thrive on taking care of people,” says Dr. Russell. “We want people to feel more comfortable when they walk into a pharmacy.”

By supporting an independent pharmacy like Russell’s, customers are not only supporting the personal services offered by a local pharmacist; they are also uplifting the economy in their hometown. In the words of Dr. Russell: “We live in Durham. The more that we’re able to grow...the more we can give back.”

Russell’s Pharmacy is located at 2116 Angier Ave, Durham, NC.

You can also learn more by [visiting their website.](#)



The counter at Russell's

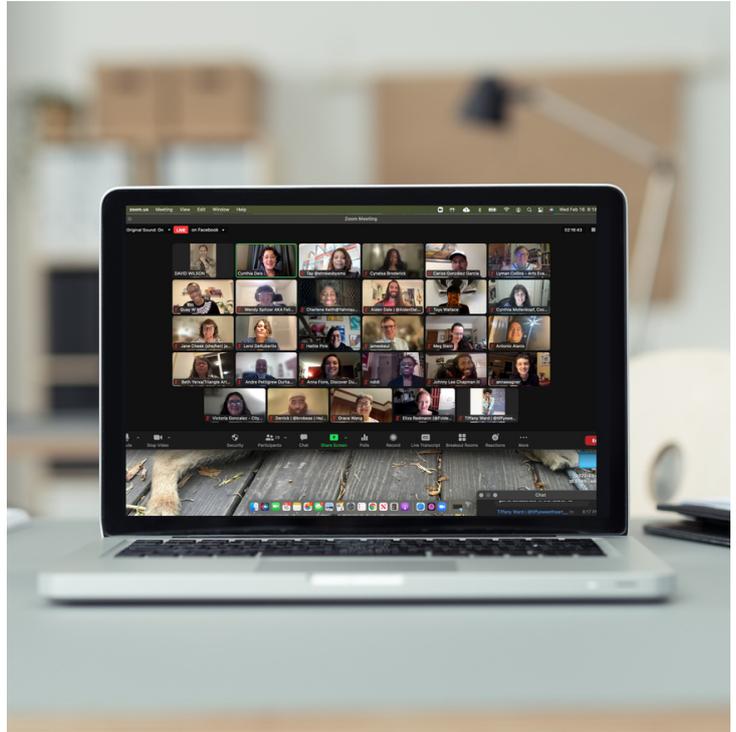
"MOMENTUM 360: MAKING YOUR OWN CAREER IN PUBLIC ART" PROGRAM CONCLUDES

Story by Victoria Gonzalez | Photo courtesy of Triangle Artworks

Momentum 360's first ever public art centered course has recently concluded. The cohort was made up of 25 local artists, who were instructed by Cynthia Deis of Triangle Artworks and prominent public artist David Wilson. The City of Durham recognizes that today more than ever, art is an essential part of our culture and our economy. Since the COVID-19 shutdown, our cultural attention has shifted toward our public spaces, creating a growing need for local artists who can create public works.

Over this six-week course, participants received class-style training hours and one-on-one advising, with the purpose of learning the necessary business and networking skills to be competitive when applying for public art opportunities. As a graduation requirement, the participants were divided into teams for a final presentation. Each team presented proposals and application materials for real-life public art calls across the country. Many of the teams submitted these materials as legitimate applications, and now await their results.

Congratulations to all our graduates! If you are interested in learning more about Momentum 360, please visit the City's webpage on [DurhamBusiness360.com](https://www.durhamnc.gov/business360)



The cohort on graduation night

"E3 DURHAM CONNECTS" PROGRAM LAUNCHES

Victoria Gonzalez

Durham-based organization Forward Cities is a recipient of the Community Navigators grant, distributed through the SBA's national program. As a result, the City, County, and many other trusted organizations are partnering with Forward Cities to create the E3 Durham Connects program.

The E3 Program seeks to expand opportunities for technical assistance for our small businesses. Forward Cities will use partnerships with community-based organizations to connect entrepreneurs with customized support resources depending on their needs. Through networking, collaboration, and personalized advising, E3 Durham hopes to tackle the real systemic barriers entrepreneurs are facing. The City supports this effort as part of our commitment to supporting Durham's entrepreneurial ecosystem.

If you are interested in joining, visit the [E3 Durham webpage](https://www.durhamnc.gov/e3).

BLACK BUSINESS WEEK

Victoria Gonzalez | Logo courtesy of the GDBCC

The Greater Durham Black Chamber of Commerce (GDBCC) celebrated Black Business Week from February 7-12. The week was filled with virtual seminars and ceremonies highlighting the growth and development of Durham's Black-owned businesses. The City's Office of Economic & Workforce Development was a proud sponsor.

Congratulations to the GDBCC and all the honorees for a successful week of events!

