

Posted: 12:00 a.m. Sunday, Dec. 6, 2015



Without a doubt, a sense of community is important in business

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By Michael D. Pitman

Staff Writer

FAIRFIELD — ESJ Carrier Corporation, the business started by Sandra Ambrose-Clark's father, went from a multi-million dollar business to "practically nothing" during the height of the Great Recession.

That setback forced her to start a garage company so she can repair the trucks of ESJ Carrier, a business that was part trucking company and part third-party brokerage firm. Ambrose-Clark started Without a Doubt Truck & Trailer Repair because she couldn't afford the high-priced mechanics needed, and she also knew small trucking companies and truckers were probably equally affected by the economic downturn.

"I had a lot of trucks, but I didn't have the money to pay for the rates for mechanics," she said, adding that some mechanics would charge \$115 per hour.

Now both companies are going strong, said Ambrose-Clark, 53, who was the recently named Fairfield Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors chairwoman.

She started her new garage venture by hiring a mechanic who could make a determination if he could fix the problem or if it did need a specialist.

"I wanted to take a very bad experience so when a driver breaks down or a truck needs a repair, I wanted to give them a place that was economical and they could afford."

Ambrose-Clark said she stands by the work of the mechanics but if it wasn't done right she'll have it re-fixed until it's right at no extra charge. That goes back to her small-town upbringing where everyone is a friend.

Now every one of her 16 mechanics abides by that philosophy which was indelibly instilled in her by her mother and late father, Eva and Jake, and growing up in the Mayberry-type town of Cadiz, Kentucky. And she's taken that "The Andy Griffith Show" sense of community and applied it to her business philosophy.

Every month from April to November, Ambrose-Clark invites neighbors, friends and strangers to her business at 3240 Production Drive for a community lunch at no charge to them. And every November, she asks everyone attending to bring a new toy for a boy or girl to donate for charity, an Appalachian ministry in Somerset, Kentucky.

The community lunch is in a way a tribute to a woman from her home town everyone called Mrs. Cain — their version of Aunt Bee from "The Andy Griffith Show."

"She took care of all the kids, and after school she made cookies and she brought us into her home," said Ambrose-Clark.

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