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CHRISTIAN REALTY | GAIUS HILL



JEANNE REASONOVER / THE TENNESSEAN

In God they trust

Entrepreneurs say Christian names are good for the soul — and good for business

NINE FRUITS | KEVIN AND KYLE BANKS



JEANNE REASONOVER / THE TENNESSEAN

GOSPEL EXPRESS | KIM COFFEE



LAVONDIA MAJORS / THE TENNESSEAN

By CHARLES BOOTH | Staff Writer

FRANKLIN — When Kim Coffee started his own auto-repair business, he didn't put much thought into the name. The business cards and fliers he printed up simply said, "Kim's Auto Repair."

The phone never rang. "It didn't work," he said. "Then I started reading the Bible, and I said, 'Thank you, Jesus. That's what I need.'"

Coffee, a minister who began preaching at age 12, decided to call his business The Gospel Express. Immediately, he said, the phone started ringing.

"People love it," he said. "I also called my godbrothers back home and told them what my business name is, and they (were) surprised. They said, 'Man, that is perfect.'"

In Williamson County, more entrepreneurs are blurring the line between religion and business by naming and running their businesses in a way that reflects their beliefs. Companies from real estate brokers to food service professionals are adopting names that showcase their values.

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WILLIAMSON: COMMUNITY NEWS

Faith: Values may be subtle

FROM PAGE 1W

Fruits reflect character

Christian values reveal themselves in a subtle way at Nine Fruits, a new smoothie shop in Cool Springs run by twin brothers Kevin and Kyle Banks.

The brothers decided to use the healthy treat to highlight positive character traits.

"The nine fruits doesn't stand for actual fruits," Kevin said. "It stands for the fruits of the spirit. We have those printed on all of our cups. They are the positive character traits love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control."

The brothers grew up in California drinking the fruit smoothies their mother made for breakfast. They wanted to open a smoothie franchise in Nashville but were turned down, so they opened their own independent business making only nine fresh-fruit smoothies with no sugar or additives.

Following the nine character traits themselves, Kevin said, is what they hope will keep customers coming back.

"Those are just positive character traits that we feel everyone could display more of," he said. "We believe that starts with us as a business and as a family. We try to pass that on to everybody we come into contact with."

The brothers' attitudes impressed customer Paul Cookson. He went into Nine Fruits just looking for a smoothie, but after hearing about the fruits of the spirit, he couldn't stop talking about the new business.

"It kind of catches you off guard," he said. "They're just a great family to talk to."

Name makes statement

Gaius Hill took a similar route when he opened Christian Realty a little more than a year ago. The company's logo incorporates a cross in place of the letter "i" in the word "Christian," and Hill has put this on his "for sale" signs and on his Escalade.

"I felt the need to open a

Drink menu tied to spirituality

The Nine Fruits nine smoothies and their spirits are:

- Passion Paradox: Love
- Berry Fusion: Joy
- Choc Full of Peanut Butter: Peace
- Pina Naranja: Patience
- Top Banana: Kindness
- Strawberry Blonde: Goodness
- Peach Flamango: Faithfulness
- Banana Bean: Gentleness
- Berried in Kiwi: Self-control

company called Christian Realty to put signs out because when people see a church with a cross on it, it's because it's a church," he said in February. "When they see the cross on a sign out in a yard or on a building, it's, 'What's that? What's going on? What does that mean?' They have to think about it."

Hill went against the advice of almost everyone he knows in choosing the name for his company. Friends and industry professionals told him it would turn some people away and limit what he could do, but almost a year later, Hill said that hasn't been the case.

"Things are going awesomely good," he said last week. "We've got about 25 agents now. The public accepts us extremely well. I think it's been a very good move."

Names don't limit

Coffee said he has expanded his business beyond auto repair thanks to the strength of its religious name. The business now includes auto detailing, house cleaning, painting, landscaping and any type of handy work.

For Coffee, it's no longer simply a business, but rather an expression of his faith. He said more customers are seeking him out specifically because of the Christian-themed name.

That's why the argument



JEANNE REASONOVER / THE TENNESSEAN

Kevin Banks, 22, operates Nine Fruits, a smoothies shop in Cool Springs, with his twin brother. Occasionally their little brother, Cameron, helps out. Their nine "fruits" are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

that the word "Christian" is limiting his real estate opportunities just isn't true, Hill said.

"I think it's been a very good move. It illustrates who we are without being pretentious," he said. "When I work with Hindus and other people, they understand that I'm not discriminating."

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