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Black Enterprise Event in Nashville Draws 1,500

The Associated Press

NASHVILLE – About 1,500 people attending the eighth annual Black Enterprise Entrepreneurs Conference were urged to be humble and patient – and to find a banker who believes in them.

Speakers at the conference at the Gaylord Opryland hotel ranged from the owner of a pound cake company to an expert in emerging technology.

Black Enterprise magazine and Microsoft Corp. are sponsoring the four-day conference, which started Thursday.

Amy Hilliard, president and founder of Chicago-based ComfortCake Co., worked in corporate jobs for 20 years before deciding to sell pound cakes. She said she involved her family in every way possible and warned them about the risks of her venture.

Her daughter coined the company motto: “Pound Cake so good it feels like a hug.”

Wilhelmina Bell-Taylor runs BETAH Associates., a technology company in Bethesda MD.

Bell-Taylor said she made her employees read Jim Collins “Good to Great,” which describes personality traits and values common to top CEO’s. She is a former teacher who worked with government agencies and other organizations nationwide.

James Britton, operator of a Dallas startup, came to the conference to network. He said he wants to learn “the keys” to other entrepreneurs’ success.

Conference organizers said the turnout was strong, despite the state of the economy.

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