

Chamber names new chairman

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Rahman expected to bring 'new energy'



There's a new chairman at the helm of the African-American Chamber of Commerce of Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware.

Effective Jan. 1, Sulaiman Rahman, CEO and founder of the event-based Web portal UrbanPhilly.com, will become the chamber's chairman.

He succeeds Delilah Winder, of Delilah's Southern Cuisine, who has served as chair since 2006.

AACC Executive Director Kim Johnson said the organization is excited about Rahman's new leadership post.

"We do see him as bringing new energy and a different perspective," she said. "He is a very brilliant, very dynamic person. I think he brings a creative aspect and I'm looking forward to working with him and under his leadership."

Effective Jan. 1, Sulaiman Rahman, CEO and founder of the event-based Web portal UrbanPhilly.com, will become the chairman of the African American Chamber of Commerce of Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware. — PHOTO BY HIROKO TANAKA/TRIBUNE STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Rahman, who will serve as the third chairman in the organization's history, is also a national trainer in the direct/sales network marketing industry.

"I want to really help steer the board and engage the board to the level that we're an extension of the staff at the African

American Chamber of Commerce," said Rahman, who has a background in the real estate industry.

According to Rahman, the chamber's leadership team is in the process of shaping its new strategic plan that will be launched in February.

The strategic plan will focus on four core areas under the concept of enabling members to REAP the benefits of being a member — an acronym which stands for helping businesses create a road map, serving as a resource for emerging trends and business opportunities, having a strong advocacy voice and participation and inclusion.

"We're finding that there is all these organizations out there, so many technical assistance programs, different information out there about how to start your own business but no one really has a road map that says listen, this is where you're at and where you need to go," Rahman said.

"We want to stay on top of emerging opportunities whether its green business opportunities, whether its business that traditionally African-American businesses have not really focused in on, figure out what those barriers are and help those businesses over the barriers."

Rahman, 33, said one of its key initiatives will be to ensure that African-American businesses are participating in the economy of a local, state and federal level.

"I believe that in order for our city to be successful, all communities have to be involved in the city's economy. We are about as strong as our weakest link. So it's important whether it's white, Black, Asian, Latino — we're able to make sure that there is a level playing field for businesses to participate and to succeed," said Rahman, who attended the University of Pennsylvania where he studied electrical engineering and entrepreneurship.

In keeping with the push for inclusion, Rahman says the organization will be working to ensure that African Americans are benefiting from the federal economic recovery dollars by identifying qualified businesses for participation.

Rahman noted that the chamber has hired Nicole Ross as its new program manager, in a move that will bring a lot of value to the leadership team. Ross is the former director, marketing and multicultural affairs, Greater Philadelphia Film Office.

He currently serves on the board of directors for Young Involved Philadelphia and Rennie Harris Movement. Rahman serves on the committee for the Multicultural Affairs Congress and the Minority Entrepreneur Development Week. He is also a member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc.

He has been the recipient of various recognitions, including being honored by Leadership Philadelphia as one of Philadelphia's "101 Next Generation Connectors and as the recipient of the Urban League of Philadelphia's Young Urban Leader Award.

Rahman has also been selected as the Philadelphia Tribune's 2008 "10 People Under 40 to Watch" and 2009 "Most Influential African American Leaders."

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