Kathi Howard-Primes, 2013

Sometimes even a teacher needs to learn a few things. Kathi Howard-Primes felt that way when she applied to the 10,000 Small Businesses program sponsored nationally by Goldman-Sachs. Howard-Primes, the founder and CEO of Momentum Tutoring, was part of the inaugural 10,000 Small Businesses class at Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C®). She and 35 other business owners graduated from the 11-week program in February.

“There is something special about Tri-C,” said Howard-Primes. “I knew that before I started this program, having worked there as an educational talent search adviser in 2010 and 2011. I saw firsthand then what Tri-C did for students. I never knew that I would benefit in the same way.”

Howard-Primes, a Dayton native, graduated from Ohio University in 1986 with a bachelor’s degree in business administration. She worked for a law firm in Washington, D.C., for four years before moving back to Ohio and settling in Columbus. After leaving D.C., she married her husband, Marlon, whom she had met in college.

In 1993, they relocated to Cleveland, where Kathi worked for the Urban League and then Cleveland State University in programs dealing with youth and education. Howard-Primes, who has a master’s degree in education from Cleveland State University, has always been interested in helping students succeed. “While at CSU, I met many outstanding students; however, I found a number of students not prepared for college work,” said Howard-Primes. “I wanted to do something to help, and tutoring is what I came up with.”

Starting with one tutor and three students, Momentum now helps more than 300 students with 62 tutors in 20 school districts. As Momentum Tutoring started growing, Howard-Primes realized she needed to be a better businessperson. “The tutoring business is a $12 billion a year industry,” she said. “I had no background in growing a business, so I applied to the ‘10K’ program and was accepted.”

Howard-Primes reports that her business has already benefited from the program. “What I learned about marketing, money and metrics has helped tremendously,” she said. “Our expanded marketing program has led to a growth in private clientele as well as larger SAT and ACT preparation workshops. I had great teachers and mentors in the program and they had a great impact on my way of thinking about the business.”

Howard-Primes cited a quote from Thomas Edison that motivates her: “If we all did the things we are really capable of doing, we would literally astound ourselves.”

She sees Tri-C as a great way to live out that motivation. “I believe Tri-C gives everyone who wants to succeed the opportunity to succeed,” she said. There is something special about Tri-C.”