The beginning of the entrepreneurial journey often begins with, “what do I need?” Or, “what do they need?” From there the entrepreneur begins to determine how he/she can meet and exceed those needs with a new product or service that has yet to be introduced. Then, the entrepreneur can continue to grow their business and their bank account or they can figure out how to use his/her success to help someone in need.

Tom Hughes has gone through steps one, two, and three, repeatedly. After graduating from Florida State University in 1961 with a dual BBA in Marketing and Finance and four years in the Navy, Hughes went on to begin working for Firestone Tire and Rubber Company. After that experience, Hughes realized he never wanted to work for anyone again and started working towards owning his own business by working his way up the corporate ladders. In 1984, after serving as Audit Manager, Controller and Chief Financial Officer for several corporations he became part owner of a $45M a year company, the Pioneer Business Group. In 1987, Pioneer Business Group was sold to North American Acquisition Corporation. From there Hughes went on to own several companies in the health services industry and currently serves as a consultant and part owner of National Electronic Attachment, Inc and Medical Electronic Attachment, Inc.

But what Hughes is most proud of is his ability to give back and help others. Although as an entrepreneur he has not always had full pockets, but he has always been willing to aid in other entrepreneurs’ careers and it has helped to motivate him through his path.

“In order to serve as an example, I had to be a success,” said Hughes.

In 2008, after receiving his Master of Business Administration from Kennesaw State University through the WebMBA program Tom Hughes was brought to Georgia Southern by Dr Constance Campbell and was introduced to Luke Pittaway.

Hughes now serves on the Center for Entrepreneurial Learning and Leadership’s Advisory Council. After realizing that everyone is crunching numbers and feeling the strain from university cutbacks Hughes once again asked, what do you need? And he delivered, in the form of two brand new laptops with all the bells and whistles.

“The climate right now is not really in favor of new business,” says Hughes.

He has made it his priority to help young entrepreneurs work towards seeing their dreams and ideas come to life, either by dosing out advice, making network connections for their benefit, or supplying teaching materials.

Tom Hughes is most proud of the schools he is helping to build in Zambia. Hughes serves on the board for the Alliance for Children Everywhere, Inc where he has played a considerable role in helping 2,500 children go to school for free. In a country where 68% of the population live below the poverty line and most working adults only bring home about a dollar a day, parents simply can’t afford to send their children to school.
Through all of his successes and trials, Hughes concedes that in fact behind every good man, is a good woman. Hughes admits that he has loved his career as an entrepreneur and business man but the lifestyle was probably not as easy for his wife. In down times, everyone is getting paid except for the entrepreneur.

“I remember looking at buying a quart of milk or a half gallon because we were trying to save money to make it through the end of the week and the next week you can buy the whole store as well as the inventory,” recalls Hughes.

In his fifty year career, Hughes continues to look for methods to increase his success so that he can serve as a lesson to young and upcoming entrepreneurs. And equally, or even more importantly continues to work for ways to help anyone he can.
Write Place 2011 VIP Reception: E-Zone Debuts as Event Venue

October 13, 2011

The guests included Georgia Southern president Dr. Brooks Keel, other university faculty and staff, local business and government leaders, community members, and six award-winning local authors. Following the reception, attendees strolled across the street to join the rest of the audience at the Averitt Center’s Emma Kelly Theater for the author presentations.

Jenny Foss, editor of Statesboro Magazine, and one of the event organizers said, “There couldn’t have been a better choice for our joint event of the community and university. It’s exactly why the Ezone was created – to bring the two together.” Foss also commented on the amenities of the space. “It’s a terrific venue with an inviting open space and a kitchen area for our caterers. The classroom and conference room would be great for a business meeting or conferences, too.”

Written by: Lynn Lilly, Entrepreneurial Fellow