

Small Business Person of the Year



Tonya and Peter Dugas opened TSAV, a woman-owned audio visual design, staffing and installation company in Athens, Georgia. With the guidance and support from the Athens, office of the SBDC, they have grown the business from a local sound design and installation firm to an internationally—recognized leader in the AV industry. The TSAV employs more than 60 people.

Peter is a former professor and serial entrepreneur that has launched several technology and entertainment startups in the Athens area. Tonya's background consists of experience in accounting, at large and small firms, corporate governance and human services. Together they have the perfect combined skillsets and experiences to be successful entrepreneurs.

Along the way they have received immeasurable support from the local SBDC office, ranging from basic business development counseling, to completing the Georgia Mentor Protégé Connection Program. They credit the SBDC for much of the company's success.

One of the greatest benefits of working with the SBDC, learning how to diversify customers, was put to good use during the economic downturn. Many of TSAV's projects were funded with construction bonds, when the construction sector slowed down, that severely impacted TSAV's revenue. Luckily, they had learned to not rely on just one industry and had begun doing other jobs that weren't tied to large construction bonds.

Today, the firm does work with convention centers, government facilities, churches, athletic stadiums and various other venues. In fact they even designed and installed the AV system for the University of Georgia football stadium.

The Dugas' have received numerous awards and recognition from the local city government and the chamber of commerce for their meteoric growth and positive impact on the local economy in Athens.