

# A Helping Hand

**NEW GOVERNOR'S OFFICE WORKS TO ENSURE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR STATE CONTRACTS**

**S**mall business is actually big business in Tennessee.

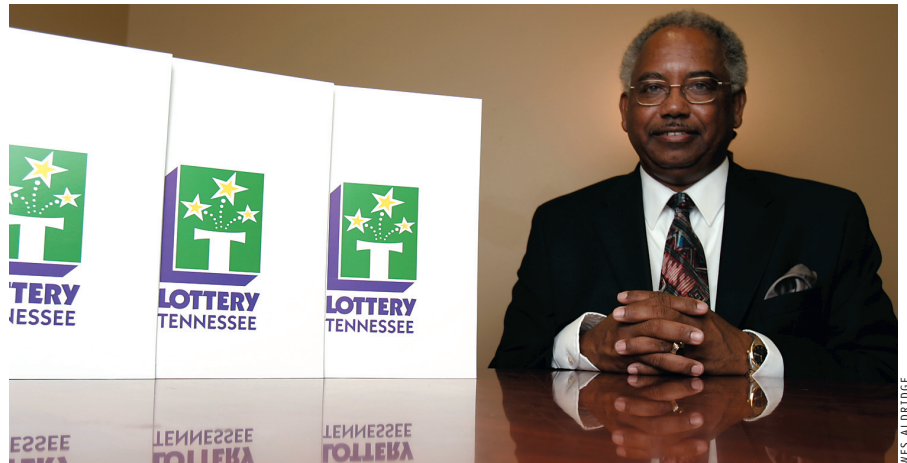
In 2002, 97.1 percent of Tennessee businesses were classified as small businesses, fueling the stability of the economy, quality of life and employment opportunities. With those facts in mind, state officials are increasing their efforts to support small-business growth throughout the region.

As a former small-business owner, Gov. Phil Bredesen is especially attuned to the advantages and challenges of these companies. In turn, his focus and interest have led to the formation of the Governor's Office of Diversity Business Enterprise. Created by executive order in December 2003 and under the leadership and direction of General Services Commissioner Gwendolyn Sims Davis, the office serves as the central point of contact for small, minority- and women-owned businesses looking for contracting opportunities with the state of Tennessee.

The office registers, verifies and assesses businesses to determine if the business is ready, willing and able to participate in contracting opportunities.

"Primarily, this office helps state agencies reach out to small, minority- and women-owned businesses, serving as a helping hand to those businesses that want to contract with the state but don't have the expertise to navigate the process," Davis says. "After only a few months in operation, we've made substantial improvements to procurement policies and procedures to assure equal and fair participation of diversity businesses."

The Governor's Office of Diversity Business Enterprise brings together representatives of five state agencies: the departments of Economic and Community Development, Finance and Administration,



*Ernest Broadwater, solutions consultant and president of Broadwater and Associates Group Inc., displays Tennessee Lottery materials produced by his company.*

General Services, Transportation and the State Building Commission. By bringing these agencies together, the Governor's Office of Diversity Business Enterprise coordinates the efforts of each to ensure that small, minority- and women-owned businesses have a fair and equal opportunity to participate in state contracts.

After a business has registered and has been verified as a diversity business, the next step is to assess its specific needs.

If the Governor's Office of Diversity Business Enterprise assesses that a business is in need of technical, managerial or financial assistance, the business will be referred to ECD's Business Enterprise Resource Office – or BERO.

"BERO has a unique position in state government because we can provide direct assistance to small, minority- and women-owned businesses," says Rick Meredith, ECD's assistant commissioner for business services. "We can take a business that needs help making connections and put them in contact with people across the state."

Broadwater and Associates Group Inc.,

a Nashville-based promotional products and commercial printing company, is one of BERO's success stories.

BERO assisted Broadwater in the cultivation of its relationship with the Tennessee Lottery Corp. and its partnership with GTECH Corp., an IT company providing software and other services to the lottery industry. Broadwater provided variable-data software and information to assist GTECH with statewide postcards to introduce the lottery.

"Our company has experienced tremendous growth," says owner Ernest Broadwater. "BERO has been a driving catalyst in assisting our company to cultivate long-lasting, mutually beneficial relationships and business partners."

– Seannalyn Brandmeir

## SITES TO SEE

- ▶ Governor's Office of Diversity Business Enterprise, [www.tennessee.gov/businessopp](http://www.tennessee.gov/businessopp)
- ▶ Broadwater and Associates, [www.broadwaterprint.com](http://www.broadwaterprint.com)