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WHS Plumbing and Heating

Bringing Jobs Back to the Neighborhood

BY MICHELLE PHIPPS-EVANS

William Satterwhite



Andrew Lightman

When William Satterwhite decided to locate his plumbing business, WHS Plumbing and Heating, at the corner of Goodhope Road and Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue in Southeast, little did he know that his 6-year-old enterprise would face some challenges above the regular ins and outs of running a small business. The building, which he owns, had been targeted by a development company, Satterwhite said.

“They wanted to use eminent domain,” said Satterwhite about the developer trying to acquire the space. His business can be seen from the exit ramp off Interstate 395 heading to the Anacostia, which is abuzz with activity. Across the street from the business are several large cranes, men wearing hard hats and a lot of movement. There are new government-occupied buildings, a new gallery, new businesses, a new Big Chair and more. He said he planned on expanding, but since there was a possibility he might have to get “rid of the place,” he decided to wait.

“I don’t know what’s going to happen down the road,” he said. “I don’t want to hold up progress, but I feel that by my coming back, I’m bringing back jobs, and the store serves a need. It’s a valuable business. It’s not that I opened a liquor store. People have been steady in coming in.” Satterwhite, a 46-year-old former Ward 8 resident who grew up on S Street in Southeast, said, “There’s a need for a homegrown business, so all the money doesn’t go out the community.”

Opened since 2004, WHS Plumbing and Heating currently employs about 10 people, most of them District residents. The company handles both residential and commercial plumbing, providing quick response for problems including everything from faucets, food, disposers, water heaters and toilets, according to the company’s website. Satterwhite and his staff have more than 20 years’ plumbing experience, including the ability to handle difficult emergencies.

Family-owned and operated by Satterwhite – who holds masters plumbing licenses in the District, Virginia and

Maryland – and his wife, Monique, the business's philosophy is to "serve our customer with the best quality of craftsmanship, materials, proficiency and professionalism in the workmanship in our staff," he said, adding that the company is licensed, bonded and insured.

Satterwhite graduated from Wilson High School, and he attended Devry Institute in Atlanta, Ga. Monique, who is from Elizabeth, NJ, graduated from a university in North Carolina with a degree in computer science and met William while at college. She handles the business's financials, and they now live in Ward 6.

Although the business has been operating for six years, Satterwhite is planning a grand opening this spring. He said that in the beginning of his operation, it was mainly other plumbers who frequented the business. Recently, however, he said more homeowners have been seeking his services. What separates WHS Plumbing from other firms, according to Satterwhite, is that it operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. He said the company "will do our best to solve your problem. Here at our company, we don't believe in assuming the role of your typical plumber. We'd like to do more, and there's nothing that's too challenging or troublesome to prevent us from applying our highest standards."

Satterwhite's plan is to start a plumbing school onsite at the company to continually teach young people in the neighborhood about the trade. "I wanted to grab a few adults, give them a taste of plumbing," he said, and if they're ready, he'll get them into an apprenticeship. "It was important to me to bring some jobs back to my neighborhood."

For more information, call WHS Plumbing and Heating at 202-255-9231, 202-262-8676, or visit www.whsplumbingandheating.com. ★

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