

best-selling author and nationally known motivational speaker. "She has made tremendous strides in a short amount of time."

Toastmasters International, which helps members develop public speaking skills, last year named Jolley among the world's top five outstanding speakers.

On a scale of one to 10 — one being a new comer, 10 a Zig Zigar — "she's probably a five," Jolley said. How long until she's a 10? "If she keeps going like she's going, it won't be long."

An epiphany

While maintaining a full-time career with Magnolia Properties, Council balances her time with her growing Charles Thoroughbred Seminars, named for her father and a mentor who nicknamed her "Thoroughbred."

Council's idea to found the company began with a telephone call from John Lumpkin, a local pastor and elementary school principal, inviting Council to speak to a group of women at a newly opened church.

"I said, 'no, not me,'" Council said. "He asked me again and to get him off my back, I said yes."

Two hours before her speaking engagement, Council sat pettified in the church hall, "waiting for something miraculous to come out of my head." She thought of the struggles of her own career — starting out broke and achieving financial success — and pieced together the first of her seminar series, "The Art of Winning."

The audience loved it, word spread and Council today jets to cities across the United States, giving seminars on topics ranging from management to high-impact power principles.

The business of talk

Council declined to disclose revenue figures, but says she's "turning a profit." Council this year is revamping her business, writing new seminars and workbooks, producing a CD-ROM and designing new T-shirts and other collateral materials. Next month, Barnes & Noble will sell her new workbook.

"Once the workbook hits the stands, the profits will go up," Council said. Also in the works is an updated promotional video to be sent to prospective clients. Council will hire a local production company to produce the video.

Jacksonville's Black House Records is producing her CD, and Brown Ink Designs handles all the printing. "If you live in a city, you need to put money back into that city," Council said. "I'm a firm believer in that." That includes giving pro-bono services.

"I am one donating queen this year," Council said. She donates workbooks to Hubbard House, a local domestic abuse shelter for women and children, and averages two speaking engagements a month for non-profit organizations.

When speakers are in demand, they travel, making it difficult for convention organizers to reach them. Council's full-time staff and agent Mike Vaprie cover details that many in the industry neglect. "She's doing things that others won't do," Jolley said. "She said, 'I'm going to write a book.' She did it. She did it. She's going to do a Web site." She did it. She's somebody who's serious about her craft.

Council's success has earned endorsements from several national companies. New York-based Her Game 2 sports-wear, will provide Council's signature skirted sweat suits as part of its \$250,000 endorsement. Witmaner Watches, also based in New York, will spend \$600,000 sponsoring Council's four-city tour, with dates scheduled in Atlanta, Houston, Charlotte, N.C., and Columbia, S.C.

For the past two years, Council has been a presenter at the African-American Women on Tour, billed as "the foremost black women's empowerment conference." The tour each year visits several major cities with a series of workshops on health, career development, relationships and other issues. Speaking on the tour "opens up a whole new avenue for them," said spokeswoman Debbie Marino. "They get national exposure not only to our attendees, but also to our sponsors."

Known as "The Power Lady," Council soon will be featured in *Essence*, a national magazine targeting African-American women.

Gwen Walthour opened Pleasant Living Facilities, a Downtown assisted living facility, after attending several of Council's seminars. "I thought I had gotten too old for this," she said. "She really encouraged me, even though I'm up in age. I went ahead and did it and it worked."

Pleasant Living Facilities opened in 2000 and is licensed for six residents. Terry Fulwood, president of Supreme Advertising Specialties, a local specialty advertising company, also benefited from a seminar the week she opened her business in 1999. At the time, Fulwood's clients were small, family-owned businesses. She credits Council with helping her land accounts with Goodrich and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida.

Taking Council's advice on business-to-business networking, Fulwood found her next target market. "The federal govern-

Based on friends

Council most often develops seminars based on her own experiences or those of her friends, who have developed a habit of calling Council for counsel in the wee hours of the morning.

"I talk to girlfriend A, girlfriend B, girlfriend C," she said. "They all have the same problems. Oh, seminar!" Council tests new seminars on small, nonprofit groups and recently formed an advisory group of six peers from across the country. The group, made up of people from different races and backgrounds, previews Council's new seminars and materials.

"They get to say, 'Don't ever send that out again, or 'Hey, make more of these,'" Council said.

Although her typical audience consists of African-American women, Council attracts crowds of women and men of all ages, races and backgrounds.

Most effective are Council's interactive seminars, which call for physical tasks and encourage audience members to make decisions and set goals on the spot. Her proof comes via repeat invitations. "We always get called back," she said.

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