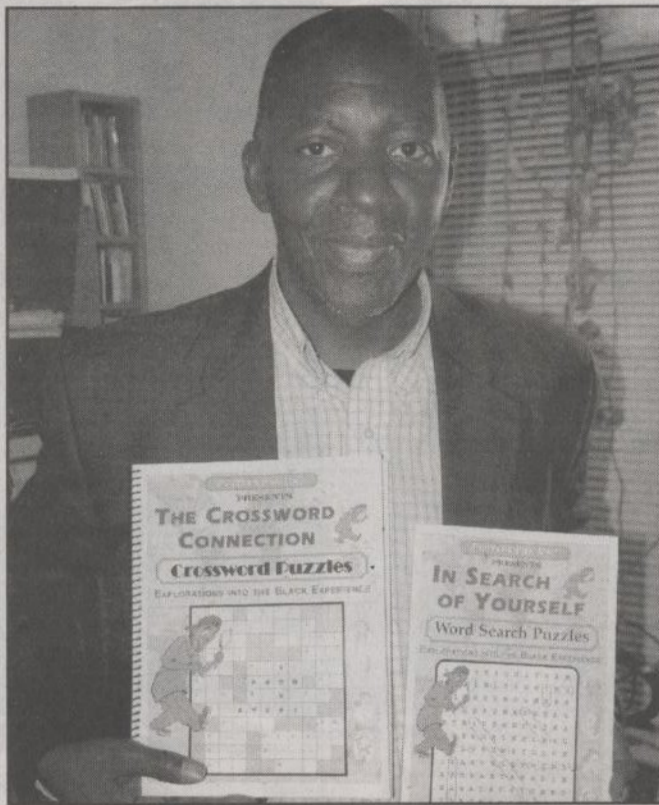


Profile



Kevin Dunn, Project Enterprise's 2007 Entrepreneur of the year, holds up copies of his crossword books

No riddle here: he's a success

Bronx man recognized for crafting puzzles inspired by black history

By Tiziana Rinaldi

Life can be a puzzle, but Kevin Dunn has a knack for it. The creative Bronxite has made a name for himself as Project Enterprise's 2007 Entrepreneur of the year doing exactly what he loves the most, invent word search and crossword puzzles that highlight African and African-American history.

"I call it *edutainment*...it's cultural entertainment," said Kevin Dunn, who took on puzzle making as a hobby, almost 20 years ago.

A lifelong lover of words, he could always find a good puzzle if there was one to be done in a magazine or a newspaper. The passion eventually triggered a habit of coming up with word games that Dunn would do for fun, while commuting to work or on his spare time.

"It was Black History month, a February, in the late eighties or early nineties," said Dunn, "when I first had the thought of creating a puzzle for my kids."

A father of five now mature children, Dunn said he wanted something his kids could do that would amuse them and teach them about their background. Daughter Ebony, sons Jisun and Lordkim, step-daughter Latoya and son Lorkimmaster, who passed away in 2001 at the age of 24, were kindergartners and young teens back then.

The first puzzle was about Hip-Hop, Dunn made it when the revolutionary urban culture was taking off and roaring through the streets of New York.

"I felt," continued the artist and entrepreneur, "that my [oldest kids] would know all about it, and it could be fun!"

The pass time didn't immediately develop into a business perspective, but Dunn's perseverance and dedication found eventually its reward, step by step.

"Ebony, once took one of the puzzles to her middle school," explained Dunn, "one of the assistant principals noticed it and word got around."

Encouraged by his sister Zenola Small, and still keeping his day job as data base manager for a health care company through most of 2002, Dunn started to participate in various festivals and street fairs. He would also stand in front of City's department stores, where he would sell two-to-three page-long, simply bound pamphlets for a buck.

"At the beginning, I was a bit hesitant," said Dunn, "but, people would come by, look at my puzzles, compliment me on the idea, and buy them."

Based not on the concept to test someone's intelligence, but to offer a multigenerational vehicle of connection while enhancing black history learning, Dunn's puzzles are designed for the enjoyment of the whole family.

"I wanted the puzzles to promote family conversation," explained Dunn, "so, if a child didn't know the answer he could go to his parents, or his grandparents to find

it."

In 2004 he joined Project Enterprise, a nonprofit organization that helps micro-businesses get off the ground, and started to work part time as an after-school and youth counselor.

Now the small company owner of "Invision Publications," Dunn designs series of word puzzles in various formats (books, cards and hard cover pamphlets) to be sold in bookstores, or directly through his company's web site under the name "Puzzles for us -- Explorations into the Black Experience."

Dunn, whose puzzles are often found in New York City's schools, also collaborates with the American Liberties Union, where he's developing a puzzle on racial profiling and the famed Apollo Theater, in Harlem, for the "Apollo Spotlight Series."

Ideas for his word games, said Dunn, come from various sources, conversations, people suggestions, reading and research. The clues and themes he chooses are drawn from black history and culture, pop culture and, occasionally, from American Indian and Hispanic cultures, as well.

"I'm not an expert in those subjects," said Dunn, "but, when I can, I like to include themes and clues that emphasize how as a 'whole' we are The People."

Clues to solve Dunn's puzzles range from the name of one of Paul Robeson's spirituals, to the identity of a former Knick's coach, to the creator of Kwanzaa and the style of jazz improvisation started by Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker.

Beyond the clue pages, though, Dunn, whose extensive research is done at the New York Public Library, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, and his own materials, adds the so called "Matters Of Fact" sections, where more in depth information about clues and puzzles' themes can be found.

Also a poet, Dunn sprinkles his word search books and crossword collections with lyrics and observations on life.

The Bronx entrepreneur is currently working on a new "In Search of Yourself," word search puzzle series entirely dedicated to teen's issues of dating, peer pressure, anger management and self-image. The book will be released later this year.

For more information about Kevin Dunn's work and to purchase his puzzles call "Invision Publications" at (718) 538-6102. For the company web site log on www.puzzlesforus.com

A list of participating bookstores can also be found on the web site.