

Soulsville's New Neighbors

MEMShop launches two pop-up stores in South Memphis.

by [CHRIS SHAW](#)

Soulsville residents can now shop for shoes and have their computers repaired without having to leave their neighborhood.

Shoe boutique Klassy Chics and computer repair shop

@Home Computers were the latest pop-up shops chosen through the Mayor's Innovation Delivery Team's MEMShop program.

Since 2012, the MEMShop program has brought new local businesses to formerly long-vacant spaces in the Broad Avenue Arts District, Crosstown, and Overton Square. Through the program, local entrepreneurs apply for a grant from MEMShop, and if they are selected, the businesses get free business advice from the locally based consulting firm, alt.Consulting, and a six-month lease through which the tenant only pays rent for the last three months at a lower price.

More than 10 businesses applied for the vacant storefronts at the corner of Walker and Mississippi in the Soulsville neighborhood, and @Home Computers and Klassy Chics were selected.

Cynthia Norwood, managing director of alt.Consulting, which partners with the mayor's team to run MEMShop, said her company provides up to 50 hours of customized consulting, from developing financial projections to public relations training.

"We want to provide these business owners with the tools they will need to succeed as new business owners and as new additions to their communities," Norwood said.

Michael Patno, who is opening @Home Computers, said he was attracted to the area because of the lack of affordable computer care in the neighborhood.

"South Memphis is a very under-served community when it comes to dependable computer repair," Patno said. "When I went to a Soulsville Neighborhood Association meeting, I learned that Soulsville will soon be getting free Wi-Fi in the whole community, and these people are going to need a store that fixes tablets and laptops at an affordable price."

Patno currently owns the @Home Computer store at 1800 Union in Midtown, but he said that his South Memphis store will concentrate on affordable repair as well as offer numerous refurbished tablets and laptops at discounted prices. Patno also hopes to work with Lemoyne-Owen College and set up an internship at his store for students.

Toya Bailey, who currently owns a cleaning business in Memphis, will be opening up her first shoe boutique in the space next to @Home Computers.

"There are a few shoe stores in South Memphis, but none of them will have the different styles that I offer, and I think it's important for South Memphis to have a presence in the Memphis fashion world," Bailey said. "As long as I keep up with the trends, I will always have a product to sell."

The grand opening for both shops will be in early May, with Klassy Chics set for a grand opening on May 10th. Norwood said that these are the first of several MEMShops in South Memphis, with alt.Consulting looking to introduce two or three more storefronts by the fall.

Although the MEMShop program only provides temporary leases, business owners are encouraged to continue their businesses beyond the six months. On Broad, a number of MEMShop businesses, including Five in One Social Club and My Heavenly Creations, which opened last April, have since signed long-term leases.

The Mayor's Innovation Delivery Team will remain involved with the MEMShop program until October. After that, alt.Consulting will take over the program. The firm is currently raising funds to keep MEMShop going after the fall.



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Josh Colfer

MEMShop storefronts

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