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‘Loser’ Canion launches line of positive clothing

BY LAYLA FARMER
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For Greensboro resident Ken Canion, inspiration comes in all sizes, literally.

Canion, 44, a motivational speaker, author and entrepreneur, founded the Affirmation Apparel clothing line earlier this year, as a means of empowering people to live up to their full potential.

T-shirts in nine different designs are currently, available through the company’s Website, affirmationapparel.com, and will officially be launched tomorrow (Nov. 6) at the Galleria Events Center in Greensboro. The shirts come in a variety of cuts and styles, and bear statements like “I Believe in Me,” “I am Destined for Greatness” and “My Dream is Worth the Effort.”

“I recognized that there was a segment of the population that wanted something different,” Canion said of his motivation to start the company, “...Everybody wants hope.”

Each shirt comes with a motivational placard that expounds on the sentiment the shirt expresses.

“If you keep saying these things, ultimately, you’ll believe them,” Canion remarked, “...I just hope that our line makes people want to take action and change their lives (for the better).”

Canion says he stumbled upon the idea for the line while coaching a kids football team last year. He had a shirt printed that said, “I Believe in You” as a sign of his dedication to the children on the team.

“I wore it every day; I didn’t care what it smelled like,” he quipped.

The idea caught on.

“The parents loved it, the kids loved it, and the more I said it, the more they believed it,” Canion related. “By the end of the year, I could really see a change in them.”

Canion says he wanted the shirts to look as good as he hoped they would make the wearers feel. He contracted with a designer in Portland, Ore., and printed a trial run of 1,500 shirts last April. Within months, he sold out.

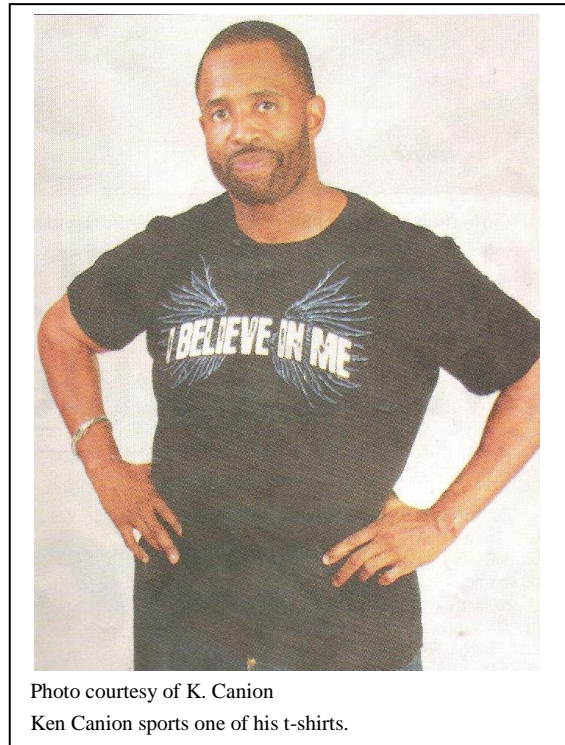


Photo courtesy of K. Canion
Ken Canion sports one of his t-shirts.

“People resonated with this,” he remarked. “They were buying (the shirts) like crazy.”

The bulk of Affirmation’s sales have arisen from fundraising efforts by local organizations, clubs and schools. Selling the shirts as a fundraiser is a win-win, Canion says, because they instill confidence in the people who wear them, and generate revenue for worthy causes.

“What parent would say no to this?” he questioned. “I wouldn’t.”

Canion’s longtime friend Daphne Page-Reaves of Silver Springs, Maryland has witnessed firsthand the power of the shirts’ suggestions. Page-Reaves says she fell in love with the idea of the shirts right away.

“It is a project that I believe in wholeheartedly,” she declared. “It is truly an excellent product, but the intention behind it is what makes it the best.”



Submitted Photo

Daphne Page-Reavis and her son, Quentin, proudly wear Affirmation Apparel shirts.

Page-Reavis, an alumna of NC A&T State University, wasted little time in purchasing shirts for herself and for her nine-year-old son, Quentin.

“The shirts are absolutely fantastic,” she commented. “(in wearing them) I’m making a statement not only to myself, but to the world as well.”

Quentin took to the shirt, which reads “I Believe in Me,” right away, Page-Reavis says, but she didn’t realize how much the declaration meant to her son until last week, when he confided in her that he was anxious about an important football game he was playing in. After discussing the matter at some

length, Quentin told his mother he wanted to wear his Affirmation shirt underneath his jersey to bolster his confidence. At the game, Quentin excelled.

“Even though they lost the game, he was actually able to perform to his personal best,” his mother said. “What he did pretty much inspired me.” I called Ken up and said, “I want to get t-shirts for the rest of his team.”

Affirmation Apparel is not Canion’s first foray into the world of entrepreneurship. He founded his first company, Black Art Gear, in 1993, and enjoyed considerable success. His watches, and clocks, which were adorned with the works of African American artists, were featured on QVC, the Home Shopping Network and in the Spiegel catalogue. The company went under a few years ago.

“I went from having nothing to having it all...and then losing it all,” he related.

The many lessons he learned from the peaks and valleys of his life as a business man led Canion to become a motivational speaker.

“That’s what caused me to write, to reflect, to be introspective about my life and how I could use my life to help other people, he said.

Despite being able to motive audiences all across the nation, Canion says he was in need of a little inspiration of his own.

Canion joined a cast of 50 competitors on Season 3 of the NBC reality show “The Biggest Loser,” in 2007. Though he was cut from the show, he went on to lose a whopping 100-pounds over the course of the next seven months. Battling his weight, and finally winning, gave him some valuable insight, Canion believes. He went on to pen two books about the lessons he’s learned and started his own weight loss boot camp.

“My goal was to use this experience to inspire others,” he said. “Now, I have a platform to help other people, and that was what I always wanted.”

For more information about Affirmation Apparel, or for fundraising opportunities, visit www.affirmationapparel.com or email ken@kencanion.com.