

KC entrepreneur helping others 'fill the gap'

Consultant known for aid to the community

By Joyce E. Smith

Star business & financial writer

After running her own business for more than two decades, Inez Kaiser has an idea of what makes a good employee.

So, she is transferring her knowledge to area teenagers in what she calls a "Fill the Gap Project."

"I counsel 14- to 16-year-olds on how to become good employees," she said. "And I also work with their parents to show them their responsibility. I'm good at motivating people, and I hope it will help cut out crime and drugs."

Kaiser was recently nominated as a finalist in the 1989 KOOL Achiever Awards for her work to enhance economic development in the inner city and to increase opportunities for minority entrepreneurs.

It is the second consecutive year she has been nominated for the award, which is sponsored by Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corp. of Louisville, Ky.

Kaiser earned a bachelor's degree in home economics from the former Kansas State Teachers College, Pittsburgh, in 1941 and a master's degree in home economics from Columbia University in New York in 1958.

She taught elementary and high school courses in the Kansas City area until 1961, when she opened her own business, Inez Kaiser & Associates Inc., a public relations, advertising and management consulting firm.

"I had advanced as far as I could," Kaiser said. "There were no opportunities for blacks in education in 1960."

She also operates Pioneer Awards and Advertising Specialty Co., marketers of plaques and other items for award winners.

Kaiser has received numerous honors, including the National

Minority report



Inez Kaiser heads Inez Kaiser & Associates Inc., a public relations, advertising and management consulting firm. (staff photo by Matt Stockman)

Association of Media Women Inc.'s Woman of the Year in Mass Communications award and the Golden Mike award for the west central area by the American Women in Radio and Television.

In 1987 the National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Clubs Inc. honored her with the Pioneer Business Women's Award for longtime service. She also recently addressed the Women's Bureau of the U.S. Labor Department in Washington on minority women entrepreneurship.

"I'm a pioneer in the business world, as a small business and as a black female," said Kaiser. "I'm going to get something out matter what it takes out of me."

Although she has worked for national corporations such as the Adolph Coors Co. in Denver and Lever Bros. in New York, Kaiser

said she has not received acceptance and support in Kansas City.

"I have a national record of production and respect, but I have no business here, period," she said. "There's an anti-Kaiser movement here; they're out to try to keep me from being successful."

In 1972 Kaiser was selected as the national coordinator for a federally funded program to study the minority woman's role in the economy. As a result she formed the National Association of Minority Women in Business, which currently has about 5,000 members.

Bob Langworthy, a lawyer at Linde Thomson Langworthy Kohn & Van Dyke, has known Kaiser for about 25 years.

"She's not afraid to say what she thinks, and that upsets some people in the community,"

Langworthy said. "But more often than not she's right. She's well-informed and sensitive to the area of concerns and thinking in the black community."

Joanne Collins, who successfully ran against Kaiser for the third district at-large city council seat in 1974 and has since worked with her on other events, said Kaiser was very talented and experienced in promotions.

"When you put something in her hands she will do it and do it well," Collins said. "She has attempted to improve the status of other minority women-owned businesses and attempted to be a good role model."

Said Kaiser: "I live by the motto, 'in every seed of adversity there is some good.' It takes guts and faith to be successful. I'm a risk-taker. I guess that's what business is all about."