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# Mover & Maker

Tennessee native returns to her roots to take over a Franklin stalwart • *By Amy Antonation*

In her words, Reiko Tate likes to take on a challenge every few years.

In 2017, the Nashville native was working as a corporate events planner in Washington, D.C., but her parents, who still lived in Tennessee, were constantly trying to lure her back to the area where she'd grown up.

Both Tate and her parents got their wish when the longtime owner of Franklin's Menu Maker Catering & Events decided to retire.

"The business has been in existence 30+ years," Tate says. "It was started by Mary Weary, and she was looking to retire. A friend of hers and of my mother had a connection, and I went to dinner with [Mary] in 2017. Mary worked with us through 2018, and at that point I took over."



Reiko Tate

Since then, Tate has grown Menu Maker by applying her skills as an event planner to the realm of catering. Here's why she enjoys doing business in Williamson County.

### **What drew you to Franklin?**

I lived in D.C. for close to 15 years. I'm from Nashville, so I knew what it was like to live in a place with trees and green spaces, and you can drive places. When I lived in D.C., I didn't even have a car. I wanted something that was close to how I'd grown up. I wanted to experience that again.

### **How would you describe Franklin's small-business scene?**

There are a lot of small businesses, and people know people. I did a site



visit today and the homeowner worked with Mary some 20 years ago.

Franklin is growing a lot because you have people moving here and lots of businesses moving corporate headquarters here, but it's still small enough that business opportunities are accessible. If you're starting and growing a business, people are willing to help and support. The whole community – whether businesses or individuals – is invested in everybody's success.

### **How is Williamson County to work with from a business perspective?**

It's been great! It's accessible and when I've had questions – like there's a tax I don't really understand – my accountant just called and was even able to go and talk to someone about it. I owned

a business in D.C. and there were many more hoops to jump through. I used to have to pack a lunch when I went to see the D.C. regulation folks. Here, even with the business transition, it's been easy enough.

### **Why would you recommend Williamson County to entrepreneurs looking to open a business?**

It's fertile ground for business ownership. It's accessible in the sense that you can start and grow, and people will assist in that. We work with staffing companies, florists, rental companies, a bunch of different people; we have some excellent partnerships. I know of at least two other Franklin-based caterers, and in the deep pandemic times, we even shared staff. It wasn't planned, but there is enough business here for everyone. We refer business to them and they refer business to us, and it works. 🙌