Up to speed with...

ASHLEY CHRISTENSEN

By LIZA ROBERTS

It’s far-fetched to think when JOHN KINZER ARRIVED AT THE FORMER Bakers bakery on the edge of Mooche, in a couple of hours, the sprawling kitchen he manages there will battle with nearly two dozen prep cooks and bakers; his massive walk-in refrigerators will empty out, then fill up again. Whole loaves will be delivered, so will boxes of carts and gallons of Howling Cow milk, trays of vegetables and eggs. Flour and honey, bulk-purchased dishes and oranges and tangerines. This is the nerve center of Ashley Christine's growing restaurant empire, the common space that enables each of her five Raleigh restaurants, a bar, and an event space to work and thrive. It's called lns Bakery, and it's what made it possible for Christine to open the restaurant: Death & Taxes and the event space Bridge Club—between it and summer's also what makes it possible for her other four popular eateries—Boozer, Beasley's, Chuck's, and Juste.—to reliably churn out fresh, award-winning, creative cuisine.
And perhaps most importantly, Axl Knoblauch is a tightly wound, controls-savvy senior vice president of the Metallics and Marketing division of Raleigh-based ABC Supply, which is the third-largest wholesale home improvement retailer in the country.

In a rare instance of a traditional Americana entrepreneur giving a speech at a conference, he can be heard in the Speckle room, a stop on the tour of ABC Supply’s headquarters.

He begins with the usual marketing spiel: "ABC Supply is the second largest wholesale home improvement retailer in the country. We sell to contractors and home improvement centers. We work with a wide range of products, from building materials to tools." He then transitions to a discussion of the company's strategic goals and initiatives.

He mentions the company’s commitment to sustainability, their efforts to reduce their carbon footprint, and their dedication to supporting local communities. He also highlights their recent investments in technology and innovation, including the development of a new mobile app for customers to order products on the go.

He concludes with a witty anecdote about the challenges of running a large company, noting that while it can be rewarding, it can also be daunting. "We have so many different departments and locations, it can sometimes feel like we’re running a small country!" he says with a smile.

He then takes questions from the audience, fielding inquiries about the company’s growth plans, its impact on the local economy, and its approach to customer service. Overall, the talk was well-received, with attendees praising his engaging presentation style and his insights into the company's operations.
The generator goes to "create a place where people want to come in and sit. We want to create an inviting and friendly atmosphere for visitors." The generator is described as "an inviting and welcoming space for people to come in and enjoy the ambiance."