

ACUTE HEATING & COOLING

Orangeburg Area SBDC Client
Primary Consultant: John Gethers
acutehvac.com



**THOMAS & OCTAVIA
EDWARDS**

RESULTS:

\$1.8M
CAPITAL INVESTMENT

9
JOBS RETAINED

\$2.1M
2025 ANNUAL SALES

BUILT TO LAST

"Smooth seas do not make skillful sailors."

For Thomas and Octavia Edwards, the truth of this saying has been proven time and again. Since launching Acute Heating & Cooling (Acute HVACR, LLC) in 2016, the Summerville-based husband-and-wife team has weathered rapid growth, a global pandemic, and the growing pains that come with success. With steady guidance from the South Carolina Small Business Development Centers (SC SBDC), those challenges became catalysts—transforming the company into a stronger, more disciplined, and future-focused operation.

As Acute Heating & Cooling expanded beyond a home-based operation, the Edwardses first turned to the SC SBDC for help refining their business plan and securing financing to support growth. But when the COVID-19 pandemic abruptly stalled non-emergency work and cut deeply into revenue, the stakes were far higher. Once again, they sought help—this time working closely with John Gethers, who was serving as a Columbia Area COVID consultant at the time and is now the SC State Region Director and a business consultant with the SC SBDC.

Gethers helped the Edwardses secure critical relief funding, retain employees, and stabilize cash flow during one of the most uncertain periods in the company's history. "John came into our lives not a moment too soon," Octavia said. "He became our advocate and kept our hope alive."

Today, Acute Heating & Cooling is operating from a position of clarity and control. Annual revenue has reached approximately \$2.1 million, with nearly \$800,000 generated through government contracts—a strategic shift the Edwardses pursued with Gethers' guidance.

Rather than chasing every opportunity, the company now focuses on carefully selected commercial and government projects under \$500,000 that align with capacity, timelines, and profitability.

"We learned the hard way that not every contract is a good contract," Thomas and Octavia explained. "John helped us slow down, analyze the scope of work, cash flow, and timing, and really understand what projects make sense for our business."

One particularly challenging project became a defining learning experience, revealing gaps in job costing, scheduling, and internal systems. With Gethers' candid approach, the Edwardses addressed those issues head-on—streamlining processes, strengthening financial controls, and investing in leadership development. Acute Heating & Cooling now employs nine full-time employees and is building a more scalable team.

"My role is to help clients see what's beneath the surface," Gethers said. "Thomas and Octavia listened, adapted, and did the work—and that's why they're succeeding."

Looking ahead, the Edwardses are targeting \$3–4 million in revenue within the next two years, guided by a renewed emphasis on profit margins and long-term sustainability. They are also beginning conversations around succession planning to ensure the business they've built will endure. "The main thing is creating something sustainable," Octavia said. "We don't just want to grow—we want to grow the right way."

From pandemic survival to purposeful expansion, Acute Heating & Cooling's journey reflects resilience, strategic guidance, and the power of a trusted partnership. With John Gethers and the SC SBDC still in their corner, the Edwardses aren't just weathering the storm—they're charting a course toward lasting success.

"John Gethers played a huge role in getting our business to where it is today. His guidance, information, and support—it all mattered."

Octavia Edwards
Co-Owner, Acute Heating & Cooling

SERVICES PROVIDED:

- Strategic Planning
- Growth Management
- Marketing Strategy
- Financial Management
- Cost Analysis