



Success Story

PRESS OFFICE

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DaD's ENTERPRISE EVOLVES FROM LEGACY OF OWNER'S FATHER

Dad's Enterprise
Debra Willis-Baldwin

BIRMINGHAM - A seven hundred dollar credit card budget catapulted DaD's Enterprise into a company with bonding capability of up to two million dollars. Debra Willis-Baldwin began this small construction business in 1999, and it has grown steadily in the economically distressed area of Tuskegee. DaD's has overcome many obstacles, such as being owned and operated by a black female single parent, to become a well-known, respected company with a good track record, satisfied customers, and a tax return that has its CPAs nodding "hats off to you."

Ms. Baldwin, the fifth of six children born to hard working farming parents, had to face adversity early in life. Due to the family's financial needs, her father and role model turned from his love of farming to the field of masonry. From an early age, Ms. Baldwin worked on jobs with her father, one of the best known brick masons in the area, and eventually became his helper. She not only experienced construction projects from the ground up but also felt pride in seeing those projects completed and knowing that she had a small hand in it. Still today, she takes pride in and loves construction - whether it's shaping minds or buildings.

As a single parent with no means of support, Ms. Baldwin earned both B.S. and Master's degrees from Tuskegee Institute. During that time, she developed powerful skills in budgeting and time management as a work-study student in the President's Office. She served as the University's Associate Director of Financial Aid Services for several years where she learned to keep current with related federal, state and school regulations. She also worked in consulting which gave her experience in bidding and negotiating - two very important components of successful government contracting. Not known to her then was the fact that this experience would play a very important role in her future.

After learning that one of her sisters had cancer and was in need of both moral support and personal care, Ms. Baldwin knew that she needed a job without a time clock. As her father had changed his life due to family needs some thirty years earlier, Ms. Baldwin made a decision to make a change to become an entrepreneur by using the skills that he had taught her.

Ms. Baldwin was aware that this would be an awesome task, so she went to the Troy State

University Small Business Development Center (TSU-SBDC), which is partially funded by the U. S. Small Business Administration (SBA), for assistance. There she received valuable information, advice, and networking opportunities. TSU-SBDC continues to work with her by providing daily government bid notices which give information on competitive government projects. According to Ms. Baldwin, this tool is very useful in that it allows project managers to quickly review a project synopsis for potential bid prospects.

DaD's has grown into a very successful general contractor with HUBZone and Small Disadvantaged Business (SDB) certifications and successfully participates in SBA's 8(a) Business Development Program. The company has received nine awards under the HUBZone Program and eight under the 8(a) Program since 2000. In 2002, the company received a safety award from the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers in Nashville, Tennessee.

DaD's Enterprise was established on the mission statement: "Recognize an opportunity when you read, hear or see it." When asked what had been the key to the business' success, Ms. Baldwin readily admits that it is recognizing, acknowledging and respecting abilities and skills in others. Her answer to what's next for DaD's Enterprise was, "DaD's Enterprise is somewhat like an umbrella with many spiral columns waiting to be utilized." She then smiled and added, "It's a well-built umbrella."

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