

Invested in St. Louis

DARLENE DAVIS

By Jason Bailey

Darlene Davis had a successful career keeping track of money for major corporations, but she wanted more. She realized that the 80-plus hours a week she spent tracking money for companies she didn't own was worth much more than what she was being paid.

Davis' husband, Tyrone, suggested that she start an accounting firm. She had never considered it. That was six years ago, and she hasn't looked back since. Awards and framed articles decorate the walls of Davis Associates as a testament that she made the right move. And as an added bonus, Davis' husband works as a partner in her firm.

In an industry dominated by white males, Davis doesn't look like the stereotypical accountant. You won't find her wearing a pocket protector or carrying a calculator. Her quick smile and dynamic personality make her warm and approachable.

"My clients come to me and they are just so happy to have a black, female CPA that they can go to," said the mother of three. "There was definitely a need and a market." Davis has clients that have been with her since the beginning of her full-service accounting firm, and she feels like a part of their business success. "The satisfaction of being able to help people is of the utmost importance," said the Saint Louis University alumnus.

Even as a child, Davis understood money. She would save

her allowance and loan money to her brother and cousin who spent theirs on candy and snacks. When they repaid her, it was always with interest. She would even charge late fees.

"I gave them a dollar then they had until the next Friday to give me a dollar and a quarter," Davis said. As a University City High School student, Davis had her eyes set on the accounting field early.

She recalls looking for a summer job and noticing how many ads there were for accountants. She decided then that she would pursue accounting because there would always be a need. "I have fun every day," Davis said of running her own business. "It's not a job to me." She has carved a niche in the St. Louis market and can't see doing business or raising her family anywhere else.

Davis tells a story of congratulating her daughter, Olivia, after a successful school performance. When asked if she would take acting classes and become an actress when she grew up, Olivia's answer nearly brought Davis to tears. "I'm taking over Davis Associates when I get big," said the eight-year-old third grader.

Not only has Davis started a business, but she has also laid a foundation for the future right here in St. Louis. It doesn't get any better than that.