



Building a legacy that impacts her family and community

By Pete Pichaske ♦ Special to The Daily Record

A dozen years ago, Tisa J.D. Clark's management career — she was a director for the giant Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation — was moving along just fine.

Then her infant son was diagnosed with Ring2, an extremely rare genetic disorder, and everything changed.

The diagnosis got Clark to thinking about her legacy, about the type of life she wanted. And that life, she decided, was one that would ensure a viable future for both her disabled son and herself, and at the same time benefit the community.

With that in mind, in 2008 Clark started her own construction and maintenance company. She opened J.D. Clark Professional Services in Upper Marlboro, the Prince George's County community she calls home.

She began by renovating properties that banks had foreclosed on so they could be re-sold. With foreclosures at an all-time high, it was the perfect time for such a venture.

Clark used the management skills she already had, took numerous courses to learn the construction business (which was completely new to her) and networked avidly.

Soon, Clark Professional Services was

doing business in 10 Maryland counties, as well as Washington and Northern Virginia.

In 2012, when the foreclosure crisis had abated, Clark revamped her business. She began working with local governments, especially Prince George's, Anne Arundel and Charles counties, to renovate public properties and spruce them up for low- and moderate-income families.

That venture also flourished, and soon, Clark added new specialties. She contracted with nonprofits who wanted to renovate other distressed homes and neighborhoods. She began offering landscaping services. She

got into property maintenance and management, added some commercial and industrial work.

As she added services, she also added partners, employees and clients. Today, J.D. Clark Professional Services uses 35 subcontractors, all of them small, women-, veteran- or minority-owned, has 10 employees, and has worked on more than 3,500 properties.

Clark's career switch has been a struggle at times, she said, but well worth the effort because she's working toward the goal she set: providing a legacy for herself, her disabled son, now 12, and her older son, 23.

"It's been a journey," she said. "I don't know what the future holds for my younger son, don't know how independent he'll be. But a lot of the groundwork I'm putting in now hopefully and prayerfully will be something that can support me in those later years, and support him as well!"

Clark is especially proud of the work she does to improve blighted properties for low- or moderate-income families. She recently worked with Prince George's County to renovate some 50 distressed homes in the Kentland area, doing everything from putting on new roofing and front porches to adding driveways and trees.

"It was really an awesome program and to be the general contractor

on that type of initiative was very rewarding," she said.

As an African American- and woman-owned firm, Clark's business is certified by the state as a Minority Business Enterprise, and she makes a point of subcontracting with other minority-owned businesses.

Her business has won numerous awards and honors, among them a small business of the year award from the Prince George's Chamber of Commerce and a citation from the governor.

J.D. Clark is not done expanding. Earlier this year, Clark opened a second office in Baltimore, where she plans to provide services similar to what she offers now.

"I want to have another presence in a

community that really needs the support and services that I provide," she said.

The financial success that will help her and her sons is only one part of the legacy Clark feels she has built. The other part, she said, is a legacy of community involvement.

Still an active networker, Clark is vice chairman of the Prince George's County Chamber of Commerce and has adopted Croom Vocational High School, in southern Prince George's, providing the school and its students with supplies, financial support and motivational talks.

"It's about having an impact in the community, being able to give back," she said of her work. "It's about being an inspiration for young people who might look at you as a role model!"

Clark's biggest challenge, she said, has been succeeding in the male-dominated construction business, and she's put in long hours to make her J.D. Clark Professional Services a success.

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*Tisa J.D. Clark,
owner of J.D. Clark Professional Services*

Photos by Maximilian Franz

