

Article submitted by
LB Bailey Foundation, Inc
written by Jimmie Jones and Wanda Matthews
November 10, 2005

A Life of Learning

Ask twenty-one year-old Brandi Baldwin what her motivation for learning is and she'll say her mother, Valecia Baldwin-Johnson, who as a single parent at a young age, spent time tutoring her, not only in her basic cognitive and social skills, but also in life skills as well. As a result, Brandi was active in a broad range of activities throughout her childhood and young adult years; she loved playing the violin, was involved with tutoring other youngsters and later, (after her introduction to the L. B. Bailey Foundation and its programs), she tried her hand at learning business and entrepreneurial projects.

She'll point to the "educational" nature walks she shared with her mother as an adolescent. The walks would lead to lessons in comparison-shopping, in check writing, and actually doing the family bank deposits. These 'lessons' gave her the confidence to start and run her first business venture, a pet service (dog-walking), followed by a local private newsletter (complete with advertising) during her middle and high school years. Later, in her freshman year at Temple University in Philadelphia, she joined the Roxbury Symphony Orchestra, and the 'Ladies of Elegance' Step team (she was elected captain of the team in her sophomore year). She continued to experiment with entrepreneurial projects, starting an e-business after developing her own WEB site.

Brandi will also tell you that, besides the lasting support of her mother, she was deeply influenced by her association with the L. B. Bailey Foundation, a nonprofit organization, located in her neighborhood in Northern Virginia. She was, in fact, one of the first of the youths to attend the initial business workshop conducted by the Foundation in 1994.

Brandi never shied away from the challenges the Foundation offered, through its business workshops, and as the first president of the Foundation's Youth Investment Club. She, instead, became more active in its programs while maintaining a 4.0 GPA in her high school studies.

The youth investment club was formed in 1999, as an extension to the business workshops (aptly named HOK LAB (Helping Our Kids Learn About Business)), offered by the foundation. It afforded Brandi the opportunity to learn how to organize and run a business club (on the NAIC model), to assist in selecting and training the club's officers, and to lead the club through its early development stages. Later, she would help guide the membership on a landmark visit to the New York Stock Exchange in August 2001, and to its first attendance at an annual shareholder meeting in California in 2004 (the club owned shares of stocks in INTEL corporation).

Brandi readily admits that these training and learning experiences help form the basis for her attraction to the entrepreneurial aspects of business. She is still involved in helping other youths in the L. B. Bailey Foundation's programs as she now attends the various activities as a mentor to the youths, and as an instructor at the annual workshops.

Enrolled in undergraduate studies at Temple University, Brandi continues her quest to improve her business acumen and to build on the knowledge and insights she began learning at an early age—learning that began with the 'nature walks' with her mother, continued through the auspices of the L. B. Bailey Foundation and its business programs, and is today embodied in her studies at Temple. She attributes her continued interests in learning to the excellent environment for studies provided by the university, and the continuing support she receives from her family and the foundation's staff.

She was recently appointed to the Board of Directors for the L. B. Bailey Foundation, and is keen on staying involved with the Foundation even as she pursues her graduate degree at Temple. She states emphatically, that life continues to be a learning experience for her; and thinks that youths today should be afforded the same opportunities to get started on their own journey, for the rewards are definitely worth the effort.