

EMPOWERING OTHERS TO EFFECT POSITIVE CHANGE

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(From *Rivier Today*, Fall 2015)

"I love my job. I get to meet phenomenal people who want to change the world..." - Keeva Davis, B.A., '00



Photo by Jodie Andruskevich

As a Workforce Development Specialist with the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training, Keeva Davis '00 has the responsibility and honor of improving people's quality of life. "Most definitely," says Davis, "I believe we are our brothers' and sisters' keepers." This belief, along with a kind and humble spirit, guide Davis' work with organizations serving the un- and underemployed.

Davis, daughter of James and Delores Davis '94G, grew up in Nashua. She graduated from Rivier in 2000 with a B.A. in Human Development and credits this experience as providing her strong personal, academic, and career support; lifelong friendships; and the foundation for a rewarding career path.

After graduation, she took on a series of roles in the human development field and earned her master's in business management from Cambridge College in Massachusetts. She rose through Massachusetts State

Department ranks before becoming a Workforce Development Specialist with the federal government. In this role, Davis oversees grant-recipient organizations in New England, New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. These organizations design and implement grantfunded workforce development projects to train low-skilled and dislocated workers and transition them back into the workforce.

“I love my job,” Davis shares. “I get to meet phenomenal people who want to change the world and the current systems in place.” Once an organization is awarded a federal grant, Davis becomes their advocate—reviewing the project’s progress with the organization’s leadership, interviewing participants to assess the project’s effectiveness, suggesting and arranging for additional resources, and providing counsel on grant compliance and progress toward goals. “You don’t meet a lot of people in this world who genuinely want to help others,” Davis says of the leaders with whom she works. “It takes a lot of heart and energy to do what they do. The people in these organizations aren’t in it for the money; they want to do good.”

Davis travels at least one week a month to visit her client organizations. Recently, she spoke with a youth program participant in upstate New York. “I interviewed a young man who prior to entering the program had moved from the south to the north, his mother had passed away and his sister was raising him, he had dropped out of high school, and did not have a job,” she shares. “As a result of the youth program, he had earned his G.E.D. and secured a part-time job. He thanked me profusely for the program that had gotten him to this new place.” A life transformed—“In that moment I knew ‘this is why I do what I do,’” says Davis.

Driven as she is to move others onto a positive path, Davis demands the same from herself: “There is something innate in me that always says, ‘Keep going.’” Davis was nominated and accepted into the Emerging Leaders Program for the Department of Labor. The program strengthens leadership skills through a combination of online and in-class learning and professional coaching by senior leadership. This experience will help prepare Davis for more challenging roles and greater success in expanding job opportunities. She is currently developing a coordinated Business Engagement Plan to build stronger relationships between her department and local businesses. Based on a successful implementation in her region, the Plan could serve as a model for lowering additional state and national unemployment rates.

Being a witness to others’ life struggles, Davis offers this advice for personal and professional success—love yourself. “Loving who you are is mandatory in this life,” she asserts. “If you don’t love who you are and who you want to be,” says Davis, “you’ll have a hard time growing and making it to your goals. In life, you get thrown a few curve balls. If you have that love, you can either catch them, move out of the way, or get knocked down and get back up again.”

Davis’ encouraging message, life-affirming work, and giving nature support a multitude of people she may never meet. Working collaboratively with community leaders, their actions have a butterfly effect—whereas, a small change in initial conditions can create a significantly different, positive outcome in the lives of the people they serve. In reaching out to establish paths to success, paths that help others reach their full potential, Davis articulates the honor we share in being our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers. ■

DAVIS FAMILY MINORITY MERIT SCHOLARSHIP

Keeva’s parents Delores ’94G and Jim Davis have established the Davis Family Minority Merit Scholarship at Rivier University.

“My mother, through her wisdom and generous spirit, envisioned a way to change lives on the Rivier campus with the creation of an endowed scholarship,” says Keeva. “When she discussed her vision with my Dad and me, I immediately said, ‘I want in.’ So a portion of my income goes to the scholarship fund.”

The scholarship will benefit minority students majoring in math or science who attend Rivier and require financial assistance. The first award is expected to be made in 2016.

“It’s exciting to think that the scholarship will support greater diversity on campus, as well as help provide a Rivier education to students in need,” says Davis.