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On Top of YOUR Game



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Jason Medlock, Dr. John Codwell, III, Carla Lane, MR.D-MARS and George E. Johnson, Jr.

Photo By: Albert Reff



Robert Garner
Jewelry Expert



**Dr. Anastasia Gentles, Connie Cazares,
Zawadi Bryant:** NightLight After Hours Pediatrics



Michael T. Bailey
Nationwide Insurance



Demetrius Early
Citywide Business &
Associates

Success does not come easy. Just ask any of the people featured in our cover story. These business people are definitely on top of their game. And they stay there by exercising some basic principles and business philosophies, ranging from everything like taking one deal at a time to being passionate about what you do.

These business owners recently received top honors at the 13th Annual African-American Business Achievement Pinnacle Awards, which spotlights and honors African-American businesses that have achieved success by combining vision, determination, commitment, perseverance and dedication to building strong communities.

Ten finalists were honored and four took home the Pinnacle Award.

On Top



Jason Medlock and Mr. D-Mars

Jason Medlock and Aaron Glenn
3131 Properties, LLC

Launched in 2000, 3131 Properties, LTD., operates on the "Magic" Johnson model of economic and community development. Medlock and Glenn have brokered over \$127 million in deals including sports, real estate, construction and franchises.

As developers, they deliver their services to historically under-developed communities with the hope of stimulating local economies and providing new employment opportunities. The company's newest subsidiary, GlennLock Foods, LTD., employs 315 individuals. The Frenchy's Chicken brand has been extremely successful for 3131 Properties.

"We take one deal at a time. We always look at a deal and say, 'What's the worst that can happen? What's the best that can happen?' We then grade those and decide if we're going to take a chance. We look at the realness of a deal. We take a lot of different things into consideration before we decide if we are going to take a project off the ground. We assess the needs and look at the demographics," Medlock said.

The key to their success has also been in the ability to hire great leadership and choose deals that make sense in the Sugar Land area. Medlock and Glenn chose prime real estate at the right price and at the right time. Also, the team was able to duplicate the historic Frenchy's Chicken brand to mimic the original Scott Street location's flavor pattern.



Dr. John Codwell, III and Mr. D-Mars

Dr. John Codwell, III
Codwell Family Food Center, P.A.

In 1995, Dr. Codwell started his practice with just one employee (himself) and a 950-square-foot office. Today, Dr. Codwell offices in his own building and has a staff of five. The center provides medical and surgical care of both the foot and ankle.

Like many African-American small business owners, Dr. Codwell's greatest challenge was in finding start-up capital to launch a legitimate, viable medical practice. However, his perseverance and belief in serving the community paid off.

To encourage increased African-American business ownership, Dr. Codwell believes early exposure of the entrepreneurial world to our children is key, as are mentorship programs.

Dr. Codwell believes the secret to his success has been to educate his patients and to take the necessary time with them to explain their medical challenges.



Carla Lane and Mr. D-Mars

Carla Lane
DiverseStaff, Inc.

DiverseStaff was launched in 2003 with Carla Lane as senior vice president and chief operating officer. The company is dedicated to providing organizations with quality staffing solutions resulting in excellent employ-

ment opportunities for its associates. Lane's business strategy for growing DiverseStaff is, "Take care of the people and the bottom line will grow." Under Lane's leadership, the DiverseStaff footprint has grown by an additional seven states, increased its portfolio to include Fortune 100 and 200 clients, and has become a leader in government contracting.

Lane distinguishes DiverseStaff from other staffing firms by ensuring she connects with the candidates, the associates and the clients. She also delivers quality to her clients and associates – she believes in exceeding expectations. Lastly, Lane believes she provides a service, she never forgets that. If she doesn't do it well, someone else will. Lane says her commitment to her job is what makes her so successful.

"You have to be passionate about what it is that you do. And of course, you have to maintain a standard of excellence when you do it," she said.

The company's keys to success has been application of its "7 Keys to Success:" "Take Charge;" "Know Where You Are Going;" "Spread the Word;" "Do What You Do So Well They'll Come Back and Bring Their Friends;" "Train, Train and Retrain;" "Measure Everything;" and "Celebrate Your Victories."



George E. Johnson and Mr. D-Mars

George E. Johnson
George E. Johnson Development, Inc.

George E. Johnson Development, Inc. was founded in 1974 as Johnson & Sons Realty. Since that time, the company has evolved into a premier comprehensive real estate development firm specializing in residential, commercial and community-developments projects.

As the company's slogan indicates, "Big enough to serve you, small enough to care," Johnson Development represents individual clients with their home-buying needs as well as public, private and faith-based organizations with their development needs. Through real estate brokerage, project management and owner's representative services, the company has completed assignments and managed projects in excess of \$1.1 billion.

Johnson states that the greatest challenge of starting the business was being the first African-American-