





Sharon Reynolds continues a family legacy of achievement, excellence, and entrepreneurship.

or years, scientists and government officials have warned the public about threats to the environment because of the rapidly growing population's consumption of limited natural resources and, instead, encouraged the use of eco-friendly products. As a result, many companies have opted out of developing products that contain harsh or toxic chemicals that may harm the planet and consumers; they've chosen, instead, to develop environmentally friendly products. Sharon Reynolds, president and CEO of DevMar Products, LLC in Nashville, Tennessee, has grown her company to be one of the leaders in providing environmentally friendly cleaning and safety products to help sustain the planet for future generations.

DevMar Products (a hybrid of Reynolds' two sons' names—**Devin** and **DeMarco**), distributes high-quality janitorial and sanitary supplies to companies for healthier work environments for employees, staff, and patients.

COVER STORY



Sharon and DeMarco, Sr. I can do,'" she says.

Before launching DevMar Products, in 2007, Reynolds, a fifth-generation Nashvillian, enjoyed a very successful 16year career as a real estate broker. She was one of the youngest African-American owners of a prominent mortgage company at age 26, eventually becoming one of the top real estate brokers in Nashville and a relocation specialist for major corporations. Unfortunately, the real estate market crash during the Great Recession forced her to switch careers.

"This whole economy was about to go under. So, I really had to reinvent myself. I said, 'Okay, so what is it that

distributorship. A valued partnership translates into issues and concerns managed completely to resolution. DevMar's ability to manage issues effectively and immediately is consistent and appreciated."

In addition to distributing products, DevMar also has innovative products designed to reduce the spread of harmful contaminants and maintain safe workplaces. On one of those, Clean Up™ Biohazard Absorbent, Reynolds partnered with the **Morehouse School of Medicine** research team to develop.

"I met a partner who had a couple of products in mind that were made from volcanic rocks. I've got a biohazard absorbent spill kit that's now patent-pending and pending **EPA** [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency] registration. That particular product kills norovirus, which is a huge nemesis in schools, restaurants, and hospitality, including hotels. It has also been tested against over 100 different pathogens, mold, and mildew," she says.

The company also offers Safety Sweep, a hydrophobic ceramic absorbent and risk management tool used in restaurants to reduce incidents of slips and falls and the first-ever EPA registered, **U.S. Food and Drug Administration**-cleared durable antimicrobial finish product, which Reynolds calls "a game changer."

DevMar's products can be found in all 50 states and a recent partnership with the **Export-Import Bank of the United States** (Exim Bank), the official export credit agency of the federal government, has allowed the company to expand its reach to global markets, including Mexico and Canada, and hopefully China, in the future.

"I'm working with them to export our products. The only challenges we have now are the tariffs that are being touted back and forth between the U.S. and China. At the end of the day, the tariffs are being passed onto the consumers on both sides."

DevMar Products also partners with **Office Depot** as a Tier 1 and Tier 2 National Office Supplier. The company offers its products through Office Depot's Diverse Supplier Catalog.

"For Tier 1, we partner to support a larger customer base and supplier diversity initiatives within the supply

She didn't have to look far for an idea. Reynolds' husband, **DeMarco, Sr.**, owns a janitorial and facilities management company, operating in four states. She recognized that there was a lot of momentum toward environmental sustainability and protecting the environment in that industry. So, she approached her husband with the idea to provide his company, **Reynolds & Reynolds Facility Services**, with environmentally responsible cleaning supplies.

"I had some pushback [from him] because he said, 'You're a young distributor and you're going to have to actually go to larger distributors to be able to provide the products that I need. I'm going to pay more, which will impact my bottom line,'" she recalls. "He was just like any other customer and I had to make sure that he wasn't going to pay more."

Shortly after, Reynolds was awarded her first major contract with the **Metro Nashville Airport Authority**. When the airport authority announced that the bid, required 20 percent diversity participation, Reynolds approached **American Paper and Twine Co.** (AP&T), who'd held the contract for 15 years, about partnering.

"I bid on that contract as their diversity partner. I won as a prime contractor and AP&T, the multimillion dollar company, was my [subcontractor]," she says. "I said, 'You all can do the heavy lifting for me. So, when they need 300 cases of toilet paper, you use your 53-foot semi-truck and take it over there for me. I'm never going to let anybody use my diversity status without participation. We're going to be partners."

As a result, Reynolds became the first African-American woman awarded that contract in the airport authority's 75-year history.

From there, DevMar Products continued to grow, securing contracts with larger, national corporations, including **CoreCivic**, formerly **Corrections Corporation of America**, which is headquartered in Nashville. DevMar supplies products to 100 CoreCivic facilities across 30 states.

Dawn Mason, managing director, Purchasing, CoreCivic, says Reynolds' "confidence and passion to perform well instills trust, which allows CoreCivic to manage the contract with DevMar as a valued partnership, not a simple

chain. The Tier 2 program provides excellent exposure for [our] specialty products on contract with Office Depot for their customers to explore the catalog and place orders," Reynolds explains.

Reynolds describes DevMar Products as an "up and coming" business but since its launch the company has garnered a number of accolades and honors that more established businesses would envy. In 2011, DevMar Products was named one of the NEXT 50 Companies to Watch by the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce and the Entrepreneur Center. Additionally, the Nashville Post and the Chamber recognized it as one of its "Green Heroes" during the 2011 and 2012 award ceremonies. Also in 2012, the company received the Women Impacting Public Policy (WIPP) Business Leadership -"External Communications" award. In 2015, the Nashville Black Chamber of Commerce named DevMar as Small Business of the Year. In September 2017, DevMar was named the Women's Business Enterprise Council-South (WBEC South) Tier 1 Supplier of the Year.

Individually, Reynolds was recognized as one of the **Nashville Business Journal**'s 2013 Women of Influence
Award honorees. She was also featured in the **Nashville Scene** for her contributions to sustainability through her line of specialty green products. Last year was very

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momentous for Reynolds as she reaped a string of honors; including the **100 Black**

Men/Women President's Organization

Women of Color Achievement Award and the Power Moves Award as Best Entrepreneur of the Year, a 2018 Nashville Business 100 Leading

Women award, and recognition as one of **MBE** magazine's WBEs Who Rock. This year has already started well for Reynolds; the **Women's Business Enterprise National Council** has



selected her as a 2019 WBE Star, the first African-American Star in the 25-year history of WBEC South. She also was a member of the inaugural **Tennessee State University**'s Executive MBA class graduating with distinction and induction into the Beta Gamma Sigma Honor Society in December 2018.

Reynolds joined the WBEC South board of directors in 2016 and **Phala Mire**, president and CEO of WBEC South, calls her a "dynamic entrepreneur" whose "energy, enthusiasm and determination are infectious."

She continued, "Sharon impacts those around her, corporates and WBEs [women's business enterprises], in positive ways and embodies the best characteristics of a successful WBE. She is resourceful, tenacious, customer service oriented, and an amazing spokesperson for her company. She brings this same energy to representing WBEC South as an ambassador and board member."

DevMar Products' and Reynolds' successes haven't come without challenges one of which affects most small businesses, particularly new businesses – access to capital. Reynolds believes her prominence in her real estate career provided a

slight assist in overcoming those early challenges.

"Being one of the top real estate brokers in Nashville, I had a very good name recognition. I was the top agent for the **Tennessee Titans'** [former NFL player] **Eddie George**. I received a lot of media and TV recognition so people knew me, as well as being here for five generations. Those types of opportunities helped,"

COVER STORY



she says.

Reynolds' transition from real estate broker to cleaning products supplier may seem odd on the surface, but dig deeper and this self-professed "germaphobe" acknowledges that she inherited her penchant for cleanliness from her father.

" [He] was really over the top. I would always watch him on the weekends when he was at home and he'd get out the Pine-Sol and the bleach and everything else. We never had problems with cleanliness although there were six kids in the house, [but] you could eat off the floor," she recalls. "Cleanliness is next to godliness and I believe that. It was a passion of mine and it just kind of happened along the way."

Her father's fastidiousness isn't the only trait she acquired from her relatives.

Reynolds' family has a legacy of achievement, excellence, and entrepreneurship that has inspired and motivated her throughout her life. Her father was one of the first African-American firemen in the city of Nashville during the sixties while her grandfather was a very successful entrepreneur during the late 1950s.

"[His company] was called **T.H. Williams and Sons Body Shop**, and [it] was the go-to company for all of the car dealerships in the state of Tennessee if they needed bodywork done to their car, whether they were mangled in wreck, or if they needed to spruce things up."

Reynolds is quick to also acknowledge the strong women in her life who have been a powerful influence, including her grandmother, a professor at **Fisk University**, who was an example of how "women can lead, provide for their families and not have any limit on their abilities because they are a woman or a minority." Her mother didn't work outside of the home, but Reynolds calls her "unbelievable" and her "rock and greatest supporter."

Perhaps, the greatest influence in Reynolds' life was her late aunt, **Gloria Snell**.

"I channel the power of 'YES' from [her]. She would always tell me that behind every 'no' there is a 'yes.' If that's your passion, you need to go find the 'yes' to your question. Don't take 'no' for an answer," she recalls. "She said, 'You're going make a difference. You're going to change the world one day.' She would champion me and I think about her in everything I do; I wanted to please her," she says. "Some of the things that she imparted in me are now coming to fruition. [She] is the reason I just keep moving forward because I know she would be extremely proud of the things that I'm doing to try to make a difference."

Reynolds isn't one to accept the accolades and successes of her work and become complacent. She continues to push boundaries and in 2016, she formed **DevMar Global Healthcare Solutions, LLC**, to offer "innovative, clinically proven medical products while providing customized, sustainable solutions for hospital systems, pharmacies, ambulatory surgery centers, clinical laboratories and physician offices." The company has partnered with **Ni-Q, LLC** to launch a commercially sterile human donor milk for micro-preemie and premature infants in NICUs across the U.S.

And if she wasn't busy enough with her businesses and community activities, Reynolds recently launched a new clothing line, **Bryla J. Couture Clothiers**, with the vision to inspire empowered elegance for

every woman. Reynolds started the company with the idea to create a legacy for her granddaughter, Bryla Josephine (named after her maternal great grandmother), who suffered a condition that caused a premature birth. As a young girl, Reynolds learned to sew from her late Aunt Gloria. Soon, she was not only making her own beautiful outfits but sewing for others, as well. Bryla J Couture Clothiers donates a portion of each sale to the March of Dimes and other 501(c)3 organizations to support premature infants and empower women to pursue their dreams to change the world.

Moving forward, Reynolds anticipates DevMar Products growing by 200 percent in 2019 and her ultimate goal is one that many larger companies seek to attain.

"We want to get these companies to a point where they are multimillion dollar status and beyond a billion dollars. I want to make the Billion Dollar Roundtable with my company," she says.

With a solid stable of innovative products combined with her drive and determination as well as a family legacy inspiring her, there's little doubt that she'll achieve those lofty goals as long as she continues to not "take 'no' for an answer and find the 'yes' in the 'no.'"





The Clean Source for a Safer, Healthier Environment[™]

Our company offers cleaning and safety products designed to support commercial, industrial, healthcare, restaurant, and retail facilities to create healthier work environments for employees, staff, and patients. In addition, we offer office supplies, furniture, and break room.

WE OFFER UNIQUE PRODUCTS



Clean Up®



Safety Sweep™



Adapt ®





Jan/San & MRO/Office

- ✓ Clean Up[®] An emergency response biohazard spill kit
- ✓ Safety Sweep™ A risk management tool used in restaurants to reduce incidents of slips and falls
- Adapt [®] Bacteriostatic that protects the workplace environment from bacteria, mold, and mildew for up to 90 days!

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