

We See You, Sis: Editor's Pick



THE ULTIMATE GOAL-GETTER

A FIVE-YEAR PLAN AND SAVVY REAL ESTATE INVESTMENTS WAS ALL SHANTIL NEWTON NEEDED TO ATTAIN FINANCIAL FREEDOM.

BY DIANE R. PAYLOR | PHOTO BY KYLENE WHITE

Shantil Newton had aspirations of becoming a multi-millionaire and retiring by her 30th birthday. Though she didn't know how she would make it happen, she held tight to her dream believing that she would find a way. After earning a Master's degree at the age of 22, she landed a full-time job with an annual salary of \$50,000 per year. Like any newly employed young person on a career come up, the Atlanta native went on shopping sprees at stores like Neiman Marcus and Nordstrom. Fortunately, her fiancée at the time (now husband, Mike) planted a seed that helped her chart the course to make her goals a reality.

"After a month of luxurious spending, he said I understand you want fine things, but you have to invest this money," Shantil recalls. With minimal debt, "Other than my cell phone, car note and car insurance, I

didn't have any bills," she says. She took her beloved's suggestion to heart, stopped the frivolous spending and within months they had jointly saved \$20,000.

"He and I started reading books on investing and money management," Shantil says, "and we got this bright idea to purchase a rental property." That property was a three bedroom, one and a half bath home in the Russell area that they purchased for \$55,000 in 2006. "We did research on the neighborhood and the Russell was up and coming. We knew that the property values would increase within 10 years. We wanted to be in that upward swing," she says.

The couple spent \$25,000 to renovate the home and nearly 17 years later, it's still in her real estate portfolio which, like her earnings, has grown significantly. In fact, the 40-year-old real estate broker/investor and owner of Infinite Homes Realty is doing phenomenally

well. How well isn't a detail everyone needs to know, but it's safe to say that what she had aspired to do by her 30th birthday has been done. It did take her a few extra years, but it's done nonetheless.

"I developed a plan. I [calculated] how many houses I would need to own to make six figures on an annual basis. It was a double-digit number and I reached it before I turned 40," she says. An added bonus: everything is free and clear. "If I decide I want to retire tomorrow I can because financially I set a goal for myself and I did it," Shantil says.

And now, teaching others how to use real estate ownership for financial freedom is a priority. She is the founder of Redwood Financial Literacy, a nonprofit with a mission to teach kids about life and organizational skills, entrepreneurship, real estate, health/wellness and, of course, financial literacy. "Whether it's flipping houses, earning passive income through rentals, understanding credit, learning to apply for jobs or scholarships...we want to provide them opportunities to view the world differently," she says.

Shantil adds that the nonprofit's name has a significant meaning. "Redwoods are the tallest trees. Their roots run long and in order for the trees to not fall over, they wrap their roots around each other to grow tall together," she says. "I feel like if we can all embrace each other and come together we can raise a future of kids that will be so far ahead than we were."

Shantil's own children are a step ahead than where she was at their age. The mother of three sons aged 15, 14, and 3; she's been teaching them about generational wealth and real estate investing since birth. She's also preparing them to buy their first home once they've reached the ninth grade. Her eldest has already gotten his first investment property. "We're teaching him that this asset can set him up for the rest of his life," she says.

Knowing that her own strategic moves in real estate have set her up for life is a huge relief especially since her youngest son has been diagnosed with autism and developmental delay. Every week Shantil and her husband take a 4-hour roundtrip drive to Cincinnati Children's Hospital for her son. But it's totally worth it she says.

"I planned to be financially free and able to live the life I wanted without limitations. Who knew that God would put us in a position where we would need to care for our son on a weekly basis? If it wasn't for me being in real estate, and my husband and I owning our own business, we wouldn't have the time nor the resources to get him the therapy he needs."