



BUSINESS WITH A CARING AND COMPASSIONATE APPROACH

Theophilus Community Program's (TCP) Executive Director Sheila Brown at her desk in her Baton Rouge, La., office.

*TCP's **SHEILA BROWN** BELIEVES A WELL-TRAINED AND WELL-ROUNDED STAFF IS CRUCIAL TO SUCCESS*

A life lived in service to others is an admirable one, and Sheila Brown of Theophilus Community Programs (TCP), a social work organization that offers assisted living to the elderly and disabled, has certainly led such a life. Brown has been in social work for nearly two decades, starting at a time when there were only three care providers in the New Orleans area. Today, there are over 120 programs in the New Orleans area alone and over a thousand statewide. Brown has opened three offices in Louisiana for her own practice starting in Gretna in 1993, then in Baton Rouge in 1994, and another in Hammond in 1999. As the owner and executive director of

TCP, she has complete responsibility for all three offices, and ensures they are all managed and operated properly.

Brown believes she was called to serve and that calling drew her to this line of work. Before she opened her own offices, she first worked as a social worker for a private agency, starting all of their programs. When she opened her first location, she had a Bachelor's degree in social work but knew she eventually needed a Master's to be able to perform the tasks that she was contracting out. "I felt that as the owner, I needed to be capable of the tasks and services I was asking my staff to provide."

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Business With A Caring And Compassionate Approach

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Brown received a Master's in 1996 from Southern University in New Orleans. Part of Brown's daily role is ensuring that all state rules and regulations are followed by those providing care at TCP. Although she has a tremendous staff and an executive assistant to help keep her on top of everything, she believes her biggest challenge is that she cannot be at all locations at the same time. "I am very passionate about this job and I understand that I am responsible for my staff providing top notch care and compassion," said Brown.

Currently, TCP offers six programs designed for separate demographics ranging from elderly patients needing long-term assistance to adults needing residential assistance, and even children that require intensive care. "Having to remember and comply with regulations for six different programs can be daunting for a new employee," said Brown.

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TCP's various programs have their workers engaging in activities like bringing their patients to the park or taking them to a movie. Workers also perform more mundane tasks like cooking, cleaning, and grocery shopping. "Most of our patients just want to do normal activities and we want to be able to provide care and service so they can enjoy the little things in life."

Though the State of Louisiana requires 16 hours of training, Brown's team members go well beyond that. She requires her team to undergo five mandatory training sessions per year, and they offer a number of ancillary trainings as well. "We do additional training because I've been in the industry long enough to know what my staff needs to do an exceptional job," said Brown. TCP trains all of its workers to be well rounded. Even if the worker does not need a certain training for their current patient, Brown has them trained for it anyway to prepare for the unexpected. Brown holds that a well-trained and well-rounded worker is much less likely to be careless, especially in a field where safety is crucial.



TCP's Executive Director Sheila Brown with her husband, and TCP's President Milton Brown.

Brown has found a great deal of satisfaction in meeting many families over her years in social work, and in playing a small role in improving their lives and the lives of their loved ones. "My staff, those that have been with me since day one, do it because they love people and serving people." Brown believes her staff should treat their patients as if they were their own family. "There have been times where my staff steps in when the patient's family cannot, and we fully support them." She gives an example at her Gretna office where a staff member takes care of a patient after hours because of a desire to help that individual even if they are "off the clock."

The most important part of running TCP for Brown is to operate with integrity. She tries to never make promises she can't keep, and when something cannot be done, she wants to be upfront about it. For Brown, social work is not about the money her company earns. "Before we get paid, we have to care and provide care." Brown's outlook on running her business is simple - "Serve well. Obey the rules. Be respectful. Be supportive."

Brown's primary motivation in her life and work is her belief in God--a belief that carries her through everyday, especially in her work at TCP. "It's important that my staff has pure motives. I always pray for the right staff member to connect with the right families," said Brown. "I've been doing this for over twenty years and prayer hasn't failed me yet." 🙏