



# Small Business Member Profile

Eve Williams is the president and CEO of Dikita Enterprises Inc., and mother of two daughters (ages 24 and 28). Based in Dallas, Williams lives by her company's slogan: "Bringing the community together for its greater good."

## **Dikita has been an APTA member since 2006. How did the company start, and what do you offer?**

Dikita was started in 1979 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin by my father and a two other partners. My father, Lucious Williams had his start as a Business Development manager at HNTB in the 70's. In fact, he was one, if not *the* first, African American hired by HNTB in their Milwaukee office. He then went on to work for the Milwaukee County where he became familiar with the government procurement regulations. At that point in his career, he decided to open his own firm in Milwaukee. In 1983, the principals opened a branch office in Dallas. His decision to open shop in Dallas was partly because I had moved to Dallas and partly because DART was going to build a rail system.

We provide program/construction management, civil design and transit planning. We also perform civil design services for infrastructure projects. We serve both the horizontal and vertical markets including transit/transportation, aviation, municipal governments and provide program management for K-12, higher education and hospital facilities. Our planning division supports planners by providing transit data collection and analysis across the U.S.

## **Dikita is about to reach its 40-year milestone. As a small business, what is the key to staying successful and sustainable all these years?**

I think that our success has been our ability to: anticipate the market and be proactive; develop key strategic partners like AE-COM and HNTB; and cultivate great people and treat them like family. My background is accounting, so another key is to control overhead and to keep a balance between overhead and billable labor. We also maintain a great relationship with our bank and have always enjoyed a generous line of credit. Having a strong financial status helps larger firms feel comfortable with partnering on a large project through joint ventures. There is nothing better than being a prime on a large project.

## **How has your professional world changed during your career?**

When my father asked me to help with his firm in 1983, I was in college and was headed off to a career in information systems and accounting. I was going to work for Arthur Andersen installing accounting software for small businesses. That never happened. Instead, my dad talked me into helping him get the Dallas firm off the ground. I promised him two years. That was 36 years ago. In 2010, in a dramatic announcement, my dad, my boss, announced that I was to be the new president and CEO of Dikita.

## **As an active member of APTA, what can you tell other small businesses about the benefits of joining the association?**

### **How can you make the most of APTA?**

I think the benefits of belonging is just that — belonging. It's im-

portant to develop relationships and APTA is the perfect place to cultivate relationships with other businesses, regardless of your market. While the APTA platform is public transit, the business community at APTA are in many more markets. The relationships I've developed extend from managing aviation projects to supporting school bond programs to renovating K-12 schools.

Building relationships and sharing information with CEOs and board members of major transit organizations is awesome. I bet I know someone at the top of every major agency in the U.S. And, if I don't, I know an APTA member who does.

The other major benefit is learning and information-sharing. You can make the most of APTA by attending conferences and workshops. As I mentioned, one of the keys to our success is understanding the market. APTA provides great resources, either through publications, webinars, workshops, conferences or through their website. I am excited about the future of APTAU and APTAConnect. I would like to think that my contributions through various committees have helped transform APTA.

## **If you were to start your career all over again, what would you change?**

I'm an entrepreneur. I come from a family of entrepreneurs that began in the late 1800's. I like the career I have, but if I had to change one thing, I may have been less risk-adverse and explored being on the forefront of technology. In college, we dreamed about the things that are now prevalent. It's not too late to make an impact, it's all a matter of time and ambition.

## **What are you most proud of?**

My two daughters have graduated from the colleges of their choice and have no debt. My dad is 87 years old and still comes to the office between golf games and exercising. My company has helped to shape the physical landscape of Dallas, beginning with DART. It's amazing and wonderful to see all the projects we have completed and the lives we have touched. I have personally advised and helped several small businesses to be successful, and, occasionally, I have helped them financially. I have served on over a dozen or so committees or task forces at APTA, made a difference, and will be chair of the BMBG in 2020 — the first African American female to chair the BMBG. It's great to belong. ■



**Eve Williams**  
President and CEO of  
Dikita Enterprises Inc.