



La'Vera Ethridge-Williams

Southwest Fresno Business Award

4th Annual "Risk Takers, Dream Makers" Awards Luncheon

La'Vera Ethridge-Williams is a dedicated community leader and business woman. She managed to put her vision into action as it relates to providing child care for working parents. She is a dynamic leader in the Fresno Community, serving on numerous boards and commissions. In addition Mrs. Williams provides strong support to her church and various charities.

La'Vera was born in Boley, Oklahoma in 1927 to the late John and Alberta Ethridge. La'Vera grew up in Wewoke, Oklahoma where she received her early education. She moved to Fresno in 1945 and continued her education at Fresno City College and Fresno State University- Fresno. La'Vera is married to Lonzell Williams. They are the parents of three children, five grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

La'Vera recognized the need for child care in West Fresno. Armed with this vision, she began to put the wheels into motion. She had to secure the proper facility where parents would have no reservations about leaving their children, and then obtain qualified staff. The most difficult task was to obtain financing. She realized that banks were reluctant to even consider granting loans especially to a black woman in 1968, amidst riots and other conditions of unrest. Her applications were denied by various banks but that didn't stop her. After much persistence she was able to obtain financing from a private source.

La'Vera realized there was a need for child care for infants age zero to two years. La'Vera was certain this school would be an asset to the community. The only problem was convincing the State Board. After submitting her proposal to the Department of Health and Welfare, hearing after hearing was held to review and study the proposal. The entire deal took four years and finally received an approval. This dream was finally a reality. **The first private child care center designed for infants and licensed by the California State Department of Social Welfare was opened.**

La'Vera's next goal was to open a chain of day care centers which were innovative and functional for the education of young children. This was an additional attempt to provide a community service. These centers would provide employment opportunities for many West Fresno residents. The Williams-Ethridge Family now operates numerous child care centers in Fresno and surrounding cities. The centers serves more than 1,000 children per day, employs more than 100 male and female employees and has become synonymous with the meaning of childcare in Fresno. La'Vera is openly enthusiastic about her business ventures. She has made child care a lifetime occupation. According to La'Vera, her child care training started when she was still at home caring for her younger siblings while her parents worked. Later after marriage, she cared for her own children and the children of family and friends. La'Vera states "The major source of our success in the childcare field comes from the families we serve and the quality of care that we have provided since 1968." In addition to working in the business, La'Vera continues to seek ways to improve her business and it's operations.