

KIDZ RIDE, LLC FOUNDER AND CEO SARAFINA

Article by Erin Frawley

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Sarafina Davis, Founder and CEO of Kidz Ride, LLC sat down with CEIR Intern Erin Frawley on the late morning of September 24, 2021, via Zoom, to discuss the building of her business and what it means to be a Black, female business owner in the Pittsburgh region.



Sarafina Davis , a Pittsburgh native and graduate of the Community College of Allegheny County School of Social Work, began Kidz Ride, LLC three years ago out of a need and desire to help her community. Ms. Davis, a self proclaimed community activist and mother of two was struggling with meeting the demands of motherhood while balancing school and work when Kidz Ride was born.

Ms. Davis experienced what most families experience: a lack of support and resources to get her children from point A to point B while balancing work and school. Not wanting to take away from her oldest child's interest of dance and ballet, but wanting to continue her education and work, Ms. Davis noticed a need for reliable transportation for youth in the region. Her vision was a ride sharing program for kids that would allow parents to have an affordable, safe, and reliable way to get children places if parents do not have transportation or are not available.

Ms. Davis describes herself as community minded, which was part of the reason she studied social work. She has organized rallies and participated in community activism.

While Ms. Davis is professionally educated in helping the community, her skills as a businesswoman come from learned experience as an independent contractor for ride sharing services, her experience as a jitney driver, and research. Currently, Ms. Davis is running Kidz Ride with no employees, but a team of drivers working as independent contractors.

Ms. Davis's key demographic for consumers are low income families with school age children. Ms. Davis acknowledges the desire for her services to be less expensive for low income families that lack access to transportation for a number of reasons. Ms. Davis hopes that she can obtain funding for scholarship programs or a sliding fee scale for low income families who lack access to transportation for their children.

Ms. Davis prides herself on being inclusive when it comes to consumers and employees. Ms. Davis reported she has experience with student with special needs and her drivers come from a broad range of backgrounds. Her drivers, due to state and federal laws, are not able to have a criminal background and

must obtain state and federal clearances to work with children. It is clear that Ms. Davis is open to diversity, equity, and inclusion in her business model. When asked about what successes she is most proud of when it comes to growing her business, Ms. Davis reported she is most proud that she has not given up on her vision. Ms. Davis had to leave her day job to run the business because sometimes she has had to cover trips that drivers could not make. Ms. Davis is proud that she is now in a place where she is making a name for herself and has found a system that works.

Ms. Davis has faced challenges in developing her brand, but she reported her biggest challenges were in her personal life. Ms. Davis identified Kidz Ride, LLC as, "her baby." She has been committed to the business and takes on the responsibility for anything and everything that happens. Having no employees means she has no one else to lean on or share struggles with when times get tough. Ms. Davis reflected that there was a time in the not so distant past when turnover for drivers was high and the demand from clients was also high. Ms. Davis reported she has now found a good balance with the right amount of drivers to the right amount of clients. Ms. Davis has found a way to find drivers as she grows and have a rate that works for her and her clients.

When asked about how her identity as an African American, female has played into challenges in growing her business, Ms. Davis responded that the biggest challenge in growing her business has been not knowing the right people. Ms. Davis reflected that from her experiences and observation, people get places quicker when they know the right people, which is an advantage she did not have in starting her business. Ms. Davis credits a small group of African American entrepreneurs in the Pittsburgh region who helped her to network and grow. Ms. Davis noted that a lot of opportunities lack for minority business owners in Pittsburgh.

When asked how she has felt supported as a female, African American entrepreneur, she reported the connections she has made and the networking she has done has positively impacted her business. Being introduced to the right people or having a social media post shared by someone makes a world of difference. Ms. Davis challenged, "Keep putting me in rooms with the right people," in reference to how her business can continue to succeed.