

NEIGHBORHOODNEWS

NATIONWIDE INSURANCE OFFICE OPENING

Long-time agent expands business east of river

BY ROSEMARY REED

Almost everyone has a lucky number or time. The Chinese believe that the number '8' is a 'get rich' number. Jackie Walker must have August, the eighth month of the year as her 'lucky' month. In August of 1988, she graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond as a marketing and business major. She worked at a federal government job until a sorority sister told her about an opportunity at an insurance company. The tip worked, and she began working in the claims department of the company in October of 1988.

She kept working there until Nationwide Insurance came knocking on her door in 1996-in August of course. She worked with Nationwide in the claims department until she transitioned to the sales department as an agent in 1997. "I marketed and sold auto, fire, commercial and financial services products. I was able to grow a 'scratch' agency to 1,200 customers in a two-year period," Jackie remembers. "The hard work paid off in that I was invited to the Conference of Champions...a conference for top producing agents." That was August of 1999.

It was a good fit. Nationwide started out as a small outfit in 1926 insuring Ohio farmers' automobiles for their needs. The company grew, and in 1955 changed its name to Nationwide Insurance to reflect the reality that it had become a national and international agency. It has grown to

client base as well as local schools; Customer Appreciation Day; distributing and installing 50 child safety seats for local Hispanic families; and participation in homeowner's education seminars. We started with one staff [member]. Now we have four and half," she said.

Now Jackie is expanding her business across the river with a new office. Deidre Brannon, who has worked with Jackie for several years, will head the satellite office at 1561 Alabama Ave., SE.

Jackie continued, "The Jackie Walker Agency is committed to community service. We feel that East of River is an underserved area. It has been my experience the families in Anacostia were not being served by local insurance agents, and that is the only thing that I have built my agency and reputation on. We can see across the street new town houses, apartment buildings, other businesses and shops. There are other shops in our strip mall, and a Giant Supermarket is opening soon. Another plus is that Deidre lives in that area. She knows it well."

Walker's location is on the ground floor at the Park Village shopping center. "We are obviously looking for walk-in business but just as important is being a visible presence in the community," she adds.

She plans to market the business with regular mailings, door hangers, notices in Value Pak mailings, and advertisements in church newsletters, local newspapers, the yellow pages and online.

"The demographics in Wards 7 and 8