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Marilyn Davy (center), Earthen Vessels Foundation.

Community Jewels: Corporate Women Who Shine

By Donia Allen, Special to BET.com

Marian Wright Edelman once said that service is the rent that we pay for living. While we may wholeheartedly agree with her, between juggling full-time jobs, family obligations and friends, our plans to mentor or do community service often drop off our lengthy lifetime to-do lists. One day, we say, when we have more time or money we can do something to give back or to make a difference in our community -- we hope.

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After singer Jill Scott's successful album, "Who is Jill Scott?," she decided to make good on her plans. She used \$80,000 of her own hard-earned money to found the Blues Babe Foundation. Created in honor of her grandmother, Blues Babe helps underprivileged girls get mentoring and financial support for their undergraduate education.

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Most of us aren't rolling quite like Scott, but nonetheless many busy sistas, like Marilyn Davy, Kimberly Nichols, and Stephanie Clark do what they can in their communities with what they have - a lot of love.



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Kimberly Nichols, Executive Director, SAVY (Successful and Victorious Youth)

Knowing that there were as many women who want to be mentors as there are girls who need them, Kimberly Nichols and a colleague put their heads together to form a program that helps the two groups come together. In 2001, Nichols and a colleague founded Successful and Victorious Youth, better known as SAVY, a non-profit organization that matches girls, ages 14 to 18, with adult female mentors. The program, currently based at Brooklyn, N.Y.'s Benjamin Banneker Academy for Community Development, also encourages teen girls to volunteer and do community service. We want to "inspire young women to reach their full potential and motivate them towards excellence," says Nichols. It offers a positive alternative to the "many images that negatively depict women of color," SAVY says, adding that the difference mentors make in these teen girls' lives is huge. Nichols admits that her satisfaction is priceless too. "When you make the commitment and see a young woman smile because she now has the hope that she can be something greater than she initially thought, well that's worth everything!"

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