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Beaty's career fueled by personal experience

By Haley Jones hjones@thelancasternews.com

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Dejernette "Dee Dee" Beaty

Dee Dee Beaty



Atlanta Housing Authority

Lancaster native Dejernette “Dee Dee” Beaty was recently named as chief real estate officer at the Atlanta Housing Corp., overseeing 20,000 units in the Atlanta area.

But no matter the size of her role, Beaty said she will never forget where she came from.

“I’m making sure that residents are being cared for, because a lot of times, there’s a stigma tied to living in public housing,” Beaty said. “People sometimes don’t want it in their areas.”

And she knows all about that.

Beaty grew up in the Pardue Street Apartments, now known as Palmetto Place, a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) public housing development in Lancaster.

She said it has become her mission to debunk the stereotypes surrounding public housing, from her personal experience of living in it.

“No matter where you come from, if you apply yourself, you give it 100% effort, and don’t give up, you can do anything,” she said.

Beaty attended Heath Springs Elementary, Erwin Elementary, Barr Street Middle and Lancaster High schools. She graduated in the class of 1991.

After high school, Beaty attended South Carolina State University in Orangeburg, and majored in accounting.

She graduated in December 1995, and worked as a customer service representative for United Healthcare before deciding to go back to get her master's in business administration (MBA) at Webster University's satellite campus in Greenville.

After her MBA, Beaty worked for a community action agency, an apartment investment management company and a private real estate trust company.

She eventually landed a job at the Atlanta Housing Agency as a portfolio manager.

“I had a portfolio of about 28 properties and they were all Section 8 low-income,” Beaty said.

“People refer to them as projects, and you paid rent based on your income. So it was my job to make sure that the properties were financially sound — that they were able to pay their debt, that the properties were being maintained, from an inspection standpoint.”

After working there for five years, Beaty was promoted five more times over the course of several years, landing her current gig as chief real estate officer March 27.

She now oversees 117 HUD properties in the Atlanta area. The Atlanta Housing Authority is the largest affordable housing provider in the state of Georgia, according to its website.

“I'm so glad she has accomplished that, where she can be able to help other people,” said Beaty's mother, Shirley Truesdale, who still lives in Lancaster.

Truesdale said her daughter owes everything to God, and by putting Him first, she was able to accomplish her career goals.

“So many times people think just where you’re at, you can’t make nothing out of yourself,” Truesdale said.

“But it’s got to be within you.” Beaty loved everyone in Lancaster growing up, Truesdale said, and her background in public housing gave her the passion to give back to those in the same situation.

Truesdale said she saw Beaty’s determination to give back, even as a child.

“I wouldn’t allow my environment to define me,” Beaty said.

“You can’t let people put you in a box and you just stay there; you have to keep pushing.

“I tell people a lot of times in my current role, I grew up in a little small town — Lancaster, South Carolina — and no one probably even expected me coming from affordable housing, in a project, to even be anything, right? But I knew within myself, I could do it.”

Beaty said growing up in the close-knit community of Lancaster gave her something to always miss, but pushed her to venture out and push herself outside of her comfort zone in the pursuit of a better opportunity.

“Sometimes, it takes you moving, to be able to pursue what you want to do,” Beaty said.

“But that doesn’t mean you forget where you come from. I don’t care how far I advance in my career, I know where my foundation lies and where I was built.”

Haley