



2009 Alumni Honor Roll | Reasons to Believe



Role models who give us *Reasons to Believe* in the power of education

M. Jason Banks

Sumner Academy of Arts and Science, 1999

"We're expecting great things from you." These words still echo in Jason Banks' head. They came from not just one teacher in the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools, but from many. They are words that empowered him to succeed.

Today Banks is the manager of supplier diversity and small business affairs for the Unified Government. His role is to increase the Unified Government's contribution to the economic development of minority and women owned businesses. His departmental achievements are many, including capturing more than \$50 million in contract awards to minority and woman owned construction and supply firms in the Village West business district. He also recently drafted the Unified Government's first Supplier Diversity Ordinance which was approved unanimously by the Board of Commissioners.



Growing up in a community of teachers is what gave Banks reasons to believe in himself. He remembers that his teachers not only guided him at school, but also throughout the summer. Many of them lived in his community and saw him at church, at the grocery store or at the YMCA.

"I always felt like I was part of this big family," he recalled. "I felt like there was a real support system in place all the time."

Though his career is just beginning, he has already received a number of recognitions for his achievements. In 2006 he received the Top 30 Under 30 Young Minority Award, and was nominated for the "Top 40 Under 40" list for *Ingram's* magazine. In 2008, he received the Leadership Award from the Wyandotte County NAACP.

Banks has an associates degree from Kansas City Kansas Community College and a bachelor's in economics from the University of Kansas. He is currently working on his MBA.

His advice for today's students is "believe in your ability to be successful."