

# Supporting UNCF is Elementary for Chicago Public Schools

**B**londean Davis makes it sound so easy: “We just send a letter to our employees, and they respond.” Thanks to her hard work, the response has been phenomenal.

Davis has served as chair of UNCF’s Chicago Public Schools campaign since 1993. Before her arrival, the campaign was raising enough money for six scholarships per year. Last year, the campaign raised more than \$800,000 — and awarded scholarships to 53 students currently enrolled in UNCF colleges and universities.

Chief of schools and regions for the Chicago Public Schools, Davis took the lead in rallying the school system in support of UNCF. From the board level down, Davis encouraged a broad base of participants. Her work is largely responsible for making the UNCF Chicago Public School Campaign one of the largest publicly supported campaigns in the nation.

## Leadership and Personal Involvement

Staff members of UNCF’s Chicago office credit Davis’ dedication for the campaign’s success. Her continuous leadership has brought continuity to the effort, and during her tenure, the



Blondean Davis

campaign has raised more than \$4 million.

Davis, however, takes little credit for herself. She believes that Chicago Public Schools employees feel comfortable contributing to UNCF because they know the monies go directly to the scholar-

ships. “These numbers really reflect the generosity of employees of this school system,” she says. “It’s a real tribute to UNCF.” Davis also takes great pride in the commitment to education evident in the scholarship recipients. “I think the greatest joy is when one of the students we sent to college through UNCF comes back and teaches in our schools. That keeps the legacy alive,” she says.

Scott Smith, president and publisher of *The Chicago Tribune* and chairman of the UNCF Chicago Advisory Board, cites Davis’ personal involvement as the source of the campaign’s success. “Her leadership qualities include her own personal dedication and her ability to inspire others to take an active role,” he says.

Asked about this ability to inspire, Davis just calls it the spiral staircase: “We are reaching back down that spiral staircase. Sometimes the steps are a little slippery, but helping students get a firm standing and pulling them up behind us is really what our job is about.” ■