



## HOPE PHARMACY | RICHMOND, VA.

**Shantelle L. Brown, PharmD,** looks at herself in a number of different ways. Taking care of her patients is a given. But she also sees herself as a role model, a mentor, and a trailblazer. On the latter point, Brown says she is currently the only African American woman pharmacy owner in Richmond, Va. She hopes others will be inspired to follow.

"It's important for generations behind me to know that they can do it as well," Brown says.

As for mentors, Brown remembers the influence that Leonard Edloe, longtime owner of Edloe's Professional Pharmacy in Richmond, had on her and many others. She wants to pass that forward.

"Whatever we can do, we're here," Brown says.

Brown opened Hope Pharmacy in April 2019. It's in the Church Hill section of Richmond, not far from where Edloe's Professional Pharmacy was located. When Edloe's closed in 2012, it created a gap in an underserved section of the city.

"I knew there was a need when Dr. Edloe closed a few years ago," Brown says. "There was still a need here in this area to be serviced, and where else would people go other than big box chains? I don't think they would get the proper care that we are willing to give."

Brown, a Richmond native, received her PharmD degree from Howard University in Washington, D.C., in 2003. She returned to Richmond as director of clinical services at Edloe's. Brown then went to Ukrop's Pharmacy, and her most recent position was as pharmacy manager for Sam's Club Pharmacy.

Brown's ownership path started through her friendship with NCPA Senior Director of Strategic Initiatives John Beckner, a longtime Richmond pharmacist. Beckner introduced her to Steve Markel, vice-chairman of the Markel Corp. Markel and developer Norman Gold created the Market at 25th. The site contains a grocery store where Hope Pharmacy is housed, along with a Virginia Commonwealth University health hub and a culinary school.

Brown says that Hope Pharmacy is basically retail, but it is also increasing its long-term care presence. "That is our ultimate goal," Brown says. Hope is a member of LTC company GeriMed, and is part of its combo-med program.

Recent years have brought well-documented challenges to independent pharmacy. Throw a global pandemic into the mix, and it makes strategic thinking even more important, Brown says.

"This is a time when any business owner, pharmacy or not, needs to be able to pivot," she says. "This has caught all of us off guard."

Part of that pivot is looking for niches. Brown is hoping to tap into the pet boom by providing pet medications. She is confident it can provide a steady revenue stream.

"Around here there is a pet on every corner," she says. "The area is called Church Hill, but I call it Dog Hill because everyone is walking their dogs everywhere. You have to develop some type of niche that will bring cash into the pharmacy, where you don't have to rely on billing the insurance companies."

Patient relationships are essential, Brown says. Because of her accessibility, patients often come to her with health questions. When they need to see a physician, Brown wants to ensure that patients know what questions to ask and engage with their practitioners instead of being shuffled into and out of the office.

Brown says the neighborhood around the pharmacy is becoming gentrified, and her goal is to have Hope be a beacon of stability among the changes.

"We're hoping the pharmacy bridges that gap between the community residents who have been here for years and the new residents who have come in," she says. "Pharmacy doesn't have any color or discrimination against it. My goal is to bridge the gap in our community between the new and old residents."