



**The 2016 Small Business Grant is awarded in tribute to Maya Darasaw**

Maya Darasaw developed a passion for photography at an early age. Initially she used photography as a means of collecting memories. It wasn't until high school that she developed an interest in the art of photography. After declaring a minor in photography while studying at Florida A&M University, it became her passion. She started M.A.D. Works photography as a way of making money while in college. Her company M.A.D. Works Photography came from her own initials. It is also a nod to her "mad talent," "mad passion," and "mad skills" as a photographer. Maya became a member of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority and had lots of encouragement from her sorority sisters to pursue her dream.

After graduation, Maya worked at a portrait studio in Gaithersburg called Celebrity Kids Portrait Studio. Her initial plans were to move to New York City and become a fashion photographer. However, the experience she gained as a portrait photographer gave her just what she needed to declare herself as a professional. When the portrait studio closed in 2009, Maya had just recently purchased a condo. She was faced with a major decision, find a steady government job, find another position as an employee photographer, or take a leap of faith and devote herself to M.A.D. Works photography full time. After much prayer and planning, Maya decided to bet on herself and God. She had faith in God and knew He would never leave her or forsake her. God provided her talent and put her in a position where she had no choice but to trust Him. But as with any business, you have your fair share of challenges. There was definitely a learning curve as she transitioned from employee to boss. Developing her brand also took time. Every obstacle she faced made her walk and her faith stronger.

Since the birth of M.A.D. Works, Maya has met and photographed a number of talented artists. Kelly Rowland, Brandy, T.I. Traci Braxton, Musiq Soulchild, Anthony Hamilton, India Aire, Joe, John Wall, Jennifer Hudson, Raheem DeV Vaughn, Kindred The Family Soul are just a few of the celebrities with whom she has worked. An avid lover of music and sports, she feels blessed for the opportunities to work with a number of celebrities we hear on the radio or watch on our tv screens.

Maya credits her peers, life experiences and God as her biggest influences. She knows very well that it was God alone who placed this talent in her heart and mind. This is more than a passion, this is a calling and Maya felt compelled to see what He could make of it. Maya knows with God, her future is bright and her story is still being written. The world is her canvas and she intends to create beautiful images for years to come!

In recognition of Maya Darasaw's entrepreneurial journey and success, The Sister Network is honored to recognize Maya with our Small Business Grant. **The company selected for the grant will be awarded \$1,000 to go toward the company's area of greatest need.**

**To be eligible for the Maya Darasaw Small Business Grant, applicants must meet the following criteria:**

- Female business owner
- Must be committed to serving women in some capacity

**Please submit the attached application along with the following documentation:**

- Proof of incorporation or business license issued by the Secretary of State, if applicable
- Federal Employer Identification Number, if applicable
- One-page essay, expressing your need and how this will further your professional endeavors.

**To apply, open the [2016 TSN Small Business Grant Application](#).**

**Please complete the linked application form, and submit it by May 31, 2016 11:59 pm, with the required supporting documentation.**