

## Meet Mia Dew continued

How would you describe your career with Ford?

My career with Ford has been a journey of change, a path for growth, and a platform for infinite measures. Hiring in I carried the mentality of simply having a job, finally an opportunity to support my daughters and provide them with a decent life. As a little girl I always wanted a means to be self-sufficient but now as a mother I needed it even more. Working in a factory was not the vision that I had but my mentality as a young mother was by any means necessary, I will support my daughters.

I must say that I questioned my decision, but I do not regret a minute of it as it has contributed a great deal to the woman I am today. I started off working in the Chassis department at Michigan Truck Plant where we built the Navigator and Expedition. A few years later during a shift reduction at Michigan Truck Plant I was transferred to, at the time, Dearborn Assembly Plant, where we built the Mustang, but within a year I was transferred back to Michigan Truck Plant as sales resumed. Upon the closing of Michigan Truck Plant I was transferred to Wayne Assembly Plant, now renamed Michigan Assembly Plant, where I currently am employed.

Why did you choose Ford and how has your career has evolved from your first day until now?

When I look at my career at Ford I envision the growth of a tree. Let's start with the seed. This would be my first day, a young lady with a vision of where I wanted to go in life but not completely sure how I was going to get there. I did not know what to expect upon entering this new world but I knew that I had to make the best of it.

In the beginning stage of tree growth the roots have to adjust and attach to the soil. This was me as I struggled making the adjustment. Working on the assembly line was not an easy task but I began to adjust and remembered what my grandfather always told me – “never let a job work you, work the job.” It just took for me to figure out my own rhythm and method to make it work for me.

With the tree, the trunk has begun growth, the branches grow thicker, and the leaves began to sprout. As my nerves subsided, my confidence intensified, I discovered a hidden gem. Me. Along with working my regularly scheduled time and at many times taking advantage of overtime opportunities, I discovered a sea of resources and opportunities that Ford Motor Company and the UAW had to offer. The first opportunity that I cherish is the support and contribution that was given toward continuing my education. Entering Ford Motor Company, I was already in my second year of college at Eastern Michigan University at my complete expense, but with the Education, Training, and Development program (ETAP) offered through UAWFord, I continued to strive on achieving my educational goals, receiving my bachelor's degree in business administration and an MBA with a specialization in project management from American InterContinental University, graduating in the top of my class and earning induction into the Delta Mu Delta International Business Honor Society. I am now working toward a doctorate of management degree in organizational leadership from the University of Phoenix.

Although these accomplishments are the biggest for me and my most proud milestones and accolades, there is so much more that I have earned and gained throughout my career with Ford and the UAW. I have received certification in various areas such as emotional intelligence and Six Sigma Change Management. I have served as executive-at-large for the UAW Local 900 Executive Board and as Education Committee chair for two terms. I also served as co-chair of the UAW Local 900 By-Laws Committee and was elected as a delegate to the UAW Constitutional Convention.

There are soft and hard skills that I have learned and adopted during my career with Ford. I have had the ability to strengthen my leadership skills and participate in and influence teamwork, as well as learn and appreciate the opportunity to work in such a culturally influenced and diverse environment.

What are you most proud of and why?

I have so many proud moments, accomplishments, and opportunities that I can speak on. Of course my education stands close to the top. I remember my brother telling me that when I was a little girl I would always play school. He said that I would have all of my stuffed animals and dolls seated as if they were in a classroom and I would teach them all day, saying that one day I was going to be a teacher or something. But to look at today, and where I am in life, I never imagined I would be here right now. A young mother who entered Ford Motor Company not even sure what life was truly about at that point now stands with three college degrees and soon will officially carry the title of doctor.

Next on my list is the opportunity that I was given to represent UAW Ford and Michigan Assembly Plant when President Barack Obama visited our facility. Meeting and introducing him was an experience and opportunity that has me lost for words. I am truly honored and grateful to my leadership for selecting me for this historic event in my life. I never in my wildest dreams would have expected to be handed that baton. I have such strong faith in God and this opportunity showed me that with faith any and all dreams can come true, even the ones that we never expect.

But there is nothing that can top my most proud moment and that's my daughters. I have three beautiful daughters with my two oldest daughters in college, one majoring in biology and the other majoring in criminal justice. My youngest is a member of the Honors Society headed to middle school. To see their growth and determination to succeed makes me feel extremely proud. I was attending my youngest daughter's swim meet and one of her teachers came up to me and she said "today in class we did an exercise and the students had to tell about a person that they looked up to." She said that all of the other students named celebrities but when she got to my daughter she said, "I look up to my mom." Then and as now tears filled my eyes; nothing has touched my heart more.

What are some of the challenges you have overcome and what inspired you most in achieving your goals?

There have been many challenges that I have been faced with throughout my life and my career with Ford Motor Company. One of the biggest challenges was staying focused on my goals while working to support my family. In this industry there are ups and downs. When we're up, we are up. The overtime can become mandatory and in some instances stressful. But when we're down, we are down. There have been times of

extensive lay-offs due to low sales and one point that we all can probably relate to is the recession that was experienced a few years back. We were fortunate that we were not a part of the bailout but we were faced with layoffs and cuts that affected many households, including mine. But through it all I continued to tell myself it will all work out.

Another challenge was trying to maintain my family and my job and continue school. With my hours at work long, daughters who were active in school sports and pursuing my degree, there were many days that I questioned my own ability to stay afloat. I created an organized system that mastered my multitasking skills that allowed me to stay on track with my operation. Time management was a key factor that was crucial to my success.

In times like these it is sometimes difficult to find inspiration, but as I pursued my journey I would reflect on the lives of the women in my family. My grandmother, a mother of five, a woman of virtue. She did not have a college degree but as a young child I remember watching her work several jobs to help support her family. She always remained a lady and never let anyone or anything break her from who she was. My mother, a true Rosie the Riveter, a Ford Motor Company retiree, worked more than 32 years throughout occasional lay-offs, the recession in the '80s and long hours, but she did not allow it to break her. My inspiration comes from the shoulders that I stand on and the hands that I must hold, my daughters.

If you were to give advice to young women today, both career and otherwise, what would it be?

If I were to give advice to young women today I would start by saying love yourself unconditionally first and foremost and take ownership of your heart. The reason I say this is because in today's society and in some instances even in a person's home there will be thieves. Not the thieves who are stealing cars or robbing banks, but thieves who will steal your dreams, your goals and your self-respect. If you take ownership of your heart and you love yourself unconditionally, no one can rob you of your integrity, your spirit or your purpose. Create your own blueprint of life. Don't try to follow an assumed path of destiny that has been created by someone who never made it there, follow your own yellow brick road, move at your own pace. So many people are caught up on societal timelines in which you are to or should have reached a certain point in your life... you should be married by a certain age, have children at a certain age, have a career and so forth, says who? If you fill your mind with the mindset of others you will miss your opportunity to be you!

Don't be afraid to be different or unique. When you think about applying for a job you have to complete an application and submit a resume. The hiring manager then is looking at your qualifications but they are also looking for your ability to be an asset. If we mirrored each other what makes me different from you? And when you look in the mirror who do you see? God has a plan and purpose for each of us. The trials and tribulations as well as the accolades and achievements have all been presented as a purpose of growth. Identify with yourself in each area and build change, confidence, understanding and refuge. Don't be afraid to try harder. I don't like to use the word "fail" because I don't see how I can fail at something that I did not know about. If it wasn't successful it just means that I need to try harder.

One of my favorite poems is *Phenomenal Woman* by Dr. Maya Angelou. In this poem she speaks about the beauty of a woman and how society thinks or has defined what a beautiful woman is but she captures the importance of inner beauty and the importance and relevance to the growth of a woman. For me, you are not only beautiful from the physical aspect but just simply being you delivers an untouchable armor of purpose. Find the joy in your soul and dance with happiness no matter where you are in life.