

CELEBRATING BLACK ENTREPRENEURS

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Docfully Founder Helping Those Most in Need

■ By KAREN PEARLMAN

Facilitating care for the people who need it most is something **Jacques Stroud** understands.

Four years ago while newly living in San Diego, he was badly injured in a fall down a flight of stairs. Stroud snapped his quad patella tendon and was seen at the emergency room at Mercy Hospital in San Diego.

But without a support network in San Diego, Stroud decided to do his rehabilitation in Los Angeles, near where his sister and a friend lived.

There were various complications during his rehab, Stroud said. In Los Angeles, Stroud remained fully dependent on others to get him through the health care red tape and directed toward the help he needed. He also had to stay connected with his surgeon and medical staff in San Diego.

During those times, a thought kept running through his mind: "I could really use my services."

Stroud named his services, which he founded in 2015, **Docfully**.

Digital Healthcare Startup

Docfully is a digital healthcare startup that seeks to help the most vulnerable communities access preventative health care services. Docfully offers telemedicine services to people who receive Medicaid and Medicare and Stroud says his option provides better care because Docfully provides a strong partnership meeting people where they already are, making health care more effective.

Stroud said that by putting patients first over their ability to pay, Docfully provides scheduled clinical visits "through a combination of technology and the human touch."

Stroud came to San Diego in 2014 as a fitness trainer but had his eyes set on becoming a physician's assistant. During his early days of living in California, he took a job as a home health aide, taking care of a young man in his 30s with cerebral palsy.

Stroud said getting the man, who was in a wheelchair, around by bus, to a doctor's appointment, was a lesson in frustration and patience.



Photo courtesy Jacques Stroud

Stroud and a patient in San Diego.

"It was a two-hour ordeal," Stroud recalled of getting his charge in the wheelchair down a hallway where he lived, out to the street, into a bus, off the bus and into the doctor's office.

Once at the appointment, Stroud said the person in his charge was summarily seen by a doctor -- for about five minutes.

Stroud said that the doctor basically told him that his charge was fine and "thank you very much, goodbye."

He said after going through that pattern a few times, he asked his supervisor at the job if there was a better way to do things, that it was a big waste of time for such a small payoff in a health care visit.

A big idea hatched during a basketball game

Not long after that, in 2015, he said he was watching a basketball game on television and started thinking, "Why don't I try to create something myself that might benefit my client?"

It took a few more years of working as an aide with other patients, including one he drove from San Diego to see in Los Angeles, that made things click. Stroud said it took

nine months before his charge in Compton was finally get the right medication for her diabetes.

"I discovered it wasn't just connecting, it was also a person troubleshooting that was needed," Stroud said.

And so began the founding of his company as a way to provide a more hands-on and caring alternative for at-risk minorities, low-income individuals, the elderly, and those who are homeless to doctor's appointments, emergency room visits and proactive health care instead of reactionary medical service needs.

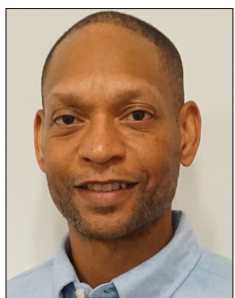
Stroud is seeking to deliver better care to those vulnerable groups by partnering with community-based organizations, non-profits, federally qualified health centers, hospitals and health plans.

Stroud said that by putting patients with limited resources and unreliable access to healthcare first, over their ability to pay, Docfully provides scheduled clinical visits "through a combination of technology and the human touch."

Different than just a software service, Stroud uses a secured platform for teleconferencing that combines his past experience working in the medical field to connect individuals to physician's assistants, nurse practitioners and doctors who can provide care in a home setting.

When Stroud was back in San Diego after his rehabilitation from the 2018 knee injury, he was able to hook up with God's Extended Hand, a religious organization that helps in-need individuals, but which last year closed its doors.

With Docfully, Stroud was able to help some people at God's Extended Hand get to the medical services they need. The following year he was a winner in a contest run by Alliance Healthcare Foundation, getting some outside funding to continue his trade. ■



Jacques Stroud
Founder
Docfully

Docfully

FOUNDED: 2015

CEO: Jacques Stroud

HEADQUARTERS: San Diego

BUSINESS: Healthcare

WEBSITE: <http://www.docfully.net/>

NOTABLE: Owner Jacques Stroud is an Emergency Medical Technician and Certified Nursing Assistant who earned a degree in biology from Chicago State University.

"Knowing the DEI Council is a strategic initiative for Rady Children's inspires me to perform my best every day. My company is invested in making sure Black and other under-represented voices and perspectives are heard."

– Jason Scott

Managed care professional. Freelance writer and editor. Diversity leader.

Since joining Rady Children's more than five years ago, Jason Scott has taken an active role in supporting the organization's efforts to learn and grow by becoming a member of the Rady Children's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Council.

Thanks to Jason's and other members' participation in the Rady Children's DEI Council, the bar for excellence keeps rising higher. Every one of these contributions mean that our children's care is in the excellent hands of a more inclusive and innovative Team Rady.



Caring for Children Is Life's Work for Angela Carroll

By KAREN PEARLMAN

Like many young children, **Angela Carroll's** plan when she was a young girl was to become a teacher.

She never lost sight of that goal, and when she got older, that plan got a little uptick.

"I didn't just want to be a teacher, I wanted to be the best teacher, and to help other teachers become the best teachers," said the 44-year old San Diego native who owns and operates **Carrolls Learning Angels** in La Mesa with her husband, John.

Carrolls Learning Angels is a preschool/daycare learning center that she and John run with two of their daughters, Angela and Ajohnee.

The business cares for up to eight children from ages seven months to seven years of age, five days a week and allows for nighttime care for children as well.

"Our role is for all of us to make sure the children leave in a better space than they came in," Carroll said. "We strive for excellence in everything we do. We don't know what their life is like away from us.

"We can't control what happens before or after they are with us, but we want to make this time with us the best time of their life. We want them to come back every time, excited about learning."

Carroll said providing a caring environment in which children feel safe to explore and build on the things they are learning helps supplement while parents are away.

"That, in turn, helps the parent go to work



Angela Carroll, owner of Carrolls Learning Angels, takes time out for outdoor play with some of the children her business cares for.

Photo by Karen Pearlman

and be successful and any stress won't roll off on the children," she said.



Angela Carroll
Owner
Carrolls Learning
Angels

Staying Focused on Goals

Carroll understands the need for care of young children every step of the way.

She gave birth to her first child when she was just 17, got married at age 18, and had another child when she was 20. Through the challenges of young motherhood, she stayed focused on reaching her goals.

"I got pregnant when I was 16, went back to school, graduated on time while working two jobs," Carroll said. "I learned a lot during that time. It wasn't an easy road, but I was

determined. I didn't allow it to be an excuse or a crutch. I also learned to have compassion for teenage moms and parents."

After she graduated from **San Diego School of Creative and Performing Arts** in 1995, Carroll attended classes at **San Diego City College**.

Over the next few years, while raising her two young girls, Carroll started working at several mainstream learning centers and daycare businesses.

She became assistant center director and eventually took over as director of a **Head Start Early Learning Center** in 2000.

In addition to her daycare business that she started in 2017, Carroll continues to oversee 20 staff members at the All Kids Academy Head Start on Jackman Street in El Cajon.

She is able to juggle both jobs because of flexibility in hours and having her daughters work for the daycare center.

Carroll went to both **Grossmont** and **Cuyamaca** community colleges in East County, taking child development classes and graduated from Cuyamaca in 2010 with an associate degree in child development. She received her bachelor's degree in child development from **National University** in 2012.

Carroll and her husband John have since added to their family, adopting a sibling set of three children. The couple also has five grandchildren.

"This is something I can leave behind to my children, a legacy to carry on," Carroll said. "While a child is in our care, we offer a wide variety of activities that cover all aspects of development. We want to make sure we have an impact in their lives and make a difference for them."

Carrolls Learning Angels also has a partnership with the **San Diego County Office of Education's** San Diego Quality Preschool Initiative, an effort to strengthen San Diego's early learning and care system to support young children and their families. ■

Carrolls Learning Angels

FOUNDED: 2017

CEO AND FOUNDERS: Angela and John Carroll

HEADQUARTERS: La Mesa

BUSINESS: Children's daycare

WEBSITE: <https://carrolls-learning-angels.business.site/>

NOTABLE: Angela Carroll also is a director of AKA Head Start in El Cajon.

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Aswad Allen
Chief Diversity Officer

CHIEF DIVERSITY OFFICER FOCUSES ON POSITIVE CHANGE

As a child, Aswad Allen heard a familiar refrain from the adults in his life: Get some fat on your head.

It meant that he should seek knowledge and the understanding that goes with it.

It's a phrase that still resonates with Allen. He watched his parents play central roles in the civil rights movement, learning more as an active participant than he ever would have by watching events unfold on TV.

"It's part of my DNA," Allen said. "From that experience, I looked at the world through a lens of fairness and equity and justice and righteousness. I've always had that as my reference point for what is healthy and what is good engagement."

Allen has brought that perspective to Cal State San Marcos as the university's chief diversity officer, a position he assumed in July. In addition to overseeing the Office of Inclusive Excellence, Allen serves on the President's Administrative Team, where he joins others in providing leadership and advising President Ellen Neufeldt on key decisions affecting the campus community.

"I'm enjoying learning about the passion and the

commitment that our faculty and staff have around supporting students and getting students across the finish line and into their desired pathways," Allen said.

Allen earned bachelor's degrees in sociology and psychology at the University of Colorado Boulder before attending Colorado State for his master's in student affairs in higher education administration and doctorate in educational leadership and human resources.

"My lived experiences inform my service spirit and desire to help people and community," Allen said. "Everything that I have done has been around service – service to people or service to the community. I try to look at things in a very big-picture way. But I also understand how parts of systems function and how people are really what makes it go. People are the difference in anything that we do. So I look for strategic, sustainable and systemic ways to empower people and to position people to be the best that they can be."



[READ THE FULL STORY](#)

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California State University
SAN MARCOS



MEET THE LEADER

Kiora Ridgeway
Sociology student
and volleyball player

Like many Americans, Kiora Ridgeway took to the streets after the murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer in May 2020.

The Cal State San Marcos sociology student and volleyball player was in her hometown of Portland at the time, having completed her sophomore year at CSUSM. Several times that summer, she ventured downtown to join in some of the largest and most visible protests in the nation.

"I felt like I had to do something," Ridgeway said. "I was like, 'I have to go out there; I have to take a stand, physically take a stand, for all the injustice that's happening.' I think that experience really empowered me to speak up for what's right."

Her feeling of empowerment was no summer dalliance. Over the ensuing weeks, she spoke multiple times with her coach, Andrea Leonard, and teammates about how to translate her newfound activist voice into action. When she returned to San Marcos that August, she seized on the momentum within the athletic department and pushed for progress toward increased diversity and inclusion.

As a result of her efforts, Ridgeway was selected in October as one of two winners of CSUSM's President's Student Champion Award for Inclusive Excellence and Diversity.

"The work I'm doing now has helped me realize that I want to help people in the community," Ridgeway said. "I would love to be a bridge between professional athletes and them working in the communities around them. I want to highlight marginalized people and help them get more opportunities while being around sports."



[READ THE FULL STORY](#)

Dancing with the Stars in Clairemont Mesa

■ By KAREN PEARLMAN

Nobody in **Summer Williams'** family is surprised that she has a flourishing career as a dance instructor.

Williams, 33, who operates **Rap A Tap Center for the Arts** in Clairemont Mesa, grew up Perris, Calif., where, as a young girl, she would put on impromptu dance shows to entertain her family. Her parents quickly took note of her talent and interest, and enrolled Williams in local dance classes when she was 7. Soon after, Williams entered formal training for dance.



Summer Williams
Owner
Rap A Tap Center for the Arts

The 2010 **San Diego State University** graduate received a bachelor's in dance and minored in business administration. She followed college with two years of dancing on the East Coast, then moved back to San Diego in 2012, where she directed local dance troupes.

After earning a master's degree in education and a teaching credential from **National University**, she started renting a space at **C3 Church** on Balboa Avenue in 2015 to teach dance. She later accepted a part-time job as a dance instructor at **San Diego Creative Performing and Media Arts**, a middle school in Clairemont where she had done her student teaching.

She was leading dance classes for the school by day, and at on her own in the evenings. All was well – literally – until COVID-19 hit in March 2020, closing the school and shuttering



Students dance at Rap A Tap Center for the Arts in Clairemont Mesa on Feb. 22.

Photo by Karen Pearlman

her studio time.

"We hit that fork in the road," said, Williams, who lives in El Cajon with her husband, Michael, a U.S. Marine Corps veteran, and their 3-year-old son.

"I said to my husband, 'Are we going to try, or are we going to let go?' Because if we let go, that was going to be the time. I wanted to stay and try, he wanted to let go. So we decided to meet in the middle. If something comes, great, if not, we know it's time."

'Something' came – via Craigslist

During the early quarantine time, Williams said she was randomly looking at Craigslist offerings and could not believe her eyes.

"I saw a building for lease – it was a dance

studio, on Craigslist!" Williams said. "I was like, 'What the heck?' I thought somebody was faking it. But we went to the place and found out another dance studio had left and left all the equipment. I said to Michael, 'Oh my goodness. If this isn't the time, I don't know what is.'"

Williams ended up leasing the building during the early part of the pandemic in July 2020.

"Opening up a studio was always a dream of mine," said Williams, owner and artistic director at Rap A Tap, a dance studio that specializes in tap, jazz, hip hop and ballet.

When state regulations would not allow the studio to open for dance in the past year, "we got real creative," Williams said.

Until November 2020, Rap A Tap held classes in a nearby park and in the parking lot where the studio is located, in a strip mall nestled in between houses in Clairemont Mesa. Williams also held Zoom classes and offered them free of charge and held a virtual recital as well.

Williams and five other instructors are now able to teach live and in person again from 4 to 7 p.m. daily inside the cozy studio and Rap A Tap has more than 100 enrolled students.

Honoring Bill 'Bojangles' Robinson

Williams named her Clairemont Mesa studio after the sounds made by Bill "Bojangles" Robinson and teaches all of her students about him. Robinson was a tap dancer, actor and singer whose heyday came in the 1920s and '30s. He was at one time the mostly highly paid Black entertainer in the U.S.

"Bojangles is a very iconic person in the world of tap," Williams said. "The opportunities he created for tap dancers in TV and film for African Americans is well documented, like the dancing with him and Shirley Temple. He paved a lot of the way for what we see now." ■

Rap A Tap Center for the Arts

FOUNDED: 2020
FOUNDER: Summer Williams
HEADQUARTERS: 3585 Mt. Acadia Blvd.
BUSINESS: Dance studio
EMPLOYEES: 6
WEBSITE: <https://rapataparts.com/>
NOTABLE: Summer Williams' mom was a professional singer, her father is a pastor at a church and her brothers are music producers.



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Teaching Life Skills, Confidence and Self-Defense the Sidekicks Way

■ By KAREN PEARLMAN

In the mid-1960s as a young man growing up in large, broken family with eight siblings in Oklahoma City, **Maurice Orange** said it was deeply disturbing to watch his older sisters fall into patterns of different forms of abuse from their significant others.

“In those days in the minority community, there was a lot of abuse,” said Orange, since 1991 the owner and operator of **Sidekicks Martial Arts Academy in San Diego**. “My sisters were abused by early boyfriends and I didn’t like it. But I was too young to do anything.”

He said at one point in his life, he recalled seeing one of his sisters crying in the kitchen after a period of abuse from her husband. “I wanted to defend her but I knew I couldn’t,” Orange said.

An avid comic book reader in those days, Orange said he would see advertisements for martial arts inside the pages showing his favorite comic book heroes.

“I first read about martial arts there, and I thought, ‘If I learn martial arts, I can stop him from ever hitting my sister again.’ And that’s how it started.”

Empowered by taking martial arts classes and learning how to defend himself just nine years of age -- earning his way to a black belt in karate in just 13 months -- Orange, now 66, has been teaching students how to gain confidence, discipline and strength at Sidekicks since 1981.

Tae Kwon Do as a Lifestyle

His trademark anime art advertisement for the academy shows six cartoon characters in their martial arts uniforms, with the words “COURTESY,” “INTEGRITY,” “PERSEVERANCE,” “SELF-CONTROL,” “INDOMITABLE SPRIT” AND “VICTORY” underneath the figures.

“At Sidekicks, we don’t look at Tae Kwon Do as a sport, and I’ve never called it a sport,” said Orange, who lives with his wife Cheri in Rancho San Diego. “I call it a lifestyle.”

Sidekicks offers programs that teach kids as young as ages 3 to 6 about good citizenship and respect for others, moving to more physical martial arts skills for the 7- to 11-year old crowd, and life safety and self defense techniques and self-confidence classes for teens and adults. It also has Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu classes and a specialized after-school karate program

Orange landed in San Diego County in 1974 during a five-year stint in the U.S. Navy. He worked long hours in hospitals and earned an Emergency Medical Technician degree.

He lived in several sites overseas, including Korea, during his time in the Navy, where he



Maurice Orange instructs his students.

Photos courtesy of Cheri Orange

had little down time -- and says he preferred it that way.

At one time, while serving in Guam, Orange said he did some DJ’ing on base and at the local Hilton Hotel. He also kept up with his martial arts, teaching others on the side.

“My goal was to stay out of trouble,” he said.

Early San Diego Martial Arts Roots

When he left the Navy and came back to San Diego, he started working as an instructor at a martial arts school on El Cajon Boulevard near 35th Street.

He said that while teaching at the martial arts school where classes were filled with eager students, the operator there told him, “Don’t think about ever opening a school. It’s been my experience that you can’t open a school and run it successfully as an African American. Work for me and you’ll be fine.”

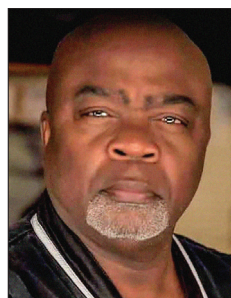
Orange said he knew that wasn’t true, and in the early 1980s, opened his own school on Plaza Boulevard in National City.

He said the school immediately filled up and he started noticing that many of his students

were coming from out of the area and lived closer to the Paradise Hills region.

So in 1991, he moved to another site, and launched Sidekicks. And more than 30 years later, there it still remains.

Orange and the five instructors at the academy teach a little over 100 students now, though Orange says that pre-COVID-19, those numbers were quite a bit higher.



Maurice Orange
Owner
Sidekicks Martial Arts

One of the earliest instructors that has worked with Orange since his National City days, **Marilou Castillo**, is still teaching at the studio.

Orange says he pays close attention to how his students are doing, both inside the studio, in their school classrooms and out in the world.

Orange has a prosthetic that he wears on his left hand, the result of a major accident he had while riding on a motorcycle in El Cajon in August of 2020. A car cut in front of Orange’s motorcycle and Orange didn’t have time to stop or swerve. He suffered a traumatic brain injury, broken bones, a collapsed lung and severe nerve damage in his left arm, which was later amputated.

He has little recollection of the collision but does know that he was unconscious for five weeks.

“I didn’t know who I was, where I was,” Orange said. “I didn’t know I was a black belt, that I had an airplane and was a pilot, that I was a photographer... I knew nothing. Cheri was told her husband would never walk again. But she was there every day. That I remember.”

Progressing Slowly to Walk and Move Again

He said he came home in a wheelchair and eventually was able to progress to walking, and more. An avid photographer who shoots everything from insects to portraits to airplanes and racing cars, he has learned to adapt and hold the camera steadily.

Though partially paralyzed on his left side, and unable to teach martial arts in full like he was able to before the collision, Orange said he doesn’t harbor anger toward the driver of the car that nearly killed him.

“What have I got to be mad about?” he said. “What do I have to be upset about? I’m able to walk, run, skip and do the cha cha. We have a two-story house and I can take all 16 steps.”

He said going through the near-death experience made him realize that “time is all we have, and that’s it.”

Orange said that being African-American is only part of who he is, that more important is that he strives as a human to do his best and teach his students to be proud of their own individual value in the world.

“We believe that every child is truly special and that every child is a winner,” Orange said. ■



Sidekick students train for belt testing.

Photos courtesy of Cheri Orange

Sidekicks Martial Arts Academy

FOUNDED: 1991
OWNER: Maurice Orange
WEBSITE: SanDiegoSidekicks.org
EMPLOYEES: 5
LOCATION: 2939 Alta View Drive, Suite Q
NOTABLE: Orange survived a major crash while riding a motorcycle in 2020 in El Cajon, losing his left hand and left forearm.