

**Florida Black History Month 2011  
Governor Rick Scott's Black History Month  
Essay Contest**

**"Celebrating African-American Leaders in Business  
Past, Present and Future"**

*Ollie Jones:*

*Inventor, Designer & Humanitarian*



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## **Ollie Jones:**

### **Inventor, Designer & Humanitarian**

My essay is unusual because I actually came to meet and know Ollie through his friendship with my dad. Ollie and my dad worked in the same building but for different employers. Ollie worked for a private transportation engineering firm while my dad worked for a government employer. It was in their employment that their friendship resulted in the meeting of our families.

On one occasion, my father had been asked by Ollie to help in constructing an oddly shaped medical device that appeared to be a mechanical hoist. Ollie's plan was to modify this hoist to support an individual in a sling, and then to allow a treadmill to be placed between the supports of the hoist to be used for exercise of a supported person. The person in mind was Ollie's daughter Janae; a special needs child with Cerebral Palsy.

Ollie went on to form Janae Designs LLC, a company that specializes in design and manufacture of medical furniture specific to special needs children. With his own daughter Janae for inspiration, Ollie with the support of his wife Tracy and their eldest daughter Nya went on to great success. Janae designs have gained a reputation for quality design and manufacturing with some of the products produced appropriately named: The Wedgster, The Walkster and The Legster.

Janae Designs has been keen at putting the modern media to good use by producing a Website (Janaedesigns.com) and utilizing social media such as Facebook and Twitter.

Ollie's natural gift is his compassion and empathy for others. On several occasions, Janae Designs has donated its products to children in families whose health insurance would not pay for such devices and in other instances, to families who could not afford these devices. Ollie even created the Janae Hope Jones 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Golf Invitational. The success of the first event created enough proceeds to produce 3 Wedgsters which were donated to Special Needs Children and their grateful families.

I consider myself privileged to witness first hand the creation of a brilliant idea and then the expansion of that idea. Ollie's journey from a single product, to a line of products; each unique and purposeful has been inspiring. I now see how a passion close to the heart can also be a passionate business. Ollie's journey has been at times difficult, but like the good businessman he is, he has continued on the vital drive of fulfilling his passion.

Ollie has created a business with a fine balance of family, community and business.

I find Ollie Jones and his creation of Janae Designs to be an inspiring achievement. One day I hope to be as successful as Ollie and to be able to give back to my community in the same caring and giving way.