

Mosley School of Cosmetology Grand Rapids, Mich.

"I want to make sure I'm dealing with people the right way. I want everyone to be successful and yet feel loved and wanted." – Theresa Mosley, owner, Mosley School of Cosmetology

- Minority Owned
- Woman Owned
- Located in an LMI Community

Climbing the rungs



When Sincerae Theresa Mosley first came to Grand Rapids, she stayed at a homeless shelter. Less than 20 years later, she's the owner of a growing business that employs seven and trains many more.

But at age 19, with her husband and two kids in Saginaw, she came to Grand Rapids to find a place to live and plan her future.

"I would go to school at Grand Rapids Community College, then drive around because you couldn't be at the shelter during the day."

She eventually found a home for the family, worked third shift at a plant and continued school. Oh, and by this point she was pregnant with her third child.

Her classes kept reinforcing her dream to be a business person so she turned to a skill she'd had for years – braiding hair. "I knew how to do it because I grew up the second oldest of seven kids and braided all my siblings' hair." She made fliers and put them up in hair shops and soon was bringing in \$1,000 week. She hired her sister to help and her 4-year-old daughter was paid to pick up hair.

Her sister – and her daughter - still work with her, but now they're helping run Mosley School of Cosmetology, a long way and a steep climb from the homeless shelter days.

"I put my trust in the Lord," Mosley said. "I was walking by faith, not by sight."

She decided against immediately getting a bachelor's degree after she graduated community college, and went to cosmetology school instead. And she noticed something

odd. “One thing they weren’t teaching me was how to do kinky, curly, textured hair.” She once went to get her own hair blown out and was told, “We don’t do hair like yours.”

“It wasn’t racial,” she stressed. “They were just terrified.”

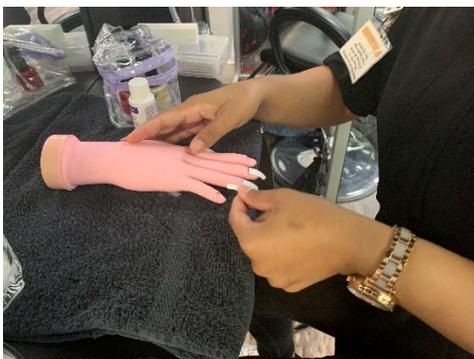


To that end, Mosley School of Cosmetology teaches braiding, twisting, extensions, sew-ins, and more. Theresa Mosley also invented and [sells hair products and tools](#).

She knew for a long time she wanted to own her own school but “there’s no school on how to run a cosmetology school,” she said. She forged ahead and opened a school, got a business degree and worked beside the owner of another school for 18 months, learning the ins and outs, before absorbing his school.

“Getting the BA was hard,” she admitted. She had small children and a lot else going on. “But I wanted to show my kids it’s not all talk, it’s action.” She now has six children, including twins. Her oldest, Benneda, works at the school on her breaks from college, where she’s studying architecture.

Mosley also helps her students with business skills, knowing that running a salon is more than just doing hair. “I have resources to area business classes, plus I give them as much as I know. We talk about ‘sleeping pretty’ – if you have your finances right, you’ll sleep pretty.”



Her landlord worked with her to increase the space, boosting it from 1,400 square feet up to the current 6,000 square feet, which translates to 65 students each semester. After graduating 20 students during a pandemic-stressed semester, Mosley expects 35-40 graduates this fall.

With the move and expansion, Mosley finally had the space to grow her school, which is where Northern Initiatives helped out. With a Community Advantage Recovery Loan (CARL) she was able to increase outreach in Grand Rapids, including a highly successful Facebook ad campaign that attracted new students. She hired an esthetician instructor and expanded the space even more.

Along with the CARL loan came a requirement for 15 hours of dedicated technical assistance within the first six months. Leandra Nisbet, owner of Stingray Advisory Group and a contractor with Northern Initiatives, has been holding weekly meetings with Mosley. “She likes having someone to talk to her about business. It’s more than just lessons. She feels like she has an outside partner who is supporting her and her business,” Nisbet said.

And together they are working on the next big step for the Mosley School of Cosmetology – accreditation. Mosley wants her school to have federal accreditation so she can offer grants to students. She says she'll be able to help low-income students get up to \$12,000 in grants; the tuition for a 1,500-hour course in Cosmetology is \$15,000.

The next step for Mosley herself is being part of a leadership cohort through the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce. "I want to make sure I'm dealing with people the right way," she said. "I want everyone to be successful and yet feel loved and wanted. When you're working with 60 people, everyone wants a piece of you. I'm working on being in the present and not focused on the next task."

Mosley School of Cosmetology

- 7 full-time employees + 1 working owner
- Successfully moved to online learning during the pandemic, then successfully transitioned back, into a larger space with more students