

Kenya Robertson's dream is becoming a reality.

The South Side resident will open the FAM Entertainment Theater Company performing arts space on Oct. 22, a collaborative with a mission to inspire women, artists and youth.

At Robertson's open house Sept. 1, the CHA voucher holder got the first glimpse of what is to come. The preview event was attended by business owners, service providers, artists, educators and entertainment professionals who will benefit from this innovative new space.

Robertson is a Section 3 business owner who received a CHA grant to start her business. She also received help from the Chicago Urban League after winning a competition for best business plans.

"I am very excited! This has been a dream of mine for over 10 years," Robertson said. "I have been doing this as a hobby. But after receiving the grant from CHA and taking classes at the Urban League, it helped my dream move out of 'hobby mode' and establish a business. Between the two programs, it has really helped me to get what I needed for start-up costs."

Robertson, who received the keys to her new business on Aug. 1, started out as an actress and appeared in many independent movies. She also toured with a stage play for more than a decade. Helping others produce their own small productions became a hobby for her. And that's when she began to realize that the cost of renting out space for even small stage productions was enormous. At times, as much as \$3,000 a pop.

"A lot of playwrights don't make that kind of money, and they've got to go somewhere to learn the ropes," she said.

She hopes her place fills a much-needed financial gap for aspiring South Side actors and performers.

"Now, they can come to me, save their money, and go over the pros and cons so that they can move on to the bigger leagues," she said.

FAM Entertainment Theater Company not only has a theater company, but a gift shop that will specialize in handmade designs and crafts by local artists.

Eventually, she hopes to move into the role full-time. She currently works as an administrator at a high school.

She is also thrilled to be part of the revitalization of Bronzeville.

"I am definitely excited," she said. "I want to make an impact."



Kenya Robertson (center) celebrating at the open house for her FAM Entertainment Theater Company on Sept. 1