

*A series
profiling
your fellow
Routematchers.*

by Laura Lee Huttenbach

Shemika Flymn

Major Accounts Manager, Client Success

In 2011, Shemika Flymn was living and working in Valdosta when her mom was diagnosed with kidney disease, caused by lupus. Shemika began visiting her in Atlanta every other weekend, but eventually her mom looked so ill and frail that Shemika said, “That’s it; I’m moving here to take care of you.” Around the same time, a college friend, Anthony Moore, mentioned to Shemika that his company, RouteMatch, was hiring. She sent Anthony her resume and was invited in for an interview. There was one problem: she had nothing to wear, because all of her business clothes were still in Valdosta. She considered skipping the interview, but her mother said, “You need to go. I have a good feeling about this.” So Shemika dug some old church clothes out of the closet and dusted off a pair of boots. “I was looking pretty baggy,” she says now. But she nailed the interview and got the job, and she has been with RouteMatch since January 2012. ➤



Q&A with Shemika on May 16, 2017

Q. Where were you born?

A. Mt. Vernon, New York. But my parents are Jamaican.

Q. How has your Jamaican heritage influenced you?

A. It taught me to appreciate things. My grandparents came from a poor community, but they were breadwinners for the town. Every Christmas when my grandmother visited, she would take all of our old clothes and shoes back with them to give away. Once when I was visiting them, I saw a man wearing my old flip-flops, and he was so happy to have them. A lot of people don't have hot water or even running water. So something as simple as turning on the water to brush my teeth—I try not to take that for granted.

Q. What were your favorite subjects in school?

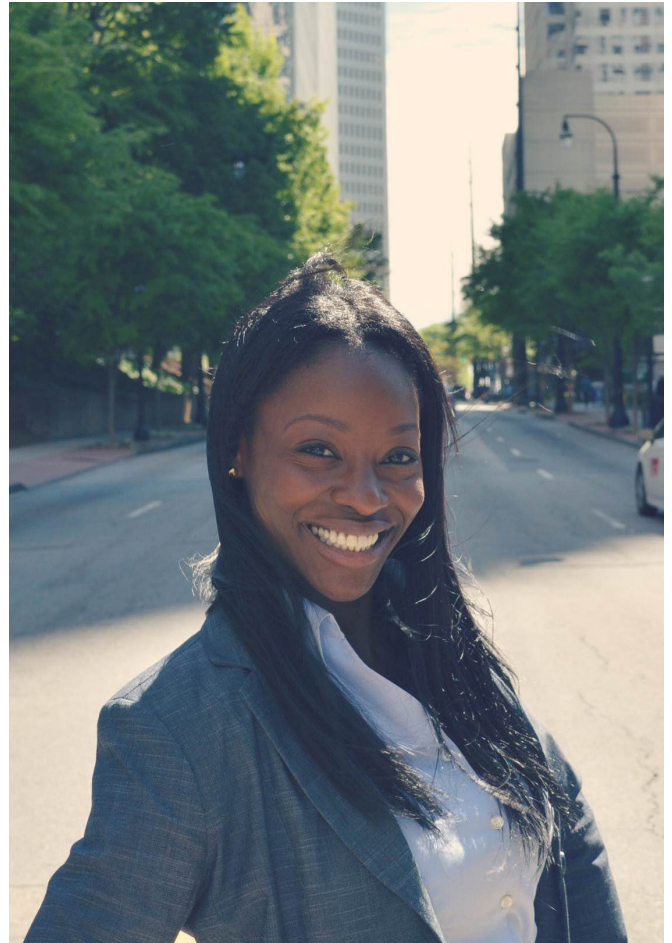
A. Math and English. Math because it made sense. One plus one is always going to equal two. And English because I loved to write. I still do. I journal every day.

Q. What do you journal about?

A. Sometimes I'll write a poem. Or write about how I feel. Or about how someone else made me feel. About different goals I have. Or sometimes I'll just doodle. It's a good way to calm my mind. It's my woosa.

Q. What does your journal look like?

A. Right now it's turquoise and white with a lock on it. But in the past I've had characters like Mickey Mouse and Winnie the Pooh. I've kept journals since I was a teenager. I look back at some of my old writing and think, "You were crazy!"



Q. When did you move to Atlanta?

A. My family moved here when I was twelve, and I hated it at first. Because in New York I went to a performing arts school. Ballet, tap, and gymnastics were free. But in Atlanta, ballet was really expensive. So I had to take up cheerleading.

Q. You were a cheerleader?

A. Yeah. One reason I chose Valdosta State was because it was ranked number two in the country for competitive cheerleading.

Q. What did you learn from cheerleading?

A. You can't get anything done by yourself. We'd do



our tumbling routines, and if one person busted on the floor, we would lose. So we had to uplift that person. We had to teach that person and practice with them one-on-one and help them be better to make sure our routine was solid. So I definitely learned that teamwork is vital to life. No matter how much you think you're killin' it on your own, you need help.

Q. What do you admire in your mom?

A. She's a giver. She gives and gives and gives. Even if someone does her wrong, if they come back and ask her for help, she will always help. Everyone deserves a second chance. I admire that about my mother. She's a nurse, so she would always be bringing in people who were handicapped to live with us, like home care.

Q. Wait, her patients were always coming to live with you?

A. Yeah, every six months or so, we would get someone new. Some had cerebral palsy. Others had autism. We would eat dinner together. Sometimes I would have to feed them. That experience also humbled me. I try not to judge people.

Q. Caring for a parent is really hard. When your mom got sick, how did you find the strength?

A. I actually talked to [fellow RouteMatch employee] Nikki Russell a lot. She has lupus, and she'd tell me different things. How to do stretching exercises for my mom. How to just get her outside and in some fresh air. I hated it when people told me, "It's gonna be okay." I felt like saying, "You don't know." Nikki helped me a lot. And RouteMatch was really good and understanding about giving me time off. I liked that they helped with transportation for people like my mom and her patients. Thank goodness, my mom is doing better now.

Q. What trait do you most dislike in others?

A. Lack of commitment. I work very hard. I don't expect you to work as hard as I do, but if you don't do the best you can, I'll be disappointed.

Q. Do you still dance?

A. Only with my sorority. We do step shows.

Q. What's your go-to dance song?

A. "Happy," by Pharrell. When I hear that song, I don't care what I'm doing. I just want to get up and dance. Oh, and "Shake it Off" by Taylor Swift.

Q. What's at the top of your bucket list?

A. Skydiving.



Writer Laura Lee Huttenbach is the author of "The Boy is Gone" and "Running with Raven" (Kensington Press, May 2017). Her website is www.LLHuttenbach.com.