

# Men of Influence

*For the next several weeks the Dayton Weekly News will recognize many of Dayton's community outstanding African American males whose contributions are making a difference in our everyday lives.*

## Robert Williams: Vice President SoBran, Inc.

By: Brenda Cochran  
Staff Writer

Our man of influence is Robert Williams, born in Montgomery, Alabama, the third child for his parents along with two sisters and one brother. He attended Jude Catholic School from the first to the twelfth grade and upon graduation attended Tennessee State University majoring in Sociology as well as attending the ROTC program there. After graduating from the University, he entered the United States Air Force as a commissioned officer. Throughout his twenty years with the Air Force, he had assignments throughout the United States and abroad.

Mr. Williams shared more about his assignments. "My assignments were in security, logistics, and management engineering with my last assignment being at Wright Patterson Air Force Base where I ended my career. Immediately after my twenty years with the Air Force,

I spent a short span of time working on special projects with the City of Dayton. I then went on to join other civic organizations and companies such as Science and Technology. After working for Science and Technology for two years, Lexis Nexus called on me where I remained for ten years as well as spending some time with NCR."

At Lexis Nexus, Robert was the manager for all of their electronic data conversion where he converted all of the data that came in such as newspapers, magazines, etc. to electronic format which was made available to the public by way of PC's. He then began assisting a young lady with the building of a small business and then joined SoBran, Inc. in 2008."

SoBran is a federal contracting company that solves biomedical, engineering, logistics and



**Robert Williams**

safe mail challengers. The company was founded in 1987 with customers including the National Institute of Health and the department of Homeland Security. The company employs more than 800 employees throughout fifteen locations in the United States, but is headquartered in Dayton.

One of the interesting things about Robert's affiliation with SoBran is that the innovator, owner and founder, Amos Otis grew up with Robert – lived across the street from him; attended the same school and Tennessee State. They were also in the same ROTC program.

After he retired from Wright Patterson in 1987, Mr. Otis called Robert and asked him for his assistance on a part-time basis which ended up being full time. He had no idea that he would be involved with so much.

According to Robert, "My desire after retiring from the Air Force was to find a golf course, play every day, have fun and relax. Over a period of time, you look back and realize that someone believed in your abilities to do certain things, otherwise I wouldn't be getting the calls. One thing led to another and here I am working at a job that is challenging, exciting and rewarding and it's just a thrill to be there."

Robert shared that there is another part about SoBran. He is working in the corporate office here in Dayton, but there are over nine hundred people

that are serviced in the organization. Here in Dayton he is over the contract office, security, human resources, accounting, information technology and marketing. He also shared that he has always had a desire to help people throughout his life. "This was part of my training in college and I learned very early at St. Jude that we were taught to do certain things. In the Air Force, I was able to be associated with various cultures. My one year tour in Viet Nam found me in various places where I learned a great deal. In the various overseas assignments that I visited which were termed temporary assignments, they were nevertheless long enough to get to know the people."

Our man of influence still has challenges, but noted that they are the same. He said, "My challenges are to remain healthy and be able to help others, but now I have grand kids and find that I am focused more because I would like to see them in a position that they can achieve whatever their goals may be and I hope to be a part of their lives in order to set some of those goals. I realize that my vision will change because of those that one is servicing visions will change, but I hope to always be flexible and not get caught up in paradigms."

Robert has been married to his high school sweetheart – Helen, a retired educator for forty-five years. He feels that he has been very fortunate to have a wife who has put up with his long hours of work or trips away from home. The couple has two sons, Wendell Jay and Jamal and two grandsons.

Robert Williams is a golfer, loves jazz, fishing and working with the organizations served by SoBran. He and Helen are members of "Precious Blood" Catholic Church.