

Trendsetters

[Executive Women]

By Mike Vogel



Leila Jammal Nodarse

Nodarse & Associates

President, CEO

Winter Park

Getaways:

Hiking. The family hiked Acadia National Park in Maine over the summer.

Engineering grads:

"We hire a lot of graduates, and they are green."

Sons: Alejandro, 9, and Francisco, 6.

Being a woman-owned business:

"It's definitely been an advantage at obtaining public-sector contracts. Then you have to perform and do well and get it renewed. It's a door opener."

Engineered for Success

Starting her own engineering firm in Winter Park 15 years ago, Leila Nodarse says she didn't envision having more than 15 or 20 engineers and employees some day. Her vision turned out to be somewhat myopic. Nodarse & Associates today has grown to 230 employees, six offices statewide and \$20 million in annual revenue.

Nodarse, 46, a Gainesville native, followed her father, Jim Jammal, into engineering and entrepreneurship. As a child, she visited job sites with him. After graduating from the University of Central Florida in 1982, she joined his firm, Jammal & Associates. Her classes and the profession had few women, but

"I always had the advantage of a father in the business. I was offered the credibility. I just had to keep it."

In 1991, three years after her father sold his firm to a national concern, she founded her own firm, specializing in geotechnical engineering, environmental consulting and construction materials testing. The firm works with civil engineering firms to test soil, groundwater and construction materials for developers and to design foundations, among other tasks. Some 60% of revenue comes from public entities such as the state Department of Transportation. Private-sector jobs include work on the 35-story The Vue and the

32-story 55 West, both under construction in downtown Orlando, the 16-story Progress Energy building going up in St. Petersburg, the Daytona Oceanwalk complex and Universal Studios parking garages.

She plans in the next 12 months to move from sole ownership to shared ownership with key staff. She expects to employ 350 in three to five years. Meanwhile, she visits with UCF engineering students and assures the women, who are eager for info on how their careers will mesh with their plans for marriage and children, that engineering, better than many professions, lends itself to a balanced home-work life.

Gregg Matthews