

## Merri Dee Communications

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**Merri Dee's** legendary award-winning 49-year career in Chicago broadcasting is admirable in itself. She was the Illinois Lottery's First Lady, anchored the first edition of midday news and sports, hosted a magazine-style TV show and served in management as Director of Community Relations. One of the first African-American women to anchor the news in the Windy City, Dee has parlayed her celebrity into charitable success, powerful motivational speaking and advocacy. She has raised millions of dollars for children's charities, spearheaded victims' rights legislation, and helped increase adoption rates across the nation.

In 1966, Merri Dee landed her first radio position with WBEE in Harvey, Illinois. She was one of the first female DJs on WSDM radio and opened her four-hour radio show at WBEE as "**Merri Dee the Honeybee.**" During the next year, Dee developed a following in Chicago radio, becoming a local celebrity.

In 1967 she made the leap to television quickly with WCIU Chicago as host of a Saturday primetime entertainment show. By 1970 Dee hosted her own talk show, **The Merri Dee Show**, on WSNS Channel 44.



In 1972 Dee was hired as an anchor for Chicago's WGN-TV. After 11 years in various on-air positions, Dee moved into administration and became the station's Director of Community Relations and Manager of its Children's Charities. One of the few African-American women in broadcasting at the time, Dee was becoming one of the most successful. She became a trusted advisor.

Dee's professional successes became even more admirable in light of her personal circumstances. She endured horrific abuse as a child and struggled for years as a single mother. In 1971, she made national headlines after being kidnapped, shot and left to die. She has recently penned this story

in a personal memoir, "**LIFE LESSONS ON FAITH, FORGIVENESS & GRACE**". The inspiring story of her miraculous recovery and remarkable courage was featured on "**60 Minutes**," "**The Oprah Winfrey Show**," "**Donahue**" and in **Essence magazine**. This life-changing experience led her to being the force behind the Illinois General Assembly's passage of the first Victim's Bill of Rights. The Illinois law became the model for similar legislation in every state in the United States. Dee's positive spirit helped her not only overcome but thrive. Her incredible journey from abused child to broadcasting icon to social catalyst has proven the philosophy she holds dear: "If it is to be, it is up to me."

Having hosted countless parades, telethons, and television specials, Merri Dee is considered an acclaimed interviewer and television host. She has shared the stage with well-known entertainers such as Lou Rawls, Stevie Wonder, Quincy Jones, Oprah Winfrey, Nancy Wilson, Frank Sinatra, and numerous others. Ms. Dee has been successful in her efforts to support well-deserving causes and assist non-profit organizations achieve their financial goals. For more than 30 years, Merri Dee served as the co-host and presenter of the nationally syndicated “United Negro College Fund (UNCF) Annual Evening of Stars Telethon,” raising tens of millions of dollars for college scholarships. She leveraged her relationship with the McCormick Foundation to raise more than \$31 million for Chicago’s Children’s Charities.

Ms. Dee extends her support beyond raising funds. She advocates for organizations that address critical social needs including issues surrounding adoption and foster care, violence prevention, education, and women’s issues. Her survival in the face of death is also the catalyst behind her impassioned advocacy for violence prevention. In addition to speaking nationally on this issue, she lends her expertise to Cure Violence-Ceasefire, a highly successful evidence-based violence prevention organization.

In recognition of her professional and civic accomplishments, Merri Dee is the recipient of awards such as:

- ✚ The Academy of Television Arts and Sciences Silver Circle Award
- ✚ The National Gracie Allen Award from the Alliance for Women in Media
- ✚ United Negro College Fund’s President’s Award
- ✚ The Adoption Excellence Award from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- ✚ National Women in Film
- ✚ Chicago Journalism Hall of Fame

She has been inducted into the National Association of Black Journalists’ Hall of Fame and most recently the U.S. Library of Congress as a History Maker. She was honored to receive honorary doctorate degrees from Tougaloo College, Jackson/Tougaloo, Mississippi and Lewis University in Illinois.

Merri Dee was appointed to serve as an official U.S. Army Ambassador. She was appointed by former Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley to serve on the Mayor’s Council on Women’s Issues, and by Illinois’ Governor Pat Quinn to The Serve Illinois Commission, a volunteer advocacy delegation. She obtained Senate confirmation as a Commissioner to the Illinois Human Rights Commission. Ms. Dee has served six years as the Illinois State President for AARP which has 1.7 million Illinois members. Recently, she joined Goodcity Chicago as an Ambassador in an effort to mobilize, inspire and make a difference in Chicagoland’s young entrepreneurial community.

**MERRI DEE’s powerful memoir**  
**LIFE LESSONS ON FAITH, FORGIVENESS & GRACE**  
available on-line @ [www.merridee.com](http://www.merridee.com); [amazon.com](http://amazon.com); [barnesnoble.com](http://barnesnoble.com);  
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