



11th Year Edition

Creating A Seat & The Table

Ambassador Dr. Margaret Dureke

on how the queen of entrepreneurs
utilizes being Founder, president &
executive director; WETATi Academy
& Margaretspeaks

She's:

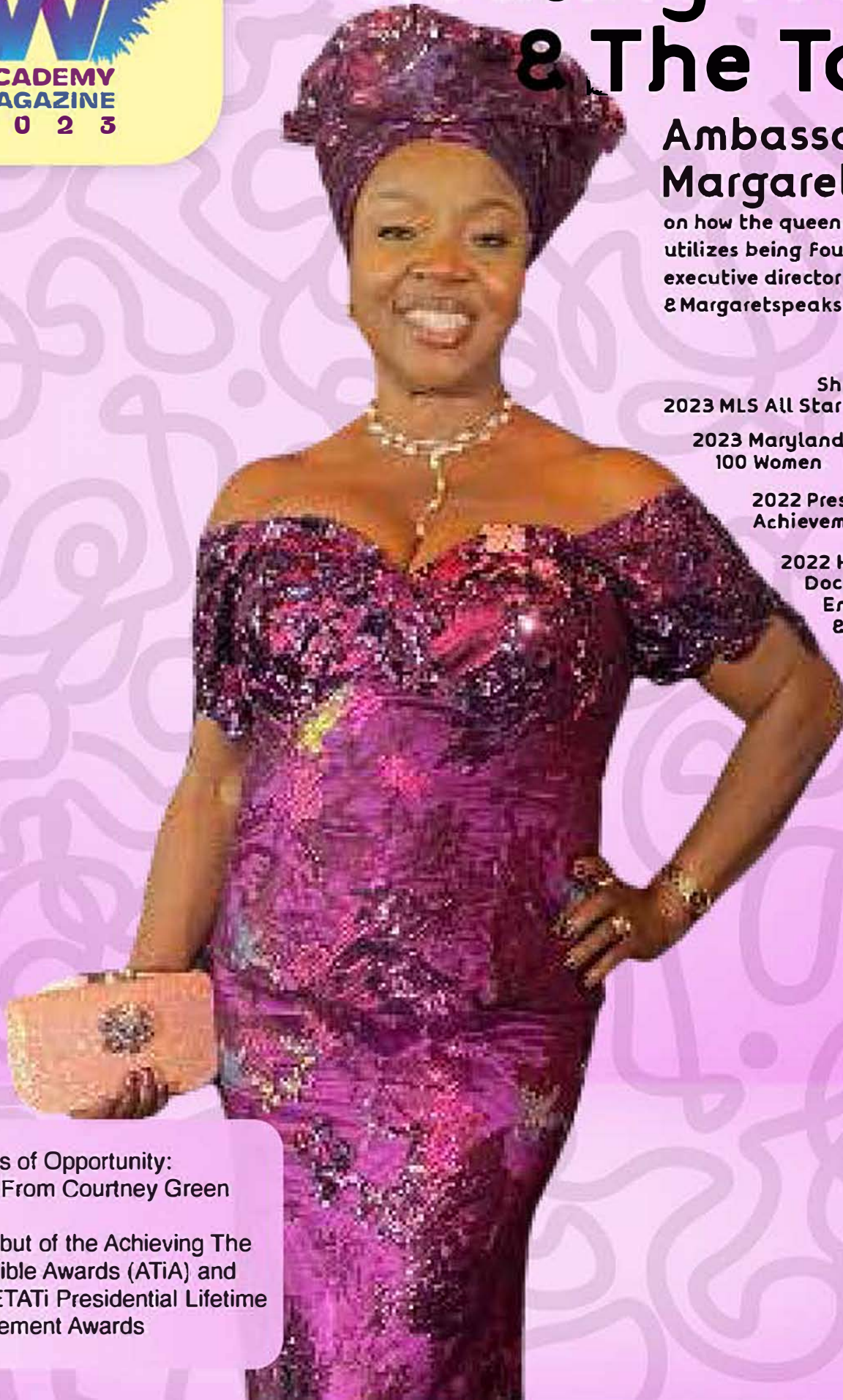
2023 MLS All Star Hometown Hero

2023 Maryland Daily Record Top
100 Women

2022 Presidential Lifetime
Achievement Awardee

2022 Honorary
Doctorate in
Entrepreneurship
& Business

2018 US Army
McArthur
Woman of
Excellence



Leaders of Opportunity:
Words From Courtney Green

The debut of the Achieving The
impossible Awards (ATiA) and
the WETATi Presidential Lifetime
Achievement Awards



2023 WETATi Academy Magazine

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- WETATi Academy Magazine 2023
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Chief Keynote Speaker of 2023 WETATI
Academy Entrepreneurship Convention

Amb. Dr. Margaret Dureke

There will never be
change without
challenge.
There will never
be change
without
change.
There will
never be
change
without
sacrifice.



On Creating A Seat @ The Table

By nature, we tend to seek change for better in every aspect of our lives. What is mind boggling is that most people expect that the change they are seeking should happen miraculously (not that miracles do not happen anymore; they do). It will NOT just happen from doing the mundane, or mediocre, or doing the same exact thing they have been doing, and yet they expect a different result. This mentality, mindset and attitude have been established to mean that the person is insane –even if they don't know it. I have come to realize that some miracles come from constructive and bold engagements – like doing what others would say “not for me” or do things haphazardly or with bare minimum in effort, lacking self-help, not willing to go where others would not go – believing in yourself when others do not; being determined and indefatigable in pursuit of what you want and in the face of the obstacles, challenges, disappointments, rejections, and the like.

When you go into the annals of history of successful people who made an impact in the lives of others and left legacies, it is evident that they understood the three principles above. You can also be encouraged to learn that those who achieved their ‘impossible’ are those who understood and embraced from the onset that there would never be change without challenge, there would never be change without change, and there would never be change without sacrifice.

It is virtually impossible to achieve anything impactful and become a force for good in the world without change, challenge and sacrifice. The good news is that when you do, you will find meaning, fulfillment and purpose in your life. So PUSH for change by embracing change, challenge and sacrifice in pursuit of your life ambitions or dreams. Dreams do not come with expiration dates on them. It is never too late to dream or reignite the ones you had before. It is only too late for those who give up. My hope and prayer is that by being here today, you will leave at the end of the program with your own ‘AHA Moment(s)’ that will allow you to embrace the inevitable changes, challenges, and sacrifices in your path to rough hew your own DESTINY in any aspect of your life that you DESIRE CHANGE! If you do the NATURAL, God will do the SUPERNATURAL. JUST PUSH!

On behalf of my fellow WETATians, I say welcome. To God be the Glory!

Biography

Ambassador Dr. Margaret Dureke is a recipient of one of the highest civilian honors in America, the Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award and an Honorary Doctorate Degree of Philosophy in Entrepreneurship and Business Administration. She is also a recipient of the Maryland Daily Record Top 100 Women 2023.

Dr. Margaret Dureke is the Founder, President, and Executive Director of an economic empowerment educational nonprofit organization called WETATI Academy; located at and in partnership with Nyumburu Cultural Center, University of Maryland, College Park. She is also the founder and managing Principal of Margaret Speaks. Dr. Dureke is a renowned international “moxie motivational speaker”- Washington Post and known as a “How-to-Guru” for her expertise and natural ability to empower her clients, through her MargaretSpeaks platform.

Ambassador Dr. Dureke, received her B.A. degree with honors from Howard University and a Juris Doctorate degree in law from American University, Washington College of Law, Washington, DC. She is serial entrepreneur, publisher, and bestselling author of several personal and business development books such as “How to Succeed Against All Odds”, “The Power of Consistency”, “7 Drivers for Success”, “Think, Believe, Act and Grow Rich”, “I Am: The Power of Self Awareness”, “11 Keys to Finding The Seed of Opportunity in Any Adversity”, and many more.

For over 30 years, Dr. Dureke has been training, empowering, coaching, mentoring and inspiring corporations, government agencies, business leaders, community leaders, diplomatic corps, students, and the public about the importance of believing in themselves to achieve their respective impossibilities in any area of their lives. Her passion is to teach others how to turn adversities or disadvantages into achievements.

Amongst Dr. Dureke's other notable achievements and awards are:

- 2023 Maryland The Daily Record Top 100 Women
- Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award
- Honorary Doctorate Degree of Philosophy in Entrepreneurship and Business Administration from Trinity International University Ambassadors' School of Business (T.I.U.A)
- Appointed Goodwill Ambassador to the Republic of the Gambia in recognition of her philanthropic and humanitarian work in Gambia and around the world
- Recipient of the United States Army MacArthur woman of Excellence Award
- Ambassador Dr. Margaret Dureke and WETATI Academy were awarded the Maryland Governor's Citation in honor of National Women's Small Business Month, October 2017. The Citation recognized: “The amazing work that you do and for the significant impact you are making to Maryland's economy and the community you serve.”
- MEA-Heart & Soul Magazine “Woman of Power Award 2018
- A Fellow at the Venture Philanthropy Partners-DC, Ready to Work Nonprofit Capacity Building
- Senior Vice President in marketing in the Direct Sales industry
- Presenter and Speaker at the 58th Anniversary-Montgomery Bus Boycott honoring Rosa Parks, alongside Dr. Bernice King

Congratulations

TO ALL PARTICIPANTS AND RECIPIENTS IN THE ANNUAL



Anne Reese Carswell Scholarship & Awards Gala



Timothy J. Adams

President & CEO
Systems Application & Technologies, Inc.



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MORE THAN 32 YEARS OF SUPPORT TO THE WARFIGHTER

Fredricia Cunegin is the founder and chief executive officer of HRinMotion, LLC, a full-service human resource management consulting firm with a mission to help CEOs develop a legacy-driven labor force through the pillars of succession planning, training, workforce development, behavioral style assessments, and diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and belonging. The organization's vision is strengthening legacy potential by transforming the way organizations utilize the human resource function. With over 25 years of corporate human resource management experience, Fredricia offers a proprietary methodology and infrastructure that guides HRIM's private- and public-sector clients to uphold compliance with federal, state, and local laws. Her team provides strategic planning, employee and labor relations, talent acquisition, recruitment services, employment law compliance, salary/compensation studies, training and development, and performance management. She offers a customized executive coaching program, and her clients are experiencing the benefit of employee longevity and the execution of succession planning strategies.

As a certified DISC, Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, and Conscientious Practitioner serving as an executive coach, Fredricia provides a progressive transformational process that elevates and connects client leaders within organizations preparing for succession. She serves as an executive coach with a passionate focus on building legacy leaders, which offer a continual platform to provide leadership-style training services that produce: (1) congruency with organizations, (2) caliber expertise and value presented to organizations, and (3) continuity that exist through succession planning.

Fredricia has successfully provided training services to the L.E.A.P. (Learn, Earn, Advance, Prosper), Academy, District of Columbia Department of Human Resource Center for Learning and Development, and DC HR. Furthermore, she has presented leadership training for the Food Safety and Inspection Services (FSIS) United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the Department of Education; Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric

Administration (NOAA), and Sexual Harassment training for the National Industries for the Blind (NIB).

Fredricia has earned the professional human resource (PHR) certification conferred by the Human Resource Certification Institute (HRCI) and the SHRM-CP certification conferred by the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM). She also holds a Master of Science Management (MSM) degree with a human resource management concentration from the University of Maryland Global Campus.

**Achieving The impossible:
PathFinder Pioneering**

*Fredricia
Cunegin*



WETATi Academy
***Above &
Beyond Award***
2023 Recipients



Jimmie Jones

Truist Bank

*Vice President & Community
Development Manager*



Joanna Swank-Chambers

WETATi Academy

*Chief Administrative Associate & Program
Coordinator*

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Achieving The impossible: Pivoting Philanthropy

Dr. Nina
Copeland



Dr. Nina R. Copeland, is a native of Montgomery, Alabama. She is the oldest of five siblings. She is stationed at Fort Gregg-Adam, Virginia. She has held command and staff positions across the Army CONUS and OCONUS organizations, from tactical to strategic operations. Dr. Nina Copeland embodies this sentiment throughout her professional career and in her work with clients. As a transformational coach, she helps those motivated to do the same in their own lives. To transcend beyond “faking it until you make it” to becoming the person you aspire to be.

Having chosen to receive her undergraduate degree in social work, it is clear that a passion for helping others succeed has long been a focus for Dr. Copeland and something she has prioritized for many years, with a master's degree in Procurement and Acquisition Management from Webster University, an honorary Doctor of Philosophy, and a Business & Entrepreneurship Coach Certificate from T.I.U.A School of Business and with a military background, Dr. Copeland has the knowledge, education, and real-world experience to

support clients in reaching their fullest potential. Throughout her academic career and time on active duty, she realized there was a unique way to help individuals, a formulaic way, to unlock their authentic identity and confidence that ultimately led to their success. After creating a methodology for implementing this strategy, Dr. Copeland began using it within her coaching and consulting business founded on self-actualization. The system is designed to take individuals through their current perspective of themselves, see the biases that allow stagnation, and begin the active transformation.

The foundational concepts of the B.O.L.D. Method, developed by Dr. Copeland, centers around reframing, strength identification, and solution-oriented cognition. These tools are recognized for addressing fearful thinking, previous traumas, and the barriers to success that most people don't realize are holding them back. Dr. Nina Copeland's goal with each of her clients is unique, but the fundamentals remain the same; to transform a client's self-image and to maximize their ability to move through life with a purpose and strategy for achieving.

Dr. Copeland provides a relatable approach that is accessible while still being thorough and well-planned. With over 17 years of hands-on experience working with individuals to reach their utmost potential, Dr. Copeland has the tools to guide others because she has learned how to implement them herself. Speaking of her own experiences, “I have encountered setbacks and failures, but once I embraced the positives in my life and applied life-changing strategies, I found my desired success. By altering your thoughts, you too can move from defeat to your own victory.”

Outside of her professional work, Dr. Nina Copeland is a wife and mother with three sons. Having raised a family and understanding what it means to advocate for the voiceless, there is a deeper awareness of supporting transformation in others. This is why she is so dedicated to her client's success and outcomes; she cares about seeing people do well and inspiring them by leading by example.

In her free time, Dr. Copeland enjoys living an active lifestyle while experiencing new opportunities and meeting new people.

Mission and Vision Statement: To each day actively strive to provide innovative tools, resources, and guidance that make a positively recognizable improvement in each client's progress toward self-actualization and ability to move with a purpose toward their goals

2023

WETATi Academy Anne Reese Carswell Scholarship Recipients



*Anthony Ramirez
Chinchilla*

University of Maryland
College Park



Laura Charleston
University of Maryland
College Park



Abdulfaruq Seriki

University of Maryland
College Park



Deborah Alain
Prince George's
Community College



Naomi Miatudila
University of Maryland
College Park



Lian Agurmezio
Prince George's
Community College

Dureke Idea Pitch Competition: Collegiate Competitors

Naomi
Miatudila



Naomi Miatudila is a well-rounded individual with balance and determination in everything she does. She excels academically in all her classes, especially her favorite math and engineering courses. Artistically, she devotes herself to her many passions, whether winning multiple first-place awards at dance competitions or performing with her musical instruments. Diligently, she works hard at her various jobs and volunteers at different places to educate children on the art of dance, swimming, and good morals. Finally, and passionately, she attends the University of Maryland in hopes of starting her own business in engineering consulting to help build her local and global communities. Naomi is determined to prosper and will one day receive a degree in engineering to build diversity in the force and become a leading figure in the engineering consulting business.

Council Member Eric Olson

Eric Olson was elected in 2022 to serve as the District 3 Council Member on the Prince George's County Council. The district includes College Park, University Park, Riverdale Park, Berwyn Heights, Landover Hills, New Carrollton, Lanham, Seabrook, and the Riverdale area. Council Member Olson serves as Chair of the Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy and

Environment Committee, Vice Chair of the Planning, Housing and Economic Development Committee, and on the Education and Workforce Development Committee. Council Member Olson's priorities include supporting smart growth, advancing climate goals, enhancing neighborhood quality of life, and creating a more responsive government. He resides in College Park with his wife, Sarah, and their two daughters.



Mirna (Lupi) Quinteros-Grady, President & CEO of LAYC, is a strategic, forward-thinking leader with over 20 years of experience working in socio-economically challenged communities serving a diverse population of youth. Since assuming her role in 2018, Lupi has intertwined LAYC's mission with the new and evolving needs of Washington, DC and Maryland's Black, Latino, and immigrant communities to ensure our services are responsive, relevant, and reliable to over 4,500 youth and families each year. Over her four years as president & CEO at LAYC, she has transformed LAYC operations and directed staff through an unprecedented global health crisis; leading LAYC to provide culturally-relevant and linguistically-inclusive services where many other organizations could not.

As a regional leader in the youth development field for over 20 years, Lupi has been responsible for the implementation of over 45+ multicultural, comprehensive, and innovative programs addressing youths' social, academic, and career needs. She previously served as LAYC's Maryland Multicultural Youth Center's (LAYC/MMYC) managing director, providing vision and oversight for all our Montgomery and Prince George's County operations. She has extensive knowledge of the development, design and replication of programs in the field of youth development and initiatives that govern community-based organizations in DC and Maryland. In her commitment to youth development, she has been invested in the development of LAYC Positive Youth Development (PYD) curriculum; a culturally-relevant, youth-centered approach created by the communities we serve, for the communities we serve.

Lupi is the first Latina to ever lead LAYC, and her connection to LAYC began as a 14-year-old participant in LAYC's Summer Youth Employment Program; a program she would go on to lead as a college student in her first position at LAYC. As an immigrant from El Salvador, Lupi uniquely understands the challenges and triumphs of the families we serve and maintains a personal connection to our youth through volunteering in our direct service programs. In addition to her master's degree in bilingual and special education from George Washington University and a bachelor's degree from Goucher College, Lupi credits our PYD approach as helping her build the confidence, advocacy, and communication skills that guide her to this day. Under her new strategic plan, launched in 2019, LAYC has prioritized racial equity and youth voice as central components of our ongoing mission: returning power to communities of color through grassroots programming.

LAYC is proud of the recognition Lupi has received as a leader across wider DC and Maryland communities, as she amplifies the voice of our more vulnerable youth and families within key political and communal forums. In 2014, she was elected to the school board of Prince George's District 2, providing leadership and expertise on academic and cultural barriers Latino and immigrant youth experience in Maryland's public schools: at the time, she was one of only two Latinas serving on the board. In 2019, she became a member of Leadership Greater Washington, graduating Class of 2020. From 2020 to present, she and LAYC have been selected to participate in a series of COVID-19 education and recovery coalitions in DC and Maryland, including DC Health Scientific Advisory Committee, Montgomery County Community Advisory Board, and Prince George Forward Taskforce's Education Recovery Work Group, to help accelerate recovery efforts and dispel health misinformation targeting communities of color. She also served as a member of the Presidential Transition Committee for Montgomery County Community College.

Achieving The impossible: Visionary Leadership

Mirna Lupi
Quinteros-
Grady



Her most recent accolades also include 2023 Washington Woman of Excellence from Mayor Muriel Bowser, DC Commission for Women, and the Mayor's Office on Women's Policy and Initiatives; 2023 Legacy Builder award from the Prince George's Office of the County Executive, Honorary Degree of Associate of Arts in Public Service from Montgomery College, Washington Business Journal's 2022 "Women Who Mean Business" Award, Montgomery Collaboration Council's 2019 "Time Well Spent for Montgomery's Children" Award, NFL's 2019 Hispanic Heritage Leadership Award, El Tiempo Latino's 2019 "100 Powermeter" Award, and Prince George's 2019 "Visionary Women in Prince George's County" Award.

WETATi Academy
*Above &
Beyond Award*
2023 Recipients



Noel Swank

WETATi Academy
WETATi Support Staff



Richard Ojuri

M&T Bank
*Assistant VP, University of Maryland
Branch Manage*

Chidinma Dureke



"Peak"
Oil On Canvas 2022



Chidinma Dureke

is a multi-hyphenate visual artist based in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. Born in D.C. to parents of Nigerian descent, Chidinma was raised between Nigeria and the United States. Her unique cross-cultural perspective characterizes her art, which investigates and celebrates Black identity. Especially drawn to portraiture, Chidinma expresses and captures vibrant visual narratives that masterfully integrate elements of African art history, traditional portrait painting, and modern-day mass media.

As a multidisciplinary designer, her practice is built upon my Trans-Atlantic and lived experience. Each creation by Chidinma is a fresh fusion of bold colors, textile-inspired textures, and expressive forms that tell an intimately personal, yet universally compelling, story. Her interests and experience are as diverse as her portfolio.

She earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in painting and graphic design at Frostburg State University and has since pursued a career in visual art, graphic design, marketing, and film production design. Chidinma is the CEO of CHDesignz, a full-service graphic and illustration design studio, and social media

marketing agency. She is also the co-founder of Nkem Life, a popular blog, featured Washington Post, about culture and dual identity. Chidinma's award-winning work has been exhibited in the U.S. Canada, Cannes, France and featured by The Baltimore Sun, Essence.com, BuzzFeed, Google News Initiative and seen on Amazon Prime.

To learn more about Chidinma visit Chidinma-dureke.com



Dureka idea Pitch Competition: Coach

Collegiate



Lucretia
Freeman-
Buster

Lucretia Freeman-Buster has a wealth of experience in financial management, commercial banking, economic development, and international trade spanning over 25 years. Her expertise extends to small business management, and she has provided professional consulting services to small, minority, women, and veteran-owned businesses, as well as non-profit organizations for more than 20 years. Her well-rounded background supports entrepreneurship and business development.

In 2011, Lucretia established the Lamb Consulting Group, LLC, a small business advisory firm that provides services to small, minority, women, and veteran-owned businesses to build stronger business operations, enhance their infrastructure, and ultimately increase organizational success.

Achieving The impossible: Lifetime Achievement

Sam Ford



Television news reporter Sam Ford was born on May 29, 1953 in Coffeyville, Kansas to construction worker Sammie Ford and laundry worker Kathleen Owens. In 1974, Ford graduated with his B.S. degree in journalism from the University of Kansas. While at the university, he began his career in media with a job as a disc jockey at the college and local radio station.

Ford's career soon made the transition into news journalism, and, in 1974, Ford was hired as a reporter/announcer on both KSJN Radio (a Minnesota Public Radio station) and KMSP-TV (an ABC affiliate television channel). He then studied journalism at the graduate level at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, and worked as a reporter at WCCO-TV, where he wrote and produced the first of many African American history TV features of his career. In 1975, Ford was one of the forty-four founding members of the National Association of Black Journalists in Washington, D.C. He spent nine years as a reporter for CBS News, before moving to Washington, D.C. in 1987 to work for ABC News. Ford worked his way up the ranks at ABC News, and was promoted to bureau chief for the NJLA-TV/ABC7 Network.

Ford has produced several television features on African American issues, including *Black Slaves*, *Red Masters* (1990), and the Emmy Award-winning *African American Connection* (1991). In 2003, he traveled to Nigeria to explore his Yoruban ancestry; the resulting TV feature, *Journey to Africa*, garnered a Broadcast Excellence Award from Columbia University. Ford is active in the Prime Movers Media mentorship program at Ballou High School in Washington, D.C., where his work with aspiring journalism students earned him another Emmy for the news special *Field Trip to Ballou* (2006).

Ford is married to freelance reporter and media manager Gloria Murry; they have a son, Murry Ford, and a daughter, Gina Ford.

Dureke Idea Pitch Competition: Collegiate Competitors

Lian

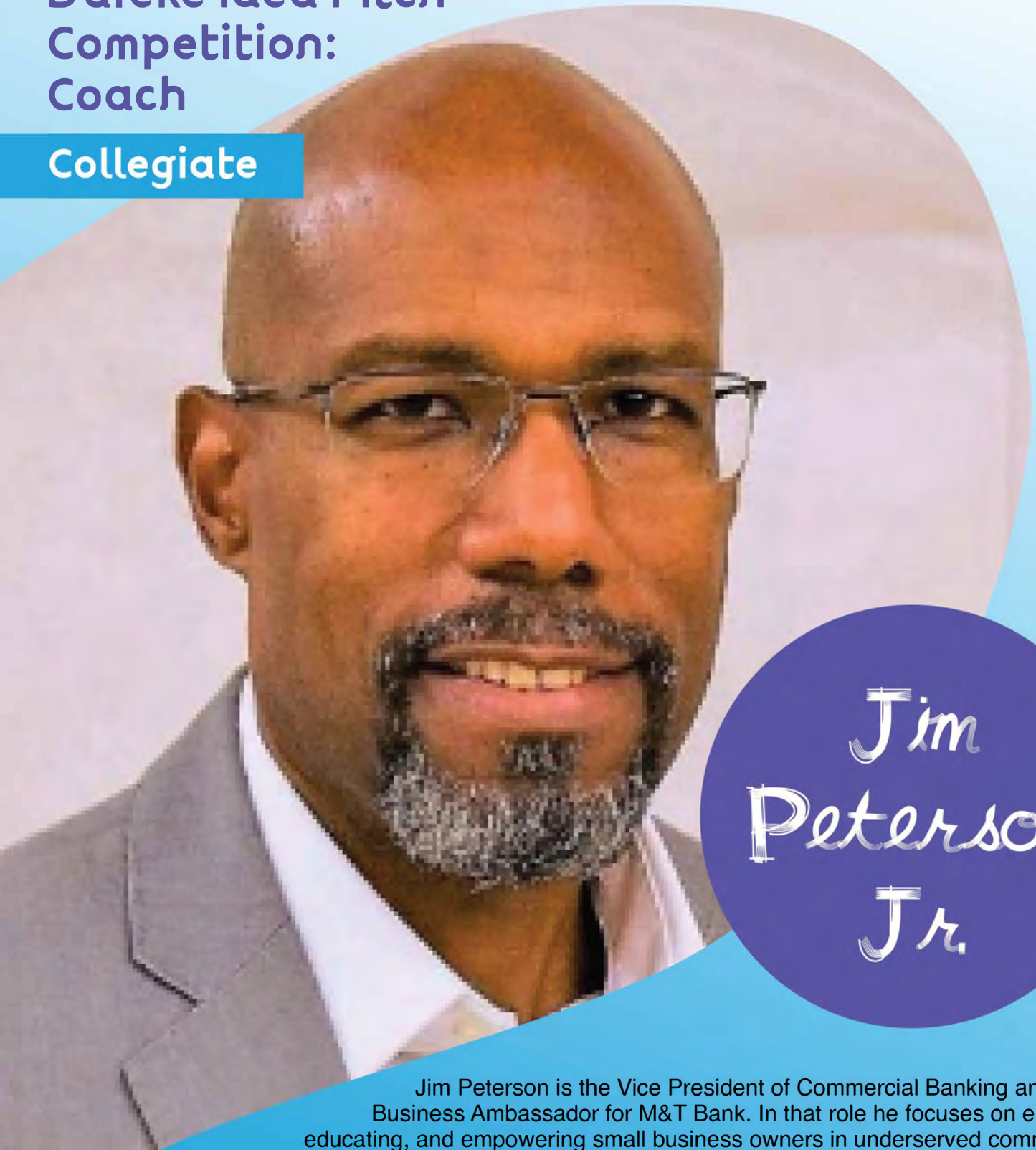
Agwumezie



Hello my name is Lian Agwumezie! I am currently a Sophomore at Prince George's Community College and will be obtaining my AS degree in Business Administration this May! During the fall I will be a junior, majoring in accounting at the Robert H. Smith School of Business at the University of Maryland. Extracurricularly, I am the Vice President of resource hub on campus that focuses on the professional and academic enrichment of the student body. I like to participate in community service, help create events, and get involved with large teams or groups! Before Wetati, I had never considered the idea of entrepreneurship or even thought of a business worth developing! They helped me tap into topics I'm passionate about and encouraged me to bring it to fruition. My business highlights the elder marginalized community and I'm excited to pitch something that will finally spotlight them and their important contributions to the community. I can't wait to further expand on my business!

Dureka idea Pitch Competition: Coach

Collegiate




Jim
Peterson
Jr.

Jim Peterson is the Vice President of Commercial Banking and Small Business Ambassador for M&T Bank. In that role he focuses on engaging, educating, and empowering small business owners in underserved communities throughout the M&T Bank footprint. Prior to M&T Bank he served in the Mayor's Office of Minority & Women Owned Businesses as the Outreach Coordinator for the Baltimore City Small Business Resource Center where he created the 0 to 100 Baltimore Accelerator that is now administered, backed and funded by M&T Bank. Jim has over 30 years of business ownership, sales and entrepreneurship experience. Jim and his partners moved their industrial flooring company from Pennsylvania to Baltimore in 1997. After transitioning out of the flooring business, Jim was chosen by the Director of Women and Minority Owned Business in the Baltimore City Mayor's Office, to assist the underserved communities in Baltimore City by sharing his experiences and teaching the art of starting, building and growing small businesses.

● WETATi Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award ●

Timothy J.
Adams



Timothy J. Adams is President and CEO of SA-TECH, a company he founded in 1989. SA-TECH is a progressive and steadily growing professional services firm with origins in the high technology and technical support areas of the defense industry.

Mr. Adams holds a Master of Business Administration degree from the University of New Orleans and a Bachelor of Science degree from Xavier University in New Orleans, LA. He attended the Minority Business Executive Program at Tuck College of Business at Dartmouth College and the Business Innovation Management Program at the A. James Clark School of Engineering and the Robert H. Smith School of Business at the University of Maryland, College Park. He received a Doctorate of Business (Honoris Causa) from Bowie State University in May 2017.

An energetic, creative and engaging individual, Mr. Adams started SA-TECH with only a few small defense contracts. Since its founding, SA-TECH has grown into a multi-million dollar diversified company with employees around the country. His exceptional leadership skills have guided the company to success, growth and prominence. Mr. Adams was recently selected as the University of New Orleans, College of Business Administration Distinguish Alumnus. He is a proud recipient of the Washington Business Journal's Minority Business Leader Award for 2019, one of Black Enterprise's Top 100 Industrial/Services Black Businesses in the Nation for 2019, one of Maryland's Most Admired CEOs, by The Daily Record, for 2018 and also received The Daily Records' ICON Honors Award for 2018. In addition, Mr. Adams was recognized as a Top 100 African American Leaders in America by the United States Black Chamber of Commerce and one of Maryland's 25 CEOs You Need To Know, and received a Maryland Democratic Party Distinguished Leadership Award. He was inducted into the Top 100 Minority Business Enterprise Hall of Fame for the Mid-Atlantic Region and was selected as one of the Maryland Chamber of Commerce's Hall of Fame inductees for 2013. Mr. Adams also received Bowie State University's 2010 Founders Promise Award as well as numerous other awards and distinctions for his business acumen.

Thankful for the advisors and mentors from whom he has benefited throughout his career, Mr. Adams has generously returned that assistance by giving his time, talents and financial support to a variety of businesses and community organizations that touch the lives of people in his community and around the country. His board service includes: Board Member, Doctors Community Health System; Board Member, Greater Maryland Health System, Inc.; Board Member, University of New Orleans Foundation; Member, Prince George's Community College Foundation – Finance Committee; Chairman, Privatization and Procurement Council for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce; Member, Corporate Leadership Advisory Council; One of the commissioners, Maryland Economic Development Council; Honorary Vice Commander, 11th Wing; Ambassador, Joint Base Andrews; President, Maryland State Black Chamber of Commerce; Board Member, Greater Prince George's Business Roundtable; Board Member, University System of Maryland Foundation; Board Member, Doctor's Community Hospital and Doctor's Community Hospital Foundation; Board Member, Maryland Chamber of Commerce; Board Member, National Black Chamber of Commerce; Lifetime Member, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity; and many others.



Mr. Adams has been extremely active in keeping small business issues in front of national leaders. He has testified before the U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, providing recommendations to the Federal Government on how it can improve its contracting and procurement procedures as they relate to small businesses.

As a strong proponent of issues affecting persons with disabilities, Mr. Adams has given his time, attention and service on the Committee for Review for the Americans with Disabilities Act. Additionally, Mr. Adams has volunteered his time and made a strong commitment to the Patriots Technology Training Center (PTTC) located in Seat Pleasant, MD. The PTTC is a non-profit organization that, since its conception in 1997, has provided information and created technology opportunities for minority students. Its mission is to help students bridge the "digital divide" while pursuing college degrees and professional careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). Mr. Adams is a mentor to the community and has especially assisted students in finding resources to attend college.

As former chair and member of the Bowie State University Foundation (BSUF) that provides student scholarships, Mr. Adams' leadership has seen BSUF increase the value of its endowment to more than \$5,000,000. These scholarships have directly impacted Bowie State's status of having the highest retention rate among all of Maryland's Historically Black Colleges and Universities. With this retention success the university has succeeded in winning a designation as a growth institution within the University System of Maryland.

Other community service has been dedicated to the armed forces and is illustrated in Mr. Adams' support of the Maryland Room, a venture designed to renovate an out-of-date reception and relaxation area at Joint Base Andrews, Malcolm Grow Medical Center, for wounded servicemen and women returning from deployment. He also supported the addition of the Family Room at Joint Base Andrews' passenger terminal and provides scholarships to the top graduates of the Airmen Leadership School.

On November 18, 2019, Mr. Adams was sworn-in as the Mayor for the city of Bowie, MD. He is the first African American elected to this position.

Mr. Adams resides in Bowie, MD, with his wife, The Honorable Sheila R. Tillerson Adams and twins, Timothy, Jr. and Kayla.

Building Stronger Communities, Supporting Maryland Families



Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor
Jacob R. Day, Secretary
Owen McEvoy, Deputy Secretary



dhcd.maryland.gov

Dureka idea Pitch Competition: Coach

Collegiate



DeWayne
Ellis

DeWayne Ellis is the Founder and Managing Partner of the Wealth Syndicate LLC. The firm is based in Silver Spring, Maryland. He is a 20+ year financial services veteran and has represented individuals, professionals and business owners on their banking and financial planning needs. DeWayne has become a trusted advisor and built a solid foundation of clients through his financial advisory services. DeWayne has a long record of successfully guiding individuals and businesses with diverse portfolios. He has managed over \$50 million in accounts over his career. His Advisory Services, Investments, Retirement Planning and specific areas of expertise include Financial Planning and Insurance Planning. DeWayne specializes in applying his expertise and market knowledge to individuals and businesses that consistently exceed the investment goals of his clients. In addition to hosting financial workshops and symposiums in the Washington, DC Metropolitan area. He has partnered with AARP to present Financial Freedom seminars to help individuals understand Basic Investing, Credit, Budgeting and Banking. DeWayne has also partnered with Industrial Bank to provide financial literacy to participants of the Young Men Emerging (Y-ME) Program at The Washington DC Department of Corrections.

Dureke Idea Pitch Competition: Collegiate Competitors

*Adewunmi
Agagu*



My name is Adewunmi Agagu and I attend Prince George's Community College but am now transferring to the University of Maryland as an upcoming junior in the fall to major in kinesiology on a pre-physical therapy track. The name of my business is called Melyon Organics and we help consumers that have trouble growing hair in problematic areas of their scalp, consumers who plan to notice new growth and lengths, strengthened hair strands, less hair shedding, targeting hair dryness, itchy scalp, and premature greying. We aim to provide customers with plant derived organic products to ensure they receive quality hair care products that will not only strengthen their hair shaft but provide a healthy scalp environment for their hair to thrive and grow. What made me participate was being in the Southern Management Leadership Program and after meeting Dr.Dureke and hearing her speak about WETATi gave me motivation that my business and vision can come to life but pushing myself to take that risk and just do it. Participating in the Dureke iDEA Pitch Competition is a great opportunity for me because it will teach me the steps, I need to take to start my business and the different entrepreneurial approaches. The outcome I'll get out of being in this competition is where I'll be prepared to launch my business in order for me to start making sales and reaching new heights with what is yet to come.

Bernitta Louise Johnson

Bernitta Louise Johnson, also coined under the alias "Veganitta", is the founder of "Get Planted with Veganitta"--a business that provides plant-based services to non-vegans and vegans, alike. This 41 year old "veganista" is not only passionate about her own plant-based journey, but is on a mission to educate and help others become the healthiest versions of themselves--from the INSIDE-OUT. However, it was only at the age of 34 that she began her plant-based journey. Up until this age, she could not envision herself omitting meat, dairy, eggs, and honey from her diet. Rather, she enjoyed a variety of comfort foods that included fried chicken, mac and cheese, pizza, hamburgers, scrambled eggs, and the extremely faddish bacon! In transition, Bernitta experienced victories and what she likes to call "First Attempts In Learning" instead of "failure". However, with education, planning, and determination, she would eventually discover the root-cause of her set-backs and soon reach a point of consistency.

Today, Veganitta works with the "vegan-curious" population whose goal is to incorporate plant-based alternatives into their diet and lifestyle. The range of services she provides include transitional coaching, menu-planning, meal-prep, fitness planning, group workshops/seminars, and edible/ non-edible vegan merchandise.

Veganitta finds great joy in "spreading the health" and uses her knowledgebased to improve one life at a time!

She likes to say "First Attempts In Learning" instead of "Failure".



Dureka idea Pitch Competition:

Coach

Next Gen



*Deepa
Deshpande*

Deepa Deshpande, MS, MBIOT, PMP works at Becton Dickinson as a Program Director. She's an experienced PMO leader with a demonstrated history of leading cross functional teams in the life sciences industry. Skilled in PMO Development, Product Development, Research and Development, Environmental Management Systems and Laboratory Safety Management. Strong program and project management professional with a Project Management Certification from PMI.

Dureka idea Pitch Competition: Coach

Next Gen



*Jimmie
Jones*

Jimmie Jones is an accomplished community banker, former entrepreneur, and small business advocate. Jimmie has spent most of his banking career in the Washington DC area and has also had the opportunity to sharpen his financial service skills in Texas and Florida over the years. He and his family returned to the DC area in 2020 to take on the role of Community Development Manager with Truist Bank. Jimmie brings a world of banking, entrepreneurial and nonprofit management experience coupled with enormous compassion to his role. In addition to his 18 years of service with Truist, he also ran a Community Development Financial Institution in Jacksonville, FL, and managed lending services at an affordable housing developer in the Baltimore/Washington region. He has served on several nonprofit boards over the years; including with WETATi, and despite the difficulties of managing through the COVID19 pandemic, has still found time to grow his young family with the birth of a baby girl last summer.

Licensed Financial Educator The existence of every human, came through birth as orchestrated by the Almighty, and through God's providence, Princess Stella Chinedo was born. She had both her elementary and secondary school education in her remote village and later proceeded to Alvan Ikoku College of Education and Administration and graduated with an associate in education in 1995. Her desire for more education made her pursue a degree course at Imo State University, Owerri and earned her bachelor's degree in education in 1998.

In keeping with her passion for caring for everyone and in pursuit of financial freedom and better education, she came to the United States of America in 1999 to join her husband and start another round of educational pursuit. She enrolled into Holy Name Hospital School of Nursing, Teaneck New Jersey, and became a licensed Practical Nurse with "Honors" in 2007. After her due academic diligence at Fairleigh Dickinson University, she obtained a Bachelor of Science in Nursing 'Cum Laude' in 2010.

Her desire for more education gave her the courage to enroll in CUNY Lehman College, New York where she obtained a degree as a Family Nurse Practitioner, an ambition she devoted her strength and energy to acquire in order to help humanity in general. A provider extraordinaire in the healthcare industry caring for the health and care of the sick across their lifespan. She is Board Certified by ANCC (American Nurses Credentialing Center)

She is married to her husband of 25 years Mr Don Chinedo and a blessed mother of four awesome Children, Maryclare, Emma, Chelsea & Don Jr. A renowned Professor of Nursing with ten years plus experience of teaching and impacting the new generation of nurses with her wealth of knowledge.

She is a knowledgeable Nurse Consultant, a role model, patient advocate, and change agent. It is on record that she contributed immensely to the success of Triboro Centers Nursing Home's first perfect state survey in August 2019.

As a professional Nurse Educator who performs job functions with a high level of expertise, including education for clinical staff across agencies, in operations and use of the electronic health record system, and staff development related to clinical practice, she has used every opportunity at her disposal to give nothing but the best attention to her patients which have endeared her to everyone who came across her both in on official and unofficial duties. Worked as a supervisor in so many nursing homes across the New York City area, Triboro, Hope center, and Greater Harlem to mention a few. She is the founder of a Non-for-Profit Organization (Ginha) with the sole purpose of making healthcare affordable to the less privileged of our society. A world where every human has access to basic healthcare needs despite their ability to pay.

Achieving The impossible: Luminary Trailblazing

Stella
Chinedo



She has used a major part of her earthly journey to teach and guide humans on various aspects of life. A definition of a round peg in a round hole. She has brought her proven record as an educational guru into the world of finance. Her belief in holistic care and her experience from taking care of the sick and seeing firsthand how stress affects the recovery process of the sick when there is no proper planning in place made her have a mindset shift to embark on a journey to merge the duo Wealthcare-Healthcare. The irony of working forty hours a week, 40 years of your life to retire on 40 percent of your hard-earned money in her words "is a scam". "I saw firsthand how my patient's even those with the highest levels of education, some with more degrees than a thermometer yet once the unwanted guest (Sickness) struck they lose everything they have worked for their entire life, and eventually lose their lives due to financial stress. I realized that the number one stressor which makes it difficult for patients to concentrate on their health and recovery process during ill health is finance". She embarked on a mission of how we can eradicate this financial illiteracy syndrome in our communities. After due diligence, the New York State Department of Finance along with a few other states issued her the license to teach financial education. She is on a mission to share lights that lack of financial education is more cancerous than the cancer itself. She is on a mission to eradicate this financial cancer that is ravaging our communities in the United States of America and around the world in order to change the narratives.



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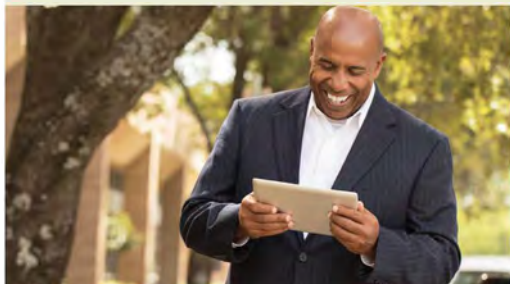
301.254.0196

akirkland@creativemindsetconsulting.com

WHO WE ARE

Creative Mindset Consulting (CMC) was founded in 2017 to provide exclusive support to non-profits. We are experts in nonprofit organizational management. We were founded with the belief that every non-profit; regardless of budget size should have access to quality consulting services. We are rooted in the belief that every organization wants to serve its constituents to the best of their ability.

OUR SERVICES



CAPACITY BUILDING

CMC strengthens the sustainability and performance of community-based nonprofits to achieve life-changing results for children and families. We offer up to 350 hours per nonprofit – results in stronger organizations and significant and lasting benefits for the children they serve.

We provide our transformative services because the nonprofits we work with are critical to their communities and could not otherwise afford it. Our engagement typically last 15-24 months per non-profit.



INTERIM MANAGEMENT

CMC's highly skilled consultants serves as interim executive management leaders during short periods of transition. CMC consultants typically spend 6-8 months per non-profit dedicating up to 20 per week providing leadership to staff and board.

Additionally, CMC assist the organization with the search for its next leader. CMC also provides 96 hours of free capacity building services to the new leader.



EXECUTIVE PLACEMENT

Recognizing the need for affordable placement services for non-profit. CMC provides a flat fee regardless on salary amount.

With the flat fee, we offer the following services:

- ☐ Needs Assessment & Search Launch
- ☐ Candidate Cultivation
- ☐ Interviews & Referencing
- ☐ Offer & Negotiation

WHY US?

We are non-profit believers! CMC consultants have exclusively spent their careers leading non-profits. We understand the needs and desires of non-profits. We are also firm believers that non-profits cannot afford high consulting cost for low results. Therefore, our cost is fixed to ensure that all organizations regardless of size can have access to high quality services.

CMC engages with local, regional, and national non-profits. For the past two years, we have focused our services in DC and Prince George's County. CMC has increased the number of youth served, increased annual budget size, and was able to launch new programs to serve the community.



Chuckwunonso Angel Dureke

Chuckwunonso Angel Dureke is a multi-disciplinary visual artist and award-winning filmmaker. As a director, producer, director, and writer with over 9+ years of experience in strategic storytelling, production management, consulting, social media management, and concept creation, Chuckwunonso specializes in creating new worlds that examine old truths. She earned a Bachelors of Science in Mass Communications from Towson University and a Masters of Fine Arts from Howard University in Film. Experience ranging from concept creation through execution; Chuckwunonso is a forward thinker who brings a broad perspective to brand and narrative development creation.

Chuckwunonso founded Dureke Productions LLC, an award winning multimedia production company and creative agency, that creates high quality conscious concepts. Dureke Productions has successfully produced several bodies of work, led by Chuckwunonso. Amongst her bodies of work include, Alemanji 2023 Pavillon Afriques Cannes Film Festival official selection, Prince George's County African American Museum & Cultural Center-Lincoln Vista Oral History Documentary, online sensation TITLES Season One now streaming on Tony Gaskins YouTube channel, Plantain & Proverbs which was selected for Amazon's 1st All Voice's Film Festival and premiered on Amazon Prime Video, Bride Price the Inaugural 1st place \$30,000 shorts Pitch Competition Winner for the Annapolis Film Festival and RSF Martha's Vineyard African American Film Festival 2020 selection, The Black Code Project and more.

In 2017, NkemLife, her 1st generation lifestyle blog she runs with her old sister Chidinma Dureke, was featured in the Washington Post for aiming to bring a bit of Africa, and some flavor, to D.C. Dureke has also worked as a social media correspondent with BET for Sundance 2018. In addition, Ms. Dureke was selected as a Magnolia Pictures Fellow for the 2019 Cannes Film Festival, Howard University The Blackhouse Foundation Fellow and a 2021 Black Future Filmmaker Cohort One sponsored by Meta and SEEN.



Dureka Idea Pitch Competition:
Collegiate Judge



Deepa
Deshpande

Deepa Deshpande, MS, MBIOT, PMP

Company: Becton Dickinson

Title: Program Director

Bio: Experienced PMO leader with a demonstrated history of leading cross functional teams in the life sciences industry. Skilled in PMO Development, Product Development, Research and Development, Environmental Management Systems and Laboratory Safety Management. Strong program and project management professional with a Project Management Certification from PMI.



**Dr. Anne Reese
Carswell**
Nyumburu Cultural Center, UMCP
Associate Director



Anthony Ramirez
WETATi Academy
*WETATi Academy Community Outreach
Coordinator Intern*

WETATi Academy
***Above &
Beyond Award***
2023 Recipients

WETATi Anne Reese Carswell Scholarship
& Awards Gala: Keynote Speaker



Alexander
Austin

Alexander K. Austin, is a results-driven and dynamic business leader, offering 20 (+) years expertise in diverse fields ranging from, Workforce Development, Business Acquisitions/Advisory Services, Business to Consumer solutions & Entrepreneurship.

Alexander is the President and CEO of the Prince George's Chamber of Commerce, a non-profit organization representing the businesses of Prince George's County. Operating as one of the largest chambers in the state of Maryland and the Washington Metropolitan region.

Known as an Intrapreneurial & Entrepreneurial Leader! Alexander has created a unique portfolio of diverse skills and achievements ranging from creating new- products & services for the local market, owning operating a professional sports franchise, publishing a book, as well as advising mid-market company acquisition and capital raise strategies.

Alexander has also worked within organizations to contribute to their organic growth, building and scaling new innovative projects that impact the local business

community. For his work and commitment, Alexander has been featured within the Washington Business Journal, Baltimore Sun and PG Suite magazine.

Having been born and raised in Prince George's County, Alexander is passionate about the counties continued growth and advancement. As a native Prince Georgian, he is focused and committed to bridging the gap, aligning the efforts of the business community, representing one voice for Prince George's County Businesses.

He is a family man, happily married to his wife Candice and proud father to his three wonderful children, Jordan, Savannah and Xavier. Whenever he's off professional duties, he enjoys exercising, creating new business idea's and spending time with Family. His Belief – "Family is the nucleus of success"

His Life's Motto – "We are only bound by the limits of our own conviction," – Robert F Smith.

Dureka Idea Pitch Competition: Collegiate Judge



*Anthony
Ramirez Chinchilla*

Anthony Ramirez Chinchilla, currently a Senior at the University of Maryland, College Park majoring in Kinesiology and minoring in Technology Entrepreneurship & Corporate Innovation. Physical activity plays a critical role in the quality and longevity of our lives. However, there are many socio-economic and cultural barriers that can limit one's accessibility to an active lifestyle. I aspire to become a physical therapist and guide others on their fitness journey. Anthony hopes to use his entrepreneurial education and experience to support his aspirations by establishing his own physical therapy clinic. Anthony aims to raise awareness on the barriers that members of his community experience, provide financial support to people of low socioeconomic status, and teach health literacy to others to help people achieve their fitness goals. At WETATi Academy, Anthony serves as the Community Outreach Coordinator, which has allowed him to connect with members of the community and share about the opportunities WETATi Academy provides. Through his role, he hopes he can inspire and inform others to have the confidence of following their entrepreneurial ideas and take part in learning how to lead with an entrepreneurial mindset.

Dureke Idea Pitch Competition:
Next Gen Judge



Richard
Ojuri

Richard Ojuri Assistant Vice President at M&T Bank. My family comes from Nigeria and I grew up in Prince Georges County. I love being in the community finding new businesses, networking with passionate individuals and finding ways to build financial empowerment in all of our communities. Graduating from Lincoln University pa the first HBCU I take pride in attending a HBCU and knowing the rich history of us Africans and Blacks.

Courtney Finklea Green

WES Theme Keynote Speaker

Biography

Courtney Finklea Green is an educator, political strategist, advocate, entrepreneur, artist, and speaker. More importantly, she is the proud mom to her son DJ. She has thirteen years of major account management, sales, government contracting, and marketing experience in corporate America. She attended Sweet Briar College and obtained a B.A. in Sociology with a minor in Spanish Literature. She holds an array of advanced graduate degrees as well as certifications from Georgetown University, Cornell University, Villanova University, George Washington University & Corcoran School of Art & Design. Many know of her in Prince George's County and Maryland due to her holding the positions of liaison and brain trust member for the historic, record-breaking campaign for Brooke Lierman for Maryland Comptroller 2022. Courtney is a co-founder of the Prince George's County chapter of "Maryland Women for Biden" with Maryland State's Attorney, the Honorable Aisha Braveboy. In 2023, she was elected and sworn in as the president of the South County Democratic Club. Furthermore, she is an alum of Emerge Maryland, which is an organization that recruits, trains, and provides a powerful network for Democratic women who want to run for office.

Giving back to the community is very important to Courtney. This is very evident in the past and current roles that she held. Currently, she is a member of the Junior League of Washington and is the Chair of the value resources committee, Jubilee JumpStart Committee. As a member, she is active in community service and charitable activities that increase literacy for women and children in underserved communities. Also, she is a graduate of their "Get on Board" program that trains women to serve on nonprofit community boards. Courtney has served on the Executive Board as the Education Chair for the Prince George's County Chapter of the NAACP. Due to her hard work and dedication regarding special education community-focused programming, she became the Director of Education for Maryland State Delegate and Chair of the Maryland Black Caucus, Del.

Darryl Barnes. Hence, she developed and implemented community events to increase parent engagement and had a leadership role in the Parental Education Advisory Committee created by Del. Barnes. In 2018, U.S. Senator Ben Cardin awarded her a citation for education advocacy and community service. Also, in 2018 and 2019, Maryland State Delegates; Del. Darryl Barnes, Del. Derrick Davis, Del. Nick Charles, and Sen. Melony Griffith awarded her citations for outstanding leadership in education. In 2021, she was appointed by the Hon. Angela Alsobrooks, county executive of Prince George's County, MD to be a member of the School Board Transformation Task Force. Due to her dedication in the areas of education and activism, she was a guest on LA TalkRadio's "Dr. Tongie Show". Courtney has also appeared in Darius Stanton's "The Peace in the Morning Show" to discuss her work as a disability rights activist and special education. Her steadfast passion for supporting parents and their children with disabilities led her to create the non-profit, "Mustard Seed Mom". The non-profit organization is a 501c3 that empowers and embraces children as well as their families in special education, art education, and underserved populations.

Lastly and without further ado, Courtney is a proud member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc. She belongs to the chapter, Iota Gamma Omega in Prince George's County.



**"Today, I urge you
to embrace your own
journey toward
empowerment.
Embrace your
strengths, your
passions, and your
ambitions. Set
audacious goals
and strive to achieve
them."**

On Creating A Seat And The Table

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to encourage and empower women through this article. I am grateful for the chance to share my thoughts on the topic of "Creating A Seat and The Table" and what it means in the journey of empowering women.

Before we dive into the essence of this topic, let me express my purpose to you. My purpose is to inspire, uplift, and encourage women to embrace their unique paths and simultaneously empower others to do the same. I believe that each of us has the power to make a difference and create positive change in our own lives and in the lives of others.

Ta'nehisi Coates once said, "My work is to give you what I know of my own particular path while allowing you to walk your own." This quote resonates deeply with me because it emphasizes the importance of our individual journeys and personal growth. We all have our own stories, experiences, and perspectives that shape who we are and influence other people.

Maya Angelou's powerful statement, "You did what you knew to do; when you knew better, you did better," reminds us that growth and evolution are essential in our journey towards empowerment. We should strive for excellence and push past our fears. It is essential that we never settle for mediocrity or let fear hold us back. Instead, we must continuously seek knowledge, learn from our experiences, and strive to become the best versions of ourselves.

Creating a seat at the table means recognizing our worth, embracing our unique talents, and moving to positions of influence and leadership. It is about acquiring the confidence to speak up, share our ideas, and make our voices heard. It is equally important to remember that we are not alone in this journey. We must support and uplift one another, creating a supportive network where all women can thrive.

Empowering women is not about competition or tearing each other down. It is about collaboration, inclusivity, and creating opportunities for growth. When we empower one woman, we inspire others to do the same. Our individual truths, experiences, and talents are all pieces of the universal truth. By embracing our uniqueness and celebrating the diversity among us, we create a powerful force for change.

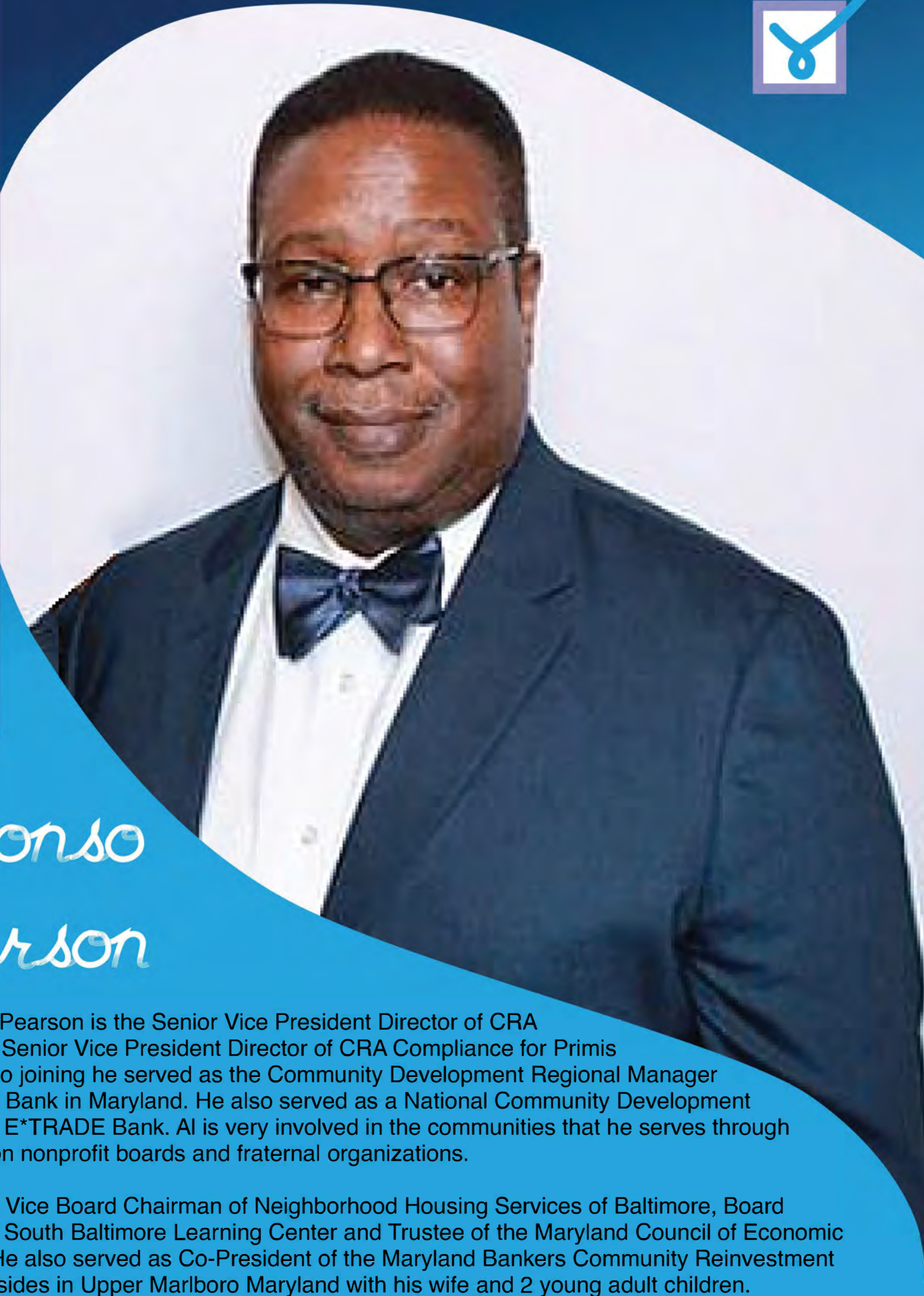
Today, I urge you to embrace your own journey toward empowerment. Embrace your strengths, your passions, and your ambitions. Set audacious goals and strive to achieve them. Surround yourself with positive influences, mentors, and role models who can guide and inspire you. Remember, you have the power to create your own seat at the table and invite others to join you.

As we continue our journey of empowerment, let us lift each other up, amplify each other's voices, and advocate for change. Let us break barriers, challenge stereotypes, and pave the way for future generations of empowered women. Together, we can create a world where women are celebrated, respected, and given equal opportunities to succeed.

In conclusion, I want to express my gratitude once again for allowing me to share this message of empowerment. Remember that your journey is unique, your truth is valuable, and your voice matters. Lastly, embrace our power, walk your own path, and inspire others to do the same. Let us create a world where all women have a seat at the table and the power to shape their own destinies.



Dureke Idea Pitch Competition:
Next Gen Judge



Alfonso
Pearson

Alfonso "Al" Pearson is the Senior Vice President Director of CRA Compliance Senior Vice President Director of CRA Compliance for Primis Bank. Prior to joining he served as the Community Development Regional Manager for SunTrust Bank in Maryland. He also served as a National Community Development Manager for E*TRADE Bank. Al is very involved in the communities that he serves through his service on nonprofit boards and fraternal organizations.

Al serves as Vice Board Chairman of Neighborhood Housing Services of Baltimore, Board Secretary of South Baltimore Learning Center and Trustee of the Maryland Council of Economic Education. He also served as Co-President of the Maryland Bankers Community Reinvestment Group. Al resides in Upper Marlboro Maryland with his wife and 2 young adult children.

WETATi Academy
*Above &
Beyond Award*
2023 Recipients



LaVonn Reedy Thomas

WETATi Academy

WETATi Communication Director



**Dr. Lucretia Freeman-
Buster**

Lamb Consulting

Managing Principal & CEO

Dureke Idea Pitch Competition:
Next Gen Judge

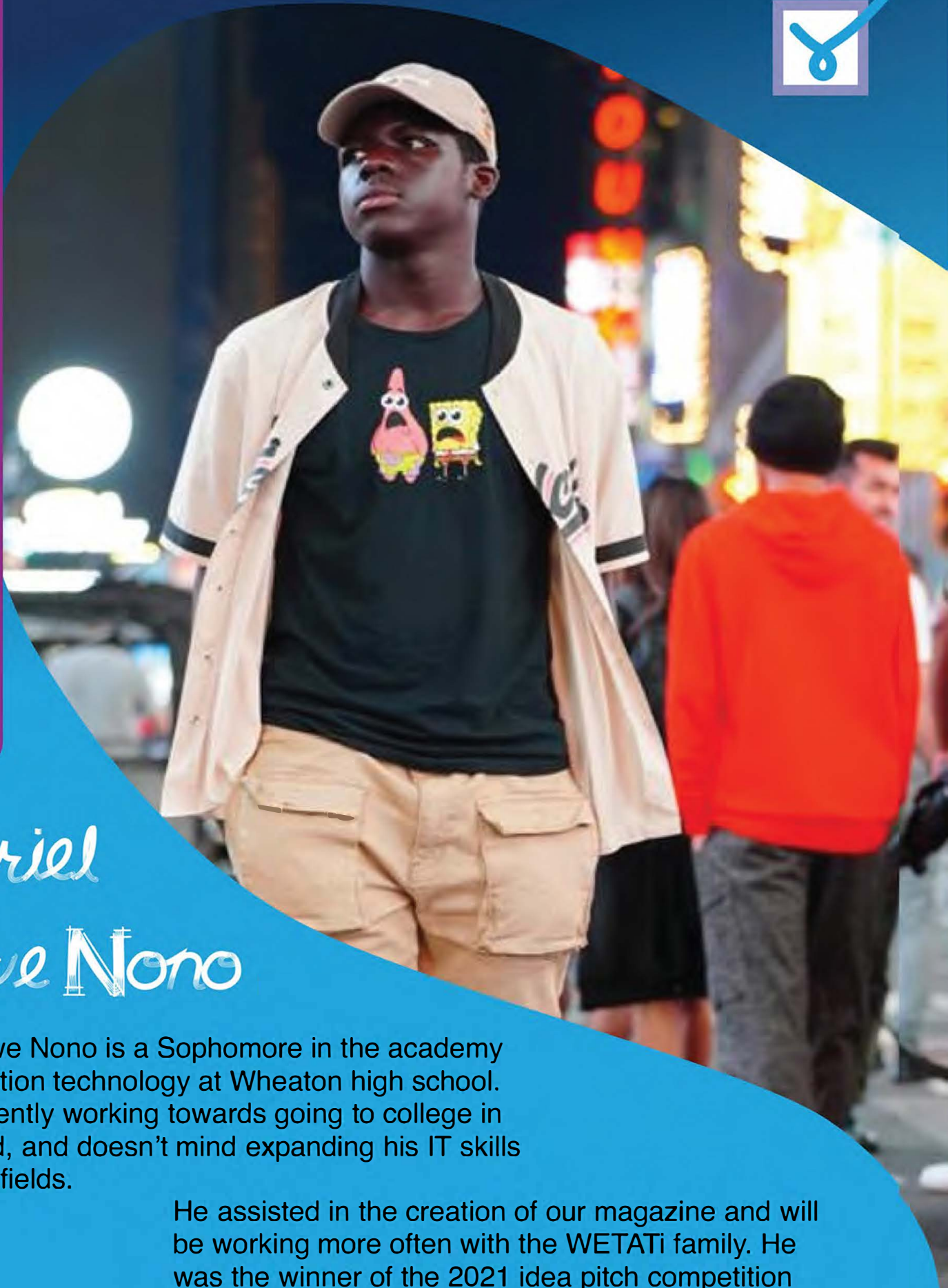


Adriel

Lowe Nono

Adriel Lowe Nono is a Sophomore in the academy of information technology at Wheaton high school. He is currently working towards going to college in the IT field, and doesn't mind expanding his IT skills into other fields.

He assisted in the creation of our magazine and will be working more often with the WETATi family. He was the winner of the 2021 idea pitch competition at the NEXT Gen level.





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Every day, FSC First works to build financial health and opportunity throughout Maryland. Through training, technical assistance programs and flexible financing options, FSC First is dedicated to empowering Maryland's entrepreneurs and small business owners by endowing them with the tools and knowledge they need to succeed. Visit our website to learn more.



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WETATi Academy
*Above &
Beyond Award*
2023 Recipients



Bernitta Johnson

College Park Academy

*Founder "Get Planted with Veganitta",
CPA Plus Program Coordinator*



Beth May

Project Management for Change

Chief Operating Officer

Dureke Idea Pitch Competition: Collegiate Judge



*Jimmie
Jones*

Jimmie Jones is an accomplished community banker, former entrepreneur, and small business advocate. Jimmie has spent most of his banking career in the Washington DC area and has also had the opportunity to sharpen his financial service skills in Texas and Florida over the years. He and his family returned to the DC area in 2020 to take on the role of Community Development Manager with Truist Bank. Jimmie brings a world of banking, entrepreneurial and nonprofit management experience coupled with enormous compassion to his role. In addition to his 18 years of service with Truist, he also ran a Community Development Financial Institution in Jacksonville, FL, and managed lending services at an affordable housing developer in the Baltimore/Washington region. He has served on several nonprofit boards over the years; including with WETATi, and despite the difficulties of managing through the COVID19 pandemic, has still found time to grow his young family with the birth of a baby girl last summer.

WETATi Academy
Above &
Beyond Award
2023 Recipients



Deepa Desphande
Becton Dickinson
Program Director



Destiny Dureke
Princess Destiny
CEO & Founder

Dureka Idea Pitch Competition: Next Gen Competitors



*Ayisha
Rodriguez-
Akande*

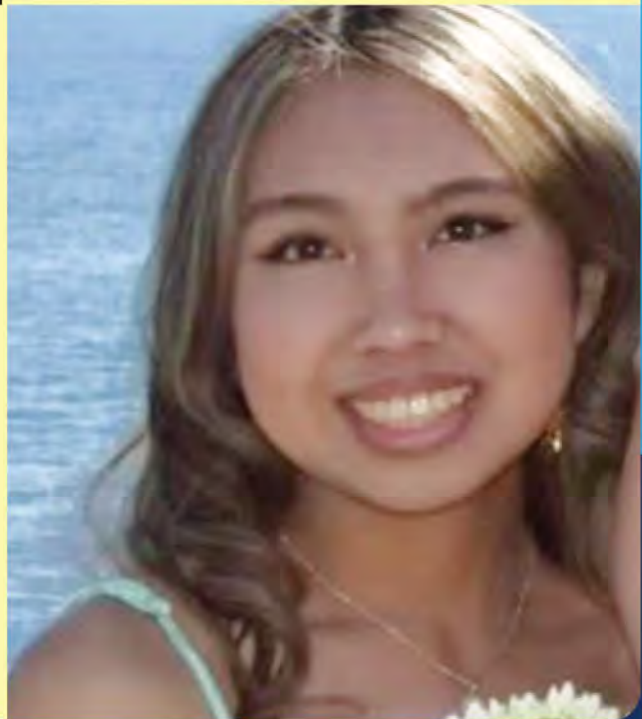


Ayisha Rodriguez-Akande, I like debating, playing the violin, and singing! I am in eighth grade and go to college park academy! I believe in equality and inclusion for all! My business idea is Medi-Ance, which supplies CPR training for all children.

*Cassandra
Mapanao*



My name is Cassandra Mapanao, a junior at Tesoro High School in Orange County, California. I am passionate about improving the world through scientific innovation and research. In my free time, I love to listen to music, bullet journal, and style clothes.



WETATi Academy
*Above &
Beyond Award*
2023 Recipients



Brandon Hurst

Chick-Fil-A

Owner, Brooklyn, New York



Celeste Johnson

Keep Me Near the Cross Ministries

Founder & President

Dureke Idea Pitch Competition:
Next Gen Judge



Gabrielle
Furr

Gabrielle Furr serves as a Program Manager for Kaiser Permanente in the Mid-Atlantic Region. In her role, Gabrielle manages the Community Relations & Stakeholder Engagement Sponsorship Program and Board Service Program. Gabrielle also serves as the Program Manager for the Community Relations & Stakeholder Engagement division directly supporting the Vice President of Brand, Communications, and Community Engagement, providing the day-to-day operations and programmatic oversight.

Gabrielle is currently a proud Board Member of Women Empowered to Achieve The impossible (WETATi). She is a Prince George's County native and enjoys spending time outdoors with her family.

● WETATi Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award ●

Wally & Lynn Burns

Wally Burns: Wally is originally from South Carolina where he attended elementary and high school and earned an associate degree (AA) from Spartanburg Methodist College. He then served eight years in the U.S. Air Force, including foreign language training at Indiana University and Syracuse University. Wally served two tours in Japan as a radio intercept analyst for the Air Force, including a remote assignment to the country's northern island of Hokkaido.

Upon discharge from the military, Wally completed studies at Syracuse University for a Bachelor of Arts degree. He then worked for a period as a tariff analyst in the trucking industry while simultaneously taking science courses at the University of Maryland. This was followed by 20 years as a foreign technology research and assessment analyst at the Washington area office of a major think tank, including time as a department manager. He was later employed for 17 years by a Maryland consulting firm as a competitive intelligence analyst. During that period, Wally began honing new skills, including web design and maintenance as he moved toward becoming an independent contractor. Over the years, he has provided business support to many clients, including recently serving as a virtual legal assistant to an attorney in Dallas.

During the early 2000's Wally met and started working for Dr. Dureke in what turned into a long and successful business relationship. Over the next 20 plus years as he and Lynn supported the Dureke family's many endeavors, he has developed and maintained websites, prepared electronic newsletters, edited digital images, prepared book manuscripts for online publication, and much more.

Lynn Burns: Lynn is originally from upstate New York. Following graduation from high school, she worked as a stenographer in private industry. This was followed by a few years working at the Syracuse University Graduate School of Social Work. She then spent 10 years working in various positions for the New York State Department of Mental Hygiene.

Wally and Lynn met around 1972 while Wally was attending Syracuse University. They were married in 1982 and are the proud parents of two grown sons whom they raised in Bowie, Maryland.

After relocating to Maryland, Lynn worked at an architectural design firm for a while before leaving to raise two sons. She became a licensed daycare provider while the boys were young. When they started school, she worked part-time for the Greater Bowie Chamber of Commerce. In 1994, Lynn established a business, The WordPlace, to provide "Virtual Assistant" business support services. The personal computer/digital era was taking off, and Lynn brought a long background in preparing correspondence, legal documents, theses, doctoral dissertations, books, etc. Wally later joined the business and brought an extensive knowledge in computer use and an innate ability to continually keep pace over the years with every twist and turn that the computer/digital world was making.

Lynn's client list quickly grew as she supported local Maryland businesses and individuals. Among her many clients during this era were WETATi, BWI Development Council, Reliable Cleaning, Greater Bowie Chamber of Commerce (GBCC), local attorneys, and church leaders.



Lynn and Wally moved back to Wally's hometown in South Carolina in 2006, and she (and Wally) have continued to work remotely for the Durekes and several other longtime Maryland clients. Lynn has also worked until recently (11½ years) as a virtual legal secretary for a Dallas, Texas attorney, until the attorney's untimely death.

Wally and Lynn Burns say:

"It is and has been our great pleasure over the past 22 years to work with Ambassador Dr. Margaret Dureke, Mr. John Dureke, and their three daughters in support of WETATi, WETATi Academy, JAHS Publishing, and their many other endeavors. We wish that circumstances were different, and we could be there with you for the June Gala. This award is a wonderful surprise, and we are enormously honored and feel blessed to receive this recognition. Thank you so very much. You do know that you've been keeping us young, right?"

Dr. Lamar Benefield

"Knowledge starts within and

This day highlights the important role and goal of education in all forms of human development. It is an honor to introduce stellar accomplished young people like Dr. Lamar Benefield. Dr. Lamar Benefield graduated from Miles College, obtaining a Bachelors in Art in Mass Communications, with a concentration in journalism. Dr. Lamar Benefield has an honorary degree in Philosophy from Trinity International University of Ambassadors of GA. He is currently a philanthropist, entrepreneur, community activist and visionary.

People often say young people are the future without understanding what that means in the context of national development. It is evident in many areas we ignore or neglect the development of their people skills and healthy core values that they carry into the world. Dr. Lamar Benefield is no stranger to hard work and perseverance. He is the co-founder of Basic Movement "Brothers and Sisters Inquiring Change", a charitable non profit organization with a list of community outreach projects and job expos held in The City of Birmingham, where Dr. Benefield grew up. He matriculated to an honorary private learning institution and opened doors he never imagined entering. Dr. Lamar Benefield is an



Honorary Inaugural 50 under 50 Award recipient presented by Miles College in 2022. Coming from a tough background of survival and resilience. He wants to inform and educate our youth as well as elders education and success go hand and hand and he will help provide the tools and steps to show the nation a flourishing future where kids are nurtured and shown the right steps to success. This Year will mark the First introduction to The Pending Billionaires Brunch, Founded by Dr. Lamar Benefield.

At the age of 28 Dr. Lamar Benefield has overcome adversity and several obstacles. Not letting anything stop him. It was not a no that stopped him, it did not take a close door to stop him,

it was not financial approval that stopped him and he is still thriving till this day. Being a threshold in his community he has created a voice for people who have not been heard. As a journalist, public speaker, and outreach leader of The City of Birmingham Dr. Lamar Benefield is the definition of unification. As a journalist I have learned one thing that I have learned after interviewing different people (lawyers, doctors, professional athletes, and public figures). One thing I have learned about people is that the one common denominator is knowledge. Knowledge starts within and can change an entire nation of people. Dr. Lamar Benefield is a student of wisdom and believes it is a confirmation of growth. You do not have to be the best or the smartest but you do have to be the most hard working person to be brilliant. You have to create new ideas and be different to excel in life. Opening a book can be one of your greatest assets to sharpen your mind to be able to navigate through life. One of Dr. Benefield's favorite authors, Robert T. Kiyosaki, taught him the importance of the practice of personal development and how to prioritize his skills found in the book "Rich Dad Poor Dad". The book helped excel Dr. Lamar Benefield mindset.

can change an entire nation of people."

WETATi Academy
*Above &
Beyond Award*
2023 Recipients



Alfonso Pearson

Primis Bank

*Senior Vice President \ Director CRA
Compliance*



Andrew Kirkland

Creative Mindset Consulting (CMC)

Managing Principal

Dureka idea Pitch Competition: Coach

Collegiate



Alfonso
Pearson

Alfonso "Al" Pearson is the Senior Vice President Director of CRA Compliance Senior Vice President Director of CRA Compliance for Primis Bank. Prior to joining he served as the Community Development Regional Manager for SunTrust Bank in Maryland. He also served as a National Community Development Manager for E*TRADE Bank. Al is very involved in the communities that he serves through his service on nonprofit boards and fraternal organizations.

Al serves as Vice Board Chairman of Neighborhood Housing Services of Baltimore, Board Secretary of South Baltimore Learning Center and Trustee of the Maryland Council of Economic Education. He also served as Co-President of the Maryland Bankers Community Reinvestment Group. Al resides in Upper Marlboro Maryland with his wife and 2 young adult children.

● WETATi Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award ●

Reverend Dr. Ruby Reese Moone



The Reverend Dr. Ruby Reese Moone, a Featured Change Maker has an accomplished decades of a long career as a Christian, Civil Rights Humanitarian, an Educator, a Political Advocacy and a Minister. She is the sixth of ten children born to the late Alexander Reese, Sr. and Annie Bundridge Reese of Sparta, Georgia whose occupations were Sharecropper Farmers. She did not often attend school as a child because she and her siblings were required to help their parents chop and pick cotton. Despite her school attendance record (or perhaps because of it), Rev. Moone was a diligent student, an excellent reader, skipping several grades and excelling and graduating from high school at the age of sixteen. She was the first in her family paternally and maternally to attend and graduate from college.

She received much of her training as a Guidance Counselor under the National Defense Education Act proposed by President Dwight Eisenhower. A High School Guidance Counselor for forty years, she established the first Career Center in Montgomery County Public Schools and organized the Brotherhood of Super Stars (BOSS). At her retirement, parents contributed financially and established the Ruby Reese Moone Foundation which she used for Book Scholarships to students. After retiring from the counseling position, she was employed as a Chaplain at the University of Maryland College Park Maryland in which she worked for twenty-five years.

Knowing that Jimmy Carter was a Christian and when he became a candidate for President of the United States of America in 1976, she wanted him to win and therefore organized The Sweet Hour of Prayer Service. This forty-six-year-old ministry continues to meet every Wednesday at 12:00 O'clock Noon (EST) with more than three hundred Prayer Warriors and constituents from across America.

Serving on the Evangelism Commission of The Baptist World Alliance, she has had the opportunity to preach on six of the world's seven continents. She talks of her visits to Israel - The Holy Land, visiting the gravesite of Jesus Christ, praying at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, baptism in the Jordan River, climbing Mount Masada near the Dead Sea Scroll and when called out, she heard the echoes of voices from the Judean Rebels. In Seoul Korea, Dr. Moone had the mighty and blessed experiences of helping to baptize one thousand converts in the Han River and praying on Prayer Mountain.

Rev. Moone has led thousands on their Christian Journey and catechized many to the Preaching Ministry. Her strong Pursuit of Happiness is carrying out The Lord's Great Commission: "Go ye therefore into all the world and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of The Father, and of The Son, and of The Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever

I have commanded you: and, lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world". Amen. THE HOLY BIBLE, Matthew 28: 19-20. KJV. She has authored a tract on The Great Commission.

A recipient of many honors, citations, and awards locally, state-wide, nationally and internationally, Dr. Moone more recently, was honored in being presented The United States President's Lifetime Achievement Award from President Joseph R. Biden and a Citation of Congressional Recognition from Congressman Glenn Ivey.



She holds a Golden Shovel from the Groundbreaking Ceremony of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Monument in Washington, DC and a Historical Rocking Chair from the University of Maryland College Park. Dr. Moone has been in ceremonies and offered awards from President Clinton, President Bush, and President Obama.

Her earliest experiences with racism were having to walk seven miles each way to and from school while White students rode school buses. Her classes were given hand me down schoolbooks that had been used by White students. While living in Georgia, Dr. Moone was involved in the Civil Rights Movement, marched with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., worked with NAACP Youth Groups alongside Attorney Vernon Jordan, and was with John Lewis on the Edmund Pettus Bridge on Bloody Sunday. She assisted in organizing Voter Registration Drives and was frightened when the Ku Klux Klan parked in front of her home in Union Point, Georgia. She serves as Chaplain of many organizations and was National Chaplain for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). When the National Movement for Civil and Human Rights was organized in 2011, Dr. Moone was unanimously chosen Chair of the Board of Directors.

Consequently, Rev. Moone has experienced many hardships and discriminatory acts but continues in the struggle. She trusts Our Heavenly Father to lead her and walks with this faith. On September 11, 2001, while serving on the Board of Directors of the No Fear Coalition and just as members of the Board of Directors were about to enter the United States Capitol to meet with Senators on the 'No Fear Act', the Pentagon was attacked by terrorist on Flight 77 into the Pentagon. Flight 93 was targeting either The United States Capitol or the White House, but the heroic passengers attempted to gain control of the aircraft, but the hijackers ultimately crashed the plane in a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

For forty years, she was married to Rev. James Clark Moone, Ph.D. (Deceased). They are the blessed parents of two daughters: Reese' Moone Domingue and Jamesa Moone Hunter (Erik). She is the proud grand mother of six grandsons.



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Dr. Angela Seay

D3 Health Fitness

Chief Visionary Officer



Gabrielle Furr

Kaiser Permanente

Program Manager

WETATi Academy
Above &
Beyond Award
2023 Recipients

J. Steward Smith



“He is relentless in pursuing and advocating for businesses that deserve access to creative business financing solutions.”

J. Steward Smith has 37 years of leadership and senior management experience in the financial services industry.

Mr. Smith started at FSC First in 2014 as a Business Development Manager and now serves on the management team as Vice President of Business Development. Steward plays an integral role in the marketing and outreach efforts at FSC First, increasing awareness of the myriad of programs and services available to support business expansion in Prince George’s County and the FSC First expanded market of Charles, Calvert, and Montgomery counties. He is relentless in pursuing and advocating for businesses that deserve access to creative business financing solutions.

Steward began his banking career in 1981 with Comerica Bank in Detroit, Michigan. In 1986, he relocated to Washington, DC, to manage several branch offices for Perpetual Savings Bank. After its acquisition, he was promoted to the executive leadership team of SunTrust Bank as Senior Vice President and Area Manager, where he served business and retail communities in Prince George’s County and Washington, DC, with distinguished recognition for providing excellent customer service and financial services solutions.

In 2008 he was an honor graduate of the CBA Graduate Retail School of Retail Bank Management. Mr. Smith received his undergraduate degree in Business Administration from Old Dominion University in Norfolk, VA, and in 2013, served as the Director of Investor Services at ICMA-RC in Washington, DC. He is a 45-year member of Alpha Phi Incorporated.

Dureke idea Pitch Competition: Coach

Collegiate

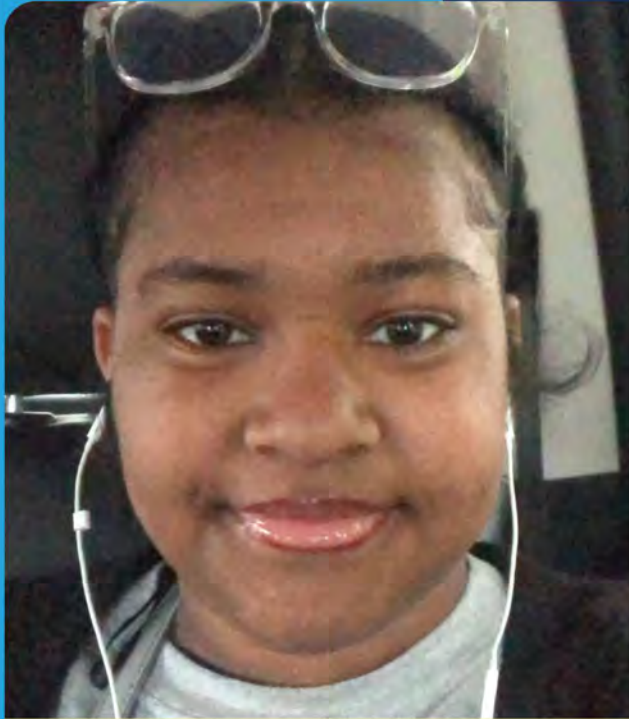


*Amb. Dr.
Margaret
Dureke*

For over 30 years, Dr. Dureke has been training, empowering, coaching, mentoring and inspiring corporations, government agencies, business leaders, community leaders, diplomatic corps, students, and the public about the importance of believing in themselves to achieve their respective impossibilities in any area of their lives. Her passion is to teach others how to turn adversities or disadvantages into achievements.

Ambassador Dr. Dureke, received her B.A. degree with honors from Howard University and a Juris Doctorate degree in law from American University, Washington College of Law, Washington, DC. She is serial entrepreneur, publisher, and bestselling author of several personal and business development books.

Dureke Idea Pitch Competition: Next Gen Competitors



Karah
Shuler



Hi my name is Karah Shuler im 14 and im a freshmen at Mergenthaler Vocational-Technical High School My business helps young girls such as myself. Who love jewelry (bracelets) but can't afford to buy the custom ones they want cause they're \$5 or up. My bracelets are \$2 just for a custom bead pattern and \$3 to add charms . I'm glad to have this opportunity even if I don't win. This is pushing me to keep going.



Nasirah
Leekins

My name is Nasirah Leekins, I'm 17. and I am in the Business signature program at College Park Academy. I decided to join the Business Pitch Competition to improve my knowledge on business and advance my business ideas. My business is Curly Babes, a fashion doll brand that focuses on inclusivity and representation for black children. I hope at the end of this experience I will have gained valuable skills and connections.

With the video here it is not the best possible video of me and I was wondering if I could get an extension on getting the video done till the end of the weekend. Since my hair will not be done till then. If not that is fine and the one I've recorded can be used.



● WETATi Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award ●

Dr. Lucretia Freeman-Buster



Lucretia Freeman-Buster has a wealth of experience in financial management, commercial banking, economic development, and international trade spanning over 25 years. Her expertise extends to small business management, and she has provided professional consulting services to small, minority, women, and veteran-owned businesses, as well as non-profit organizations for more than 20 years. Her well-rounded background supports entrepreneurship and business development.

Having started her banking career in the mid-1980s, Lucre'a faced significant challenges as a young, black African female, and a foreigner in a white male-dominated industry. Despite the obstacles she encountered, she rose through the ranks to become Assistant Vice President and Vice President for large and community banks. In 2006, she was recruited to develop the Commercial & Industrial Lending Department for the Washington Savings Bank, where she led business development efforts, managed the Commercial & Industrial and Commercial Real Estate loans portfolio, and developed strategies to improve non-performing loans. She served as Vice President for Commercial Lending until 2011.

In 2011, Lucre'a established the Lamb Consulting Group, LLC, a small business advisory firm that provides services to small, minority, women, and veteran-owned businesses to build stronger business operations, enhance their infrastructure, and ultimately increase organizational success. As Managing Principal and CEO, Lucre'a leads all strategic and business development activities for the company, in addition to working directly with clients as a senior consultant.

In recent years, Lucre'a has shifted her focus to business start-ups, international trade, economic development, and volunteerism. She has provided consulting services to various corporations, non-profit organizations, and government agencies, and developed the Comprehensive Guide to Small Business Planning. She also volunteers her services in working with high school students in the area of entrepreneurship, empowering them to innovate, develop their talents, and prepare them to be productive citizens.

Lucre'a Freeman-Buster has a distinguished career that includes positions such as Associate Director and acting Executive Director for the District of Columbia Small Business Development Center. In these roles, she played a key role in implementing and executing the organization's strategy,



providing oversight of service centers, program functions, and developing funding proposals for the network. Lucre'a serves as Chief of Business Development for the Charles County Economic Development Department, where she leads the business development team and engagement programs. She recently created the Business Growth Advantage Program

(BGAP), which equips entrepreneurs with the practical information necessary for running the day-to-day operations of a growing business. The program's curriculum includes crucial topics such as building a sustainable organizational infrastructure, leading people and planning for growth, marketing, accounting, HR, and accessing capital for growth.

Lucre'a holds a Master of Business Administration from the University of Maryland University College, a Bachelor of Science degree in management from Potomac College, a certificate in International Business Management from Georgetown University School of Continuing Studies, and other professional certifications.

Outside of work, she volunteers with a global enterprise and helps people in need. She has been married for 35 years and has three daughters and one granddaughter.

Ravin L. Tatman



Ravin L. Tatman, M.A. runs a private consulting business that has a special emphasis in mediation, leadership coaching, implementing management strategies, and mentoring clients. Ms. Tatman currently works as a Program Manager for General Services Administration (GSA) leading IT modernization efforts for the System Award Manager (SAM) contracting system. Ms. Tatman previously worked as a Program Analyst for the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) for 5 years improving IT business processes across the organization. Ms. Tatman earned her Master of Arts degree in Management and Leadership from the George Herbert Walker School of Business & Technology at Webster University and her Bachelor of Science degree in Legal Studies with the University of Maryland University College. Ms. Tatman is a United States Air Force Veteran that has a strong passion for serving the community. Ms. Tatman's prior community involvement includes serving as the Vice Chair for Community Crisis Service, Inc. (CSSI) board for a and now serves as a Board of Directors advisory member. She has a passion for youth and their development which is why she volunteered as a reading mentor to promote children's literacy with Everybody Wins! DC. Ms. Tatman also mentored abused and neglected children as a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) with DC Superior Court. In her spare time, she enjoys traveling, visiting museums, reading, and playing golf.

● WETATi Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award ●

Jimmie Jones

Jimmie Jones is an accomplished community banker, former entrepreneur, and small business advocate. Jimmie has spent most of his banking career in the Washington DC area and has also had the opportunity to sharpen his financial service skills in Texas and Florida over the years. He and his family returned to the DC area in 2020 to take on the role of Community Development Manager with Truist Bank.

Jimmie brings a world of banking, entrepreneurial and nonprofit management experience coupled with enormous compassion to his role. In addition to his 18 years of service with Truist, he also ran a Community Development Financial Institution in Jacksonville, FL, and managed lending services at an affordable housing developer in the Baltimore/Washington region.

He has served on several nonprofit boards over the years; including with WETATi, and despite the difficulties of managing through the COVID19 pandemic, has still found time to grow his young family with the birth of a baby girl last summer.

Jimmie's technical expertise, and his connection to both community and cause, help him to lead the charge on building and inspiring better lives and communities.



John Dureke

MPS in Professional Studies in Human Relations from the New York Institute of Technology.

Mr. Dureke co-founded JAHS Fitness Center with his beloved wife, which later evolved into a business empire that branched out into several other flourishing companies such as the JAHS Publishing Group and JAHS Active Wear. Under the umbrella of the JAHS Publishing Group Mr. Dureke published several books he wrote and illustrated, such as Z - The Goodluck Bird (2000), The Horrors of War from the Eyes of a Child (2002), Compassion is The New Power (2016), My Only Game: A True Love Story (2018), Call for New Acts of Patriotism – Cultural Amendment (2020), and Patriotic Diplomacy (2020).

Mr. Dureke's success stories have been featured in many publications, including The Washington Post, Afro-American Newspaper, The Sentinel Newspaper, and the Prince George's Journal, to mention but a few. In 2019 Mr. Dureke debuted in his first film as an actor in the critically acclaimed short film, Bride Price that premiered at the 2019 Annapolis Film Festival and screened at the 2020 Martha's Vineyard African American Film Festival. After serving the youth of Prince George's County as a dedicated educator Mr. Dureke retired from the educational system to focus on political advocacy and civic engagement. Mr. Dureke works as the Community Outreach Coordinator and Campaign Strategist for Mayor Tim Adams. Though Mr. Dureke continues to give back to the community in many ways, WETATi Academy, is now one of his greatest endeavors as a strategic advisor on project engagement and administrative associate, at various levels: Local, County, State, National and International.

John Dureke has been married to his "Only Game," Ambassador Dr. Margaret Dureke and together have three beautiful, smart, and talented daughters who are all successful entrepreneurs in their own respective rights.



John O. Dureke is an entrepreneur, educator, political advisor, campaign strategist, author, actor and art illustrator. Before beginning his professional pursuits Mr. Dureke obtained an AA in Political Science and minor in Religion from John Cabot International University, Rome, Italy, BA in Political Science from Hiram College Hiram, Ohio and a

Dureka idea Pitch Competition: Coach

Next Gen



Nury
Mena

A Dominican Republic Native and 28-year veteran of Fulton Bank, Nury Mena is Vice President/Manager, and is heavily involved with the Hispanic community in Northern Virginia. Her leadership as Chairperson of the Hispanic Business Council of the Dulles Chamber of Commerce helps her connect with Hispanic businesses through Chamber programs and activities. In addition, as a Branch Manager for Fulton Bank, Nury has helped many Hispanic business owners expand and grow. In addition to being an active member of the Dulles Regional Chamber of Commerce & Prince William Chamber of Commerce, Nury is also the Treasurer for "Old Town Business Association", a nonprofit organization, dedicated to advocating and coordinating events and sales opportunities for businesses in Old Town Manassas, VA.

"What drives me is helping others believe in themselves to gain confidence so they can achieve their personal goals in life,". By giving back to the community, we truly are 'Changing Lives for the better' in our communities."

● WETATi Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award ●

Dr. Celeste
Johnson-
Matheson



Dr. Celeste Johnson-Matheson was born in a small town in Virginia called Gainesville. Never despise small beginnings because this powerhouse continues to show up big. Public service is what she does, but being a people servant is what defines her character.

Dr. Celeste Johnson-Matheson works as an Executive Liaison Officer for the United States Government, but that is not all she does. Celeste is an Inspirational Bestselling Author, International Award-Winning Author, Book and Leadership Coach, and Inspirational Speaker by divine design. Celeste's writing has allowed her to have a seat at the table, creating many opportunities for enlarging her business territory. Celeste, the C.E.O. of Keep Me Near the Cross Ministries, appeared in America's Leading Ladies book with Oprah Winfrey, Melinda Gates, and other powerhouse women. Celeste has been educated by some of the best in the profession in leadership. She received an Executive Certification in Leadership from the University of Notre Dame, attended Harvard University Strategic Leadership course, and numerous prestigious universities studying leadership. Celeste believes writing is therapeutic. As a book writing coach, she uses her expertise to teach others how to use writing and journaling to overcome their pain, trauma, and emotional setbacks.

Dr. Celeste Johnson-Matheson is enthusiastic about rewriting the script for impoverished children. Her future endeavor is to establish a non-profit organization called Kids In Need Dream Success (KINDS) to provide kids with school necessities.

Dr. Johnson-Matheson has appeared in many news outlets and magazine articles and received the Women of Distinction award for her profession. She received global recognition from Hoinser magazine and was featured as one of the Top 100 Inspirational Women. Celeste has written Keep Me Near the Cross: Judgement or Journey, collaborated with the Network of Stars, the late Pat Sampson on the bestseller American Leading Ladies, and the Visionary Dr. Vernessa Blackwell on the bestselling devotional Joy Comes in the Morning with eighty-nine coauthors. Celeste's latest novel, Tainted Love: Hold Me, Jesus, debuted as Amazon's #1 International bestselling book. Her children's book, Silly Butterfly, will be released this year.

Dr. Celeste Johnson-Matheson has earned a Ph.D. in Business Administration and Entrepreneurship from the Trinity International School of Ambassadors (T.I.U.A.) School of Business, a Master of Science in Business Psychology from Franklin University, a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Strayer University, and an Executive Certificate in Leadership and Management from the University of Notre Dame, School of Business, and attended Harvard University Extension School, Strategic Leadership Program.

Celeste and her husband, Richard Matheson, reside in Fredericksburg, VA.

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Dureke Idea Pitch Competition:
Next Gen Judge



Dr. Lucretia
Freeman-Buster

Lucretia Freeman-Buster has a wealth of experience in financial management, commercial banking, economic development, and international trade spanning over 25 years. Her expertise extends to small business management, and she has provided professional consulting services to small, minority, women, and veteran-owned businesses, as well as non-profit organizations for more than 20 years. Her well-rounded background supports entrepreneurship and business development.

In 2011, Lucretia established the Lamb Consulting Group, LLC, a small business advisory firm that provides services to small, minority, women, and veteran-owned businesses to build stronger business operations, enhance their infrastructure, and ultimately increase organizational success.

Destiny Dureke



I'm Destiny, entrepreneurial, multi-disciplinary visual communication designer. I was born in Maryland but am cherished by Nigerian parents. I'm currently a Fashion Institute of Technology, in NYC, student studying advertising and digital design with a focus on art direction while minoring in multisensory branding. Founding my own fashion brand during the pandemic of 2020, I'm one who doesn't wait for the circumstances to be perfect to create new opportunities.

Coming of age, I found myself attracted and curious about process of art and how to always be a student of it. While on YouTube, I began to explore the various sides of the internet. Going as far as learning dj-ing software where I made remixes. Partaking in DIYs, hair, makeup and fashion tutorials, which turned into my Youtube channel PrincessDestiny a digital platform I created for all young multimedia creatives such as myself, which has had gained over 113k views on YouTube.

From there I started doing marketing and graphic design work for CHDesingz. Wardrobe Styling and make-up for production sets such as "Plantain and Proverbs" which was selected for the 1st ever Amazon All Voices Film festival, "Bride Price" the inaugural \$30,000 shorts pitch competition winner for the Annapolis Film Festival, and "Black Excellence" which I also editing the music video trailer for. Editing applications

like Adobe, especially latched onto my heart; the possibilities of how I could manipulate the story and enhance the vision of the producer or director always intrigued me. For example, making edits to my favorite photographs, cutting out what didn't fit my vision aesthetically, creating custom filters and typography. As well as, coloring videos, sound engineering, virtual styling, all filled the holes other artistic paths didn't. These final experiences sealed my fate of pursuing creative direction.

Throughout this journey literature was by my side. Coupled with my other talents, my love for the way writers would entertain, persuade, and or inform complex thoughts had me wrapped in a blanket of fabricated confessions from their mind. At the age of fourteen I published my first coming of age novel titled "Chasing Seconds". My book, landed me deals with Barnes & Nobles, book signings, interviews with Microsoft plus CCTV, and more business opportunities.

Outside of my digital journey, I went through a personal one as well. I know I have the mind to be behind the camera but, I also have the personality to be in front of the camera as well. Even though I have worked on the set of several productions, film and print media, I also had a calling for acting. I got casted in productions such as "What This Place Meant" which was shown at the Blackstar Film Festival.

I became active in my community and joined the nonprofit organization my mother created, called WETATi, (We Empowered To Achieve The Impossible) where I birthed my own branch to able to reach out to my generation about the importance of entrepreneurship and creating generational wealth, severing up to over 20,000 students collectively since the start of WETATi in 2011.

I believe that I have something special to share and I understand how to package aesthetics like no one else. My life experiences and curiosity in the arts has shown me that anything that I want to grow in I will give it my all, along with propelling that idea into the best rooms for them to grow with me, such as FIT. Being multifaceted with mixed media and my identity in this my generation go hand in hand. Many creatives such as me are all about not being put in one box while still having a category to belong. The time is now to create new limitless content, and opportunities, and we're not going to wait on no one to give us the future we want to live in, especially not me.



● WETATi Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award ●

Dr. Anne Reese
Carswell



Anne Reese Carswell, the Associate Director of the Nyumburu Cultural Center at the University of Maryland, College Park (Nim-Boo-Roo), and a Maryland Alum has been working in higher education for more than forty-two years. A liaison and standing member of multiple campus wide planning committees/advisory boards, she is instrumental to the "Home Away from Home" atmosphere commonly attributed to the Nyumburu Cultural Center.

As the Associate Director of the Nyumburu Cultural Center, Anne Carswell's duplicitous role is comprehensively linked to the spirit of entrepreneurship. She cultivates talent and innovation in students by connecting them to community and campus resources. Her concept of leadership is largely informed by the seven principles of Kwanzaa.

Anne Carswell encourages cultural engagement on and off campus. Empowering students with positions of leadership as speakers, coordinators, department ambassadors, and program facilitators, while also serving as an advisor, investor, and volunteer herself to create strategic community partnerships.

With integral involvement in the upstart of 5 of her own businesses (1 currently operating), Anne Carswell is devoted to developing community and wealth. She humbly describes her support of the careers of countless students as a "responsibility" rather than a "gift." However, truth be told, she learned to appreciate her influence early and uses it to cultivate an alumni pipeline that makes stepping stones of hurdles.

Anne Carswell has cultivated the spirit of tenacity in herself and others by volunteering with Women Empowered to Achieve the Impossible, Kiwanis Club Greater Landover, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, the National Movement for Civil and Human Rights, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Inspired by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, she has fervently worked to build coalitions that support community uplift in marginalized populations worldwide.

Anne Carswell is the Founder and Director of the K-12 summer enrichment program, Camp Shule at the Nyumburu Cultural Center. She also founded and empowered students to develop the student organization Sisterhood Of Unity and Love (SOUL). She continues to enhance the cultural consciousness and worldview of students by coordinating a Pre-Kwanzaa Celebration, "Juke Joint" Open Mic, "NewsBreak," "Gospel Happy Hour," and the "Miss UnityScholarship Pageant."

Anne Reese Carswell has an innate ability to develop impactful programs that encourage college retention through extracurricular cultural engagement. Much like the recipients of the Rosa Parks "Labor of Love" award she gives annually, she labors tirelessly on behalf of the wellbeing of students and the community that supports them.



Anne Reese Carswell has received a 40 Year University of Maryland Presidential Service Award, as well as a 25-year service award as one of the original members of the campus-wide Maryland Day Planning Committee. She also received the Madison "Who's Who Registry of Executives and Professionals" Award for Exemplary Achievement and Distinguished Contributions to the Business Community.

Anne Reese Carswell is the namesake for the WETATi Annual Scholarship Gala. She has received the Student Success Council M. Lucia James Faculty/Administrator Impact Award, the WETATi "Above and Beyond" Award for Entrepreneurship, and was twice named University of Maryland Student Affairs' "Advisor of The Year." She has been honored with the Chi Delta Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Incorporated's "Uplift" Award, she was a 2008 (College Park Chapter) NAACP Image Award Banquet Honoree, and also the recipient of the Destiny Church 2010 Woman's Day, "You Didn't Have to Do It, But You Did" Award.

Anne Reese Carswell was recognized for exceptional service as the Chairperson of the Nyumburu Cultural Center's UMD 50th Anniversary week long celebration and banquet. Her abundant initiative was evident in her role in establishing the Nyumburu "Donor Recognition Tree" and "Ambassadors & Friends Wall." She has since been applauded by her department and the senior leadership of the campus' Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

Although she is one of the namesakes of the University of Maryland's Divine 9 James Otis Williams & Anne Reese Carswell Scholarship Fund, she has also established an annual scholarship that is distributed in her name as the "If I Can Help Somebody" Award.

Anne Reese Carswell is a resilient source of support for the University of Maryland, College Park campus and its students. She encourages community resource groups and businesses to press through the national climatic challenges implicit in the pursuit for qualitative progress in global diversity and inclusion.

Dureke Idea Pitch Competition: Collegiate Competitors



Abdulfaruq
Seriki



Deborah
Alain



Hi, my name is Deborah Alain. I am a sophomore at Prince George's Community College. I will be majoring in Information Science at the University of Maryland in Fall 2023. The name of my business is SmartNote. SmartNote is an organizational app equipped with tools and resources and builds a sense of community among like-minded individuals striving for greatness.



Dureke Idea Pitch Competition: Collegiate Judge



Staci
Griffin

Staci Griffin is an Associate Community Outreach Officer at Fulton Bank. She is a recent graduate of the University of Baltimore with a master's degree in Human Service Administration. She pursued her degree because of the passion she has for community development. As a lifelong Baltimore City resident it is important for her to help grow capacity of our community residents and organizations. Staci Griffin joined Fulton Bank in July 2021 as an Associate Community Outreach Officer for the State of MD, Northern Virginia, and Washington D.C. In this role, Staci helps bring the bank's Fulton Forward™ initiative to life in Baltimore and the surrounding counties, helping to advance economic empowerment, workforce development, homeownership, as well as diversity, equity, and inclusion particularly in underserved communities. Specifically, Staci works closely with internal and community partners to help increase home ownership in majority/minority communities.

WETATi Academy
***Above &
Beyond Award***
2023 Recipients



Staci Griffin

Fulton Bank

Associate Community Outreach Officer



Steven Baker

College Park Academy

Middle School Principal

Dureka Idea Pitch Competition: Next Gen Competitors



Payton
Pryor



Achieving The impossible: Dynamic Education

Chiquita Jackson



Chiquita Jackson is an entrepreneur and community advocate who has achieved extraordinary feats despite facing many extreme obstacles in her youth, such as homelessness, food insecurity, foster care, and the untimely loss of both of her parents to senseless murders. Her strength, resilience, and unwavering commitment to effecting meaningful change and lifting up underserved communities have established Chiquita as a powerful and motivating role model. As the first in her family to graduate high school and college, Chiquita received a Bachelor's Degree and established her own social impact agency Chiquita Jackson Enterprise in 2020. Through her company, she provides a range of essential services and resources to individuals in low-income backgrounds, such as workforce development, entrepreneurial support, youth entrepreneurship/sports leadership, organizing grassroots advocacy campaigns, and community empowerment events. Chiquita is a highly sought-after public speaker who has spoken on transformative leadership at events such as SXSW EDU (2022), Afro & Audio Convention (2022), and Net Impact (2019). Her impressive impact is evident in her role as reparations commissioner and community relations advisory board member for the City of Greenbelt, advancing the voices of the working class to disrupt poverty. Chiquita Jackson has demonstrated how with passion, courage, and unwavering perseverance, we can overcome even the greatest of odds and create a meaningful change in the world around us.

inspiring social entrepreneur and community advocate who has achieved extraordinary feats despite facing many youth, such as homelessness, food insecurity, foster care, and the untimely loss of both of her parents to senseless murders.

Dureke Idea Pitch Competition: Collegiate Judge



Kelly
Vaughn

For over 35-years, Kelly Vaughn has been a servant leader in the business development space. You may know her work as the Director of Community Engagement and Sponsorships at the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development but Kelly Vaughn can also be credited with contributions to the nonprofit-sector, small business community, and promoting affordable housing programs at the national and state level. Driven to empower others, her mission is to provide resources that re-energize existing partnerships, establish new community relationships and reconnects at a grassroots level with culturally-specific communities to broaden the reach and increase awareness building, statewide; including joining the Office of the Governor and Secretary in communicating critical statewide initiatives. In addition to her primary job functions, Kelly Vaughn has been recognized by the Governor, Housing Secretary, and Community partners for her extraordinary commitment to public service. And, the Black Business Review recognized her as a person on the move.

Evelyn Mei

Evelyn Mei is a Senior Product Strategy Manager at Oracle, a Technology & Racial Equity Practitioner Fellow at Stanford University, and a Professional Mentor at TechWomen, a US Department of State initiative.



Evelyn created Negotiation Villain; an AI-based zero-cost negotiation trainer approved by OpenAI for a global launch. She also launched 2 AI-based software products for sustainable supply chain management.

She is a frequent speaker and mentor at AI4ALL and related hackathons. Evelyn graduated from the Department of Management Science and Engineering at Stanford University.

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John Dureke
WETATi Academy
WETATi Support Staff



Laura Charleston
WETATi Academy
*WETATi Academy Communications
Coordinator Intern*

WETATi Academy
***Above &
Beyond Award***
2023 Recipients

Dureka idea Pitch Competition: Coach


Next Gen



*Dr. Angela
Seay*

Dr. Angela Seay has never lost her hustle or her New York state of mind. Educating others is a part of her DNA. Modeling her life after her Mantra, Healthy people are happy people and happy people show love, Dr. Angela took her passion from academia to the dance floor. Teaching is her passion, but wellness/fitness is her true love language. Dr. Angela's method of teaching is just like a three-strand cord. She teaches to elevate the mind, transform the body, and feed the soul. She is a published author, has served on several wellness advisory boards and serves in ministry to reach her audience. Cultivating an environment for healthy living and community is Dr. Angela's goal. With more than 30 years of experience, this is just the beginning of a dream come true.

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