



Celebrating

**The Next Generation Of
WNY Entrepreneurs and
Business Professionals**

April 26, 2025

One Seneca Tower, Buffalo NY



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Empower716 Young Entrepreneurs of Color Awards Gala

Saturday, April 26, 2025

One Seneca Tower, Buffalo, NY

Program Agenda

11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Networking, Vendors, Food & Refreshments

12:00 PM – 2:00 PM

Welcome & Opening Remarks

Sponsor & Elected Official Recognition

Special Awards Presentation

Youth Entertainment Performance

6-Month Program Highlights & Pitch Contest Winner Announcement

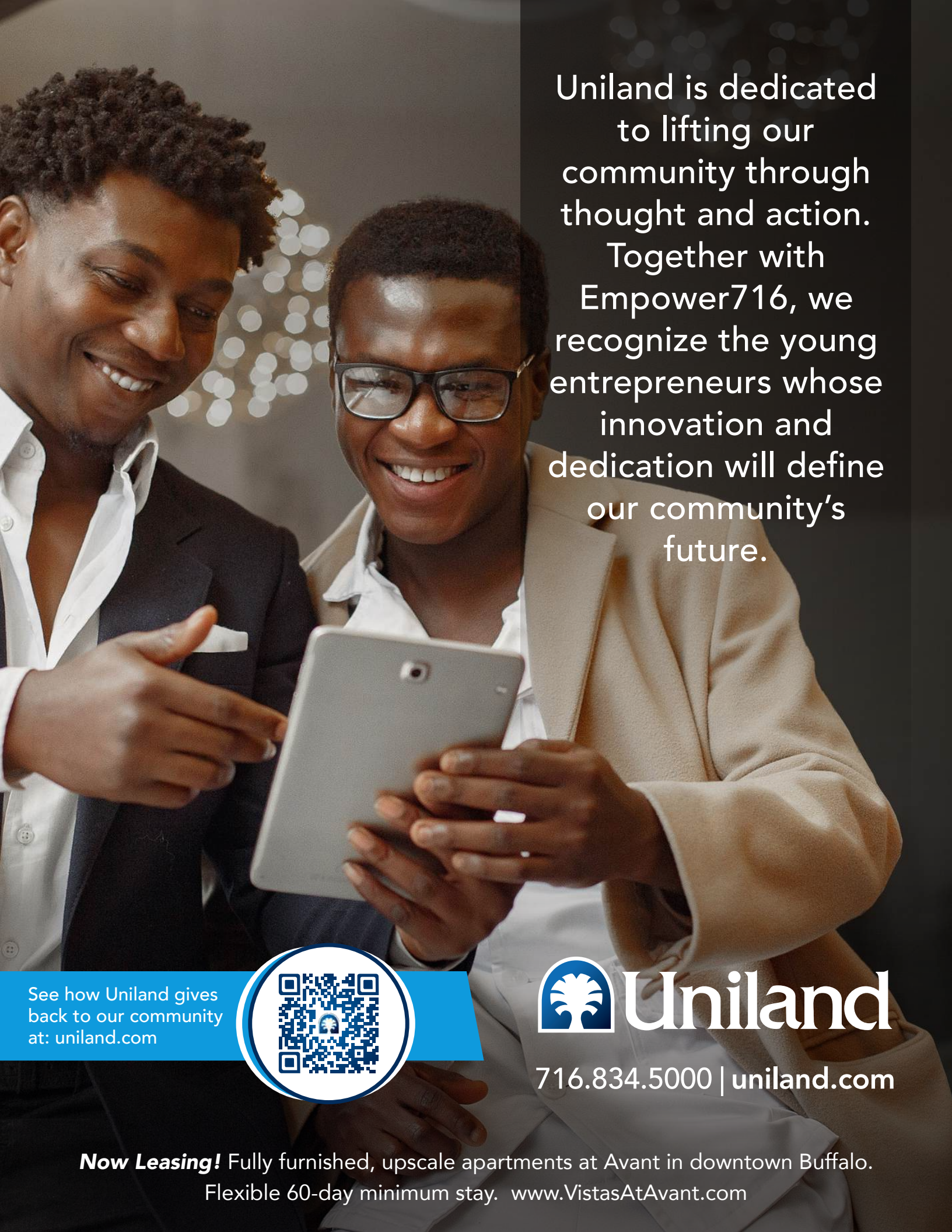
Youth Entertainment Performance

Honoree Presentations

Entrepreneurial Spirit Award Presentation

Closing Remarks

Final Networking & Vendor Showcase



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recognize the young
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dedication will define
our community's
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Empower716 Young Entrepreneurs of Color in
their mission to foster innovation, drive growth,
and create a lasting impact on the community.



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Honorees



Lynda Brundige

Marie Enterprise LLC

Founder of a licensed contracting firm, Lynda began her journey at age 12 working on community projects with her family's nonprofit. A standout student-athlete, she earned a degree in Physics and holds multiple licenses including real estate and CDL-A. Committed to breaking barriers, she mentors youth and empowers Black women in construction while expanding her business.



Anita Collins

Saints and Friends, LLC

Anita's Christian clothing brand blends fashion and faith to spread uplifting messages. She's a motivational speaker, singer, and photographer, balancing business, ministry, and education. Anita's mission is to inspire others, expand internationally, and pursue a doctorate in psychology while building a legacy rooted in faith.



Anaiyah Marshall

Ni's DreamLab

Anaiyah is the founder of a beauty and esthetics business that promotes confidence through skincare, waxing, and wellness education. Starting from home, she now operates in a professional suite and mentors young women. Her goal is to expand services while keeping them affordable and accessible in her community.



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ELDER

NIAGARA COUNTY LEGISLATURE



one open door can open doors across a community.

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Honorees



George Wiley V

Spray Lab

George customizes and restores shoes and clothing, with a client base that includes NFL and NHL athletes. A standout student and football player, he uses his creativity for charitable causes and balances academics, athletics, and entrepreneurship. George is committed to growing his brand while giving back.



Elias Torres

Eli Cutz

From Home Cuts to Becoming the Brand — Meet Elias Torres, the Self-Made Master Barber & Stylist Known as Eli Cutz. What started in 2022 as casual home cuts for friends has transformed into a powerful movement built on skill, style, and purpose. A graduate of the BOCES/Harkness Barbershop program, Elias inspires others through mentorship, community outreach, and professional excellence.



Eman Wajed

Buffalo Fashion Runway

Eman co-founded Buffalo Fashion Runway to spotlight local designers and creatives. Through events, workshops, and collaborations, he's built Buffalo's most-followed fashion platform. His mission is to expand BFR's impact, support young artists, and elevate Buffalo's fashion scene with innovation and purpose.



Anthony Baldi & Associates
Ameriprise Private Wealth Advisory Practice

Proud to Support the Next Generation of WNY Entrepreneurs and Business Professionals



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M&T Bank is proud to sponsor the Young Entrepreneurs of Color Awards.

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Honorees



Jaden Martin

Jaden's Journey

Jaden launched his nonprofit to support underserved communities through outreach and creative expression. Despite personal challenges, he's volunteered for food drives, supported the homeless, and showcased his art in exhibitions. Jaden is committed to expanding his impact and using his story to uplift others.



Isaiah Gethers

IG Entertainment

Isaiah is a singer, mentor, and music teacher who founded IG Entertainment to combine artistry and community impact. He teaches young musicians, produces music, and uplifts through mentorship. Isaiah's vision is to grow his platform and inspire youth through the power of music and service.



Mekhi Edwards

Capture Me Visuals

Mekhi founded his photography business to capture life's most meaningful moments. A Canisius University student and marketing professional, he's also led fundraising efforts and mentors young creatives. Mekhi's goal is to expand his brand and blend photography, marketing, and social impact into one powerful platform.



Quality Youth Enrichment Programs

To learn about the
Police Athletic League of Buffalo,
please visit:

Buffalopal.com



SCAN TO DONATE



Honorees



Paulae Pope

UND

Paulae created UND, a sustainable fashion house that helps individuals express identity and reduce waste. She teaches clothing repurposing in schools, runs community drives, and promotes accessible fashion. Her mission is to build a platform for creativity, sustainability, and self-expression.



Rhalon Bragg

Legacy Tour

Rhalon leads Legacy Tour, a youth mentorship and sports program focused on leadership and community. As a coach and event organizer, he engages youth through basketball and giveaways. Rhalon's vision includes growing his brand, launching merchandise, and pursuing coaching, real estate, and life coaching to build generational impact.

Congratulations to the

Empower716

Young Entrepreneurs of Color Honorees



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About the Empower716 Young Entrepreneurs Program

The Empower716 Young Entrepreneurs of Color Program is a six-month initiative created specifically for youth in grades 8 through 12. This hands-on, real-world experience equips young visionaries with the tools, skills, and support needed to explore and grow their entrepreneurial dreams.

Through dynamic workshops, one-on-one mentorship, professional networking, and pitch development, participants gain critical insights into business fundamentals, branding, financial literacy, and leadership. This program isn't just about learning—it's about launching.

From classroom concepts to boardroom confidence, the initiative empowers youth of color in Western New York to transform ideas into action—and passion into purpose.

Faces of the Future

Meet four of our outstanding 2025 six-month program participants:



Mateen Thomas



**Curtis Lamar
Clemons Jr.**



Angie Walker



Aaliyah McCarleu

THANK YOU TO OUR COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS



To become a collaborative partner or supporter go to www.empower716.com

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Empower716 Program Leadership

The Empower716 Young Entrepreneurs Six-Month Development Program was created to equip students in grades 8 through 12 with the tools, confidence, and community they need to pursue their dreams and bring their business ideas to life. Through a combination of hands-on workshops, real-world learning, and personalized mentorship, this program served as a launchpad for the next generation of bold thinkers and doers.

At the heart of this effort was a dynamic leadership team that brought passion, guidance, and inspiration to every session.

Program Coordinator



Dr. Clement Kwakye

Dr. Kwakye led the overall coordination of the six-month initiative, ensuring that every experience was impactful and aligned with the mission. His leadership helped bring structure, purpose, and vision to the program.

Program Facilitators



Tamara Zantrell

As the founder of Raising a Mogul, Tamara led the first half of the program with powerful insight and real-world strategies. She helped students explore their "why," define their business identities, and take ownership of their entrepreneurial journeys.



Zandra Cunningham

As a nationally recognized teen entrepreneur and founder of Zandra Beauty, Zandra brought energy, authenticity, and vision to the second half of the program. Her mentorship challenged students to elevate their thinking and believe in their ability to lead.

With Gratitude to Our Collaborative Partners

This program was made possible through the support of incredible community partners. These organizations provided mentorship, resources, spaces, and services that transformed a vision into a reality. We are deeply grateful for your investment in our youth.

Thank you for walking alongside us.

Empower716 Young Entrepreneurs of Color Awards Gala

Planning Committee

We gratefully acknowledge the dedicated members of the Empower716 Planning Committee, whose leadership, creativity, and commitment made this year's program and celebration possible. Their passion for uplifting youth entrepreneurs of color continues to drive this mission forward.

Committee Members



Stephanie W. Cowart



Candice Thompson



Mark Overall



David E. Collins



Tanika Shedrick



Talisa King



Janice McKinnie



Shanna Smith



RaQuell Hall



Crystal Morgan



Shara Armprester



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