

**EMPOWER716
YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS OF COLOR
AWARDS**

Celebrating
the Next Generation of

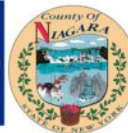
WNY Entrepreneurs and Business Professionals

Saturday, April 25, 2026 | One Seneca Tower, Buffalo, New York

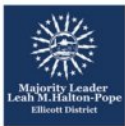
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Welcome Message

Welcome to the 2026 Empower716 Young Entrepreneurs of Color Awards.

This year's theme, **Fueling Bold Beginnings**, reflects the heart of Empower716 and the powerful journey of the young people we are honored to celebrate today. Bold beginnings are not always easy. They require vision, courage, discipline, and the willingness to move forward even when the path is uncertain. This morning, we recognize young entrepreneurs and emerging leaders who have chosen to begin, to build, and to believe in what is possible.

The **Empower716 Young Entrepreneurs of Color Initiative** was created to do more than host an awards ceremony. It was designed to uplift, equip, and invest in youth and young adults of color across Western New York through recognition, mentorship, entrepreneurial development, and meaningful community connection. From our honorees who are already leading through business and innovation, to our student participants who have committed themselves to learning, pitching, and growing through this year's development program, each young person represented in this initiative reminds us that the future is already taking shape.

As we gather at One Seneca Tower, we celebrate more than achievement. We celebrate resilience, creativity, leadership, and the promise of what can happen when talent is seen, supported, and given room to grow. We also recognize the families, mentors, sponsors, partners, judges, facilitators, elected officials, staff, volunteers, and community supporters whose belief and investment help fuel these bold beginnings.

Thank you for joining us as we honor the next generation of entrepreneurs and changemakers. Your presence affirms that our young people matter, their ideas matter, and their future is worth investing in.

Rob Lowery

Visionary,
Empower716
Young Entrepreneurs of Color Initiative



Robert Lowery,
RL Experience, LLC



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AWARDS

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Program Overview

Saturday, April 25, 2026

10:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Networking, Youth and Young Adult Pop-Up Showcase, Food, Refreshments, and Live Music by **The A-Team**

Pre-Ceremony Recognition

11:10 a.m. – 11:40 a.m.

Hosted by **Jada Ivy, Young Entrepreneurs of Color 2024 Honoree and Founder of XII XXI**

Musical Selection by **Anita Fraiser**

Reflection by **Legend Lewis, Young Entrepreneurs of Color 2024 Honoree and Founder of M.A.D.E by Legend**

Reflection by **Donald Pettaway III, Young Entrepreneurs of Color 2025 Dennis Wilson Jr. Entrepreneurial Spirit Award Recipient and Founder of Lawn Barber Lawn Care & Landscape**

Sponsor Acknowledgment

Remarks by Elected Officials and Special Guests

Representative from U.S. Congressman Timothy Kennedy's Office Taylor Norton, Representative from Governor Kathy Hochul's Office Mo Sumbundu, New York State Senator April N.M. Baskin, New York State Senator Jeremy J. Zellner, New York State Assembly Majority Leader Crystal D. Peoples-Stokes, Erie County Deputy County Executive Lisa M. Chimera representing Erie County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz, Erie County Legislator Taisha St. Jean Tard, Erie County Legislator Lawrence J. Dupre, Buffalo Common Council Majority Leader Leah M. Halton-Pope, Mayor of Niagara Falls Robert Restaino, and Minority Leader of the Niagara County Legislature Jeffrey Elder.

Awards Ceremony

12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Hosted by **Chelsea Lovell, Daytime Buffalo Host at WIVB/WNLO-TV, and Shelden Gibbs, CEO of Classic Knot and Young Entrepreneurs of Color 2025 NextGen Award Recipient**

Music Curated by DJ Brei

Opening Processional (Ade Jembe Fola, African Drumming Ensemble)

Welcome, Opening Remarks, Sponsor and Past Honoree Acknowledgments

Special Remarks by Mayor, City of Buffalo, Sean Ryan

Program and Pitch Contest Recognition, presented by **Dr. Clement Kwakye, Program Coordinator; Tamara Zantell, Founder of Raising A Mogul; Zandra Cunningham, Founder of Zandra Beauty; and Mekhi Edwards, Host of the 2026 Pitch Contest and Founder of Capture Me Visuals**

Featured Performance by Anita Fraiser

Featured Speaker, **Kevin "WavyKid Kev" Northington, Young Entrepreneurs of Color 2023 Recipient of the Dennis Wilson Jr. Entrepreneurial Spirit Award**

On the Rise Recognition Award Presentation

NextGen Excellence Award Presentation

Honoree Recognition

Featured Performance by Chosen One Kye performing "Breaking Out"

Honoree Recognition Continued

2026 Dennis Wilson Jr. Entrepreneurial Spirit Award, presented by Dennis Wilson Jr., Entrepreneur, Educator, and Owner of The Oakk Haus Nightclub

Closing Remarks

Our Story, Mission, and Vision



How It Started

Empower716 began as a platform to highlight the stories, journeys, and success of business owners and entrepreneurs of color across Western New York. Through Empower716 The Podcast, RL Experience, LLC created space to amplify voices that were often overlooked while sharing stories of resilience, innovation, and community impact.

How It Grew

As the platform grew, so did the vision. What began as storytelling evolved into a deeper commitment to support the next generation by providing visibility, encouragement, and direct support to young entrepreneurs. That early vision became the foundation for the Empower716 Young Entrepreneurs of Color Initiative.

Our Mission

To foster entrepreneurship among underrepresented youth and young adults of color by providing the tools, resources, mentorship, visibility, and support they need to thrive.

Our Vision

To help create a more inclusive and equitable business landscape by building a pipeline of young entrepreneurs and emerging business leaders who will drive innovation and community impact across Western New York.

Why It Matters

Empower716 is more than an event. It is a growing initiative rooted in the belief that when young entrepreneurs are seen, supported, and connected to real opportunities, they grow in confidence, leadership, and purpose.

How the Empower716 Young Entrepreneurs of Color Initiative Creates Impact

Recognition Program

The Recognition Program honors young entrepreneurs ages 25 and under who are already building businesses, brands, and platforms with purpose. Selected honorees receive more than public recognition. They receive direct business investment through a stipend, professional photo and video production, increased visibility, and opportunities for mentorship, networking, and connection to community leaders, supporters, and resources. This support is designed to help strengthen their brand, build confidence, and create tools they can use beyond the event to grow their business and tell their story.

Development Program

The Development Program equips students in grades 8 through 12 with entrepreneurship training that helps turn ideas into action. Through workshops, coaching, and guided business development, participants strengthen skills in branding, communication, financial literacy, business planning, and public speaking. The program is designed to help youth build confidence, explore entrepreneurship, and develop the tools needed to grow their ideas in practical ways.

Photo and Video Branding Experience

A key part of the Empower716 experience is helping youth present themselves and their business professionally. Through the photo and video production experience, participants receive support in storytelling, brand identity, professional presence, and communication. This results in professional-quality photos and spotlight videos that can be used for marketing, promotion, and future business opportunities.

Pitch Contest and Business Readiness

The Pitch Contest experience is one of the strongest ways participants apply what they have learned. Through pitch preparation, live coaching, and the formal contest, youth learn how to clearly explain their business idea, identify the problem they are solving, communicate their value, and respond confidently to questions. Presenting before judges, business leaders, and community supporters helps participants strengthen executive presence, sharpen presentation skills, and grow in confidence.

Partnership, Collaboration, and Access to Resources

Empower716 is committed to building an ecosystem of support around young entrepreneurs. We believe in partnership and collaboration and are not trying to recreate the wheel. By working alongside schools, community organizations, business leaders, higher education institutions, funders, and government agencies, we help connect honorees and participants to resources, relationships, and opportunities that can strengthen their growth. This collaborative approach expands access, deepens impact, and helps young people see that they are supported by a broader community invested in their success.

Real-World Exposure and Ongoing Community

Empower716 is designed to provide more than workshop-based learning. Through networking experiences, vendor opportunities, and the live marketplace environment at the awards ceremony, participants gain exposure to real business settings where they can practice customer engagement, represent their brand, and build meaningful connections. Past honorees also continue to stay engaged as hosts, presenters, mentors, judges, supporters, and visible examples of what is possible.

As part of our continued commitment to past honorees, Empower716 plans to host two events per year that bring alumni together for connection, business resources, and speakers who provide practical value. These gatherings are designed to help past honorees stay engaged, continue learning, and remain connected to a growing entrepreneurial community.

Our Impact

Together, these experiences reflect the heart of Empower716. We recognize achievement, invest in young businesses, strengthen visibility, develop talent, create community, and connect youth and young adults to the people, resources, and opportunities that help move their ideas forward with confidence and purpose.

Empower716 and True Community Development Corporation



Janice McKinnie

Executive Director
True Community Development Corporation

Empower716 and True Community Development Corporation

The Empower716 Young Entrepreneurs of Color Initiative is powered by a meaningful partnership between RL Experience, LLC and True Community Development Corporation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization committed to building stronger communities through service, education, empowerment, and opportunity. Together, this partnership helps create a pathway for youth and young adults of color across Western New York to be recognized, supported, and equipped as they grow in entrepreneurship and leadership.

What began as a vision to celebrate young entrepreneurs has continued to evolve into a broader initiative that does more than recognize achievement. Through this collaboration, Empower716 provides visibility, mentorship, encouragement, and connections that help young people strengthen their confidence, sharpen their skills, and take meaningful steps forward in business and in life. At its core, this partnership reflects a shared belief that young entrepreneurs deserve access to opportunity, support, and community.

A key part of this partnership has been the leadership and support of Janice E. McKinnie, Executive Director of True Community Development Corporation. Janice has played an important role in helping strengthen the connection between Empower716 and the broader community, bringing both nonprofit leadership and a deep commitment to service. Her experience in community development, strategic partnerships, and empowering others has helped support the continued growth of this initiative and its impact on young people.

Through the partnership between RL Experience, LLC and True Community Development Corporation, Empower716 continues to create space for youth and young adults of color to be seen, celebrated, and developed. Together, we remain committed to fueling bold beginnings and investing in the next generation of entrepreneurs, leaders, and changemakers.

Event Hosts



Chelsea Lovell

Daytime Buffalo Host
at WIVB/WNLO-TV



Sheldon Gibbs

Founder of Classic Knot and
Young Entrepreneurs of Color
2025 NextGen Award Recipient

Featured Entertainment



The A-Team



Anita Fraiser



Ade Jembe Fola



Chosen One Kye



DJ Brei

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Honoring the excellence of our honorees!



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Empower716 Program Leadership

The Empower716 Young Entrepreneurs of Color Development Program was created to equip students in grades 8 through 12 with the tools, confidence, and support they need to explore entrepreneurship, strengthen their leadership, and bring their ideas to life. Through hands-on workshops, real-world learning, mentorship, and pitch development, the program continues to serve as a launchpad for the next generation of bold thinkers and emerging entrepreneurs.

At the heart of this experience is a leadership team that brings passion, guidance, and purpose to every session.

Program Coordinator



Dr. Clement Kwakye

Dr. Clement Kwakye serves as the Program Coordinator for the Empower716 Young Entrepreneurs of Color Development Program. He provides overall leadership for the program, helping to ensure that each session, partnership, and participant experience is meaningful, organized, and aligned with the mission of Empower716. His coordination, mentorship, and commitment to youth development help bring structure, vision, and impact to the program.

Program Facilitators



Tamara Zantrell

As the founder of Raising a Mogul, Tamara Zantrell brings powerful insight, entrepreneurial strategy, and authentic encouragement to the Empower716 program. Through her facilitation, students are challenged to think deeper about their purpose, define their business identities, and take ownership of their entrepreneurial journey. Her leadership helps participants build confidence, creativity, and clarity as they grow their ideas.



Zandra Cunningham

As a nationally recognized entrepreneur and founder of Zandra Beauty, Zandra Cunningham brings energy, authenticity, and real-world experience to the Empower716 program. Her mentorship encourages students to think boldly, lead with confidence, and see entrepreneurship as a pathway to impact. Through her story and facilitation, participants are inspired to believe in their voice, their vision, and their ability to build something meaningful.

With Gratitude to Our Collaborative Partners

This program is made possible through the support of incredible collaborative partners and community supporters. Their investment, encouragement, and commitment help create opportunities that empower youth and young adults of color to grow in leadership, entrepreneurship, and purpose.

Thank you for walking alongside us.

2026 Program Graduates and Pitch Cohort



We proudly celebrate the youth and young adults who participated in this year's Empower716 Young Entrepreneurs of Color Development Program and Pitch Contest experience. Through virtual learning, business exploration, mentorship, and courageous participation, these emerging leaders demonstrated creativity, commitment, and a willingness to grow. Whether refining a business idea, building a brand, or stepping forward to share their vision, each participant reflects the promise and potential of the next generation.

Please join us in congratulating the following participants:

Queen Ivy
Kendra Davis
Layla Maryam Haque
Ava Murphy

Amiyah Funderburk
Jy'Ahzhannae Taylor
Anayah Gross
Jazlyn Carson

Saniaa Mitchell
Raven Mullen
Xavier Powell

Lauren McElrath
Noriah Parris



Mekhi Edwards

Host of the 2026 Pitch Contest
Young Entrepreneurs of Color 2025 Honoree
Founder of Capture Me Visuals

2026 Pitch Contest Judges



**Oswaldo
Mestre Jr.**
City of Buffalo



Rhalon Bragg
Founder of Legacy Tour,
Young Entrepreneurs
of Color 2025 Honoree.



**Dr. Deana
Stevenson**
DocDeana
Enterprises, LLC



DeVale Jackson
KeyBank



Royce Woods
Citizens Bank



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Taisha St. Jean Tard

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Special Recognition Awards

The Empower716 Young Entrepreneurs of Color Special Awards are designed to recognize young leaders who are building, growing, and making an impact in unique and meaningful ways. While our honorees are nominated by the community, these special awards allow us to highlight individuals whose journeys reflect momentum, leadership, and the evolving spirit of entrepreneurship.

Each award celebrates young entrepreneurs ages 25 and under who are shaping the future through innovation, resilience, and purpose.

On the Rise Recognition Award

The On the Rise Recognition Award honors a young entrepreneur who is building momentum, expanding their influence, and showing promising growth through their creativity, hustle, and unique impact.

This recognition is given to an individual whose rising presence, entrepreneurial spirit, and growing platform reflect the energy, vision, and promise of the Empower716 Young Entrepreneurs of Color Initiative. It celebrates those who are actively creating opportunities, developing their craft, and making their mark while continuing to grow into their full potential.

NextGen Excellence Award

The NextGen Excellence Award recognizes a rising young leader who is already making an impact and helping to shape the narrative of youth entrepreneurship.

This award honors individuals who have demonstrated a strong track record of leadership, innovation, and commitment to their business or platform. These young entrepreneurs are not only building successful ventures, but are also using their influence to inspire others, uplift their communities, and represent the next generation of excellence in business.

“Recipient of the 2026 NextGen Excellence Award”

Featured Speaker



Kevin “WavyKid Kev” Northington

Founder, Kutz by Kev LLC

Today, we are proud to feature Kevin “WavyKid Kev” Northington, a dynamic young entrepreneur who represents what it means to build with vision, creativity, and purpose. Kevin’s journey reflects the spirit of this year’s theme, Fueling Bold Beginnings, as he has transformed his talent, discipline, and personal brand into a platform that reaches far beyond the barber chair.

Kevin Northington, known as WavyKid Kev, began learning barbering at a young age. Before the age of 18, he launched his own LLC, becoming an independent barber while steadily building a digital audience. In 2023, his innovative approach and entrepreneurial drive earned him the Dennis Wilson Jr. Entrepreneurial Spirit Award at the Empower716 Young Entrepreneurs of Color Awards. Since then, he has continued to expand his brand and gain both local and national recognition.

Now at just 22, Kevin has emerged as both a high-performing barber and a standout digital entrepreneur. He has built a brand that blends barbering, entrepreneurship, lifestyle, and automotive creativity into his own unique lane of influence. Through strategic content creation and brand development, he has grown a powerful online presence with over 300,000 Instagram followers, more than 80,000 YouTube subscribers, and nearly 100,000 Facebook followers. His reach has allowed him to secure brand partnerships, create multiple streams of income, and inspire audiences across industries.

Kevin is widely recognized not only for his barbering talent, but also for his ability to produce engaging digital content that captures transformation, style, branding, and culture. His work has expanded into automotive content, including curated showcases, vehicle transformations, wrap features, and collaborations that highlight both style and innovation. Through this growing platform, he has shown how a young entrepreneur can successfully merge passion with business while building influence, community, and income.

Alongside growing his brand, Kevin has also stepped into the role of teacher and mentor. He has been invited to speak at barber conferences and industry events, where he shares his experience and encourages others to stay consistent, build intentionally, and turn talent into opportunity. Rooted in family values and faith, Kevin represents a new generation of entrepreneurs who are multidimensional, community-driven, and committed to lasting impact.

“Recipient of the 2026 On the Rise Award”



Xavion Baines

Founder, King Baines, LLC

Xavion Baines, 24, is a rising entrepreneur who has transformed his passion for photography into a dynamic and growing business. Inspired by his late grandmother, a professional photographer who recognized his talent early and invested in his journey, Xavion began capturing moments at local events and quickly built a strong and recognizable presence.

As the founder of King Baines LLC, also known as King Baines Productions, and through his work in event promotion, Xavion has developed a multifaceted brand rooted in creativity, audience engagement, and cultural storytelling. He credits DJ Reese Brown for helping him better understand the business side of event promotion, allowing him to expand beyond photography into building experiences and managing event-driven platforms.

His impact extends beyond business. Xavion was selected as the Buffalo Chapter President for One of Many, a platform focused on youth leadership and community empowerment, and received a \$10,000 investment to support programming, events, and initiatives aimed at uplifting the next generation. A graduate of City Honors School and a second-degree black belt, Xavion brings discipline, focus, and creative energy to everything he does.

Committed to both entrepreneurship and community impact, Xavion is working to create meaningful opportunities that engage and uplift others. That vision includes hosting a community boxing event and building future initiatives that provide positive alternatives, exposure, and encouragement for young people in his community.

Xavion's journey reflects momentum, influence, and purpose, a young entrepreneur who is not only building a brand, but creating impact and carrying forward a legacy.

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Congratulations to The 2026 Empower716 Young Entrepreneurs of Color Honorees



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ONE PERSON AT A TIME

True Community
Development Corporation




True Community
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“

The mission of the TCDC is to function as a development engine committed to providing faith-based leadership, housing, and human service, which will serve as a foundation for revitalization and restoration of under-served and underutilized communities.

”



Celebrating a new generation
of visionary honorees!

“The Dennis Wilson Jr. Entrepreneurial Spirit Award”

The Dennis Wilson Jr. Entrepreneurial Spirit Award recognizes a young entrepreneur who exemplifies leadership, creativity, purpose, and a strong commitment to community impact. Named in honor of Dennis Wilson Jr., this award celebrates a young leader who is building with vision, showing up with consistency, and using entrepreneurship to inspire and uplift others. It reflects the spirit of innovation, resilience, and community-centered leadership that Dennis has modeled throughout his career.



Dennis Wilson Jr.

Entrepreneur, Educator, and Owner of The Oakk Haus Nightclub

Dennis Wilson Jr. is a Buffalo-based entrepreneur, educator, promoter, and graphic designer whose work has made a lasting impact on business, culture, and community in Western New York. He is the founder and CEO of Mrdwilson Limited Corp., a New York State MWBE-certified company specializing in printing, graphic design, and event planning. He is also co-owner of Thee W Studios and owner of The Oakk Haus Nightclub, a downtown Buffalo venue created for urban professionals and upscale nightlife experiences. Alongside his entrepreneurial work, Dennis serves as a certified teacher in Social Studies and Printing in Buffalo Public Schools.

Born and raised in Buffalo, Dennis attended Turner/Carroll High School, graduated at the top of his class from Riverside High School, and went on to play Division I basketball at Canisius College, where he earned both bachelor's and master's degrees. His entrepreneurial journey began in 2001 with King of Spades Graphics and later expanded into promotions, hospitality, and brand development. Over the years, he has become known for creating businesses, signature events, and experiences that bring people together while also creating opportunities for others.

Dennis's impact extends far beyond business. His signature events have helped shape Buffalo's cultural landscape, and his work has earned recognition from a number of organizations, including Buffalo Business First's 2025 Power 100 Business Leaders of Color. More importantly, he has used his platforms to mentor, inspire, and invest in the next generation. This award honors his legacy by recognizing a young entrepreneur who reflects that same spirit of excellence, service, and bold vision.

Honoring the Legacy of This Award

This award continues to celebrate young entrepreneurs who lead with vision, purpose, and a commitment to uplifting others. We proudly recognize the outstanding recipients who have represented the spirit of this honor in previous years.



Kevin "WavyKid Kev" Northington

2023 Recipient



Mohamed Maalim

2024 Recipient



Donald Pettaway III

2025 Recipient

“Recipient of the 2026 Dennis Wilson Jr. Entrepreneurial Spirit Award”



Anayah Gross

God Is Love The Movement

Anayah Gross is a faith-centered entrepreneur, author, and encourager whose work reflects purpose, compassion, and a deep commitment to helping others grow. Through God Is Love The Movement, Intimacy Through Christ, Modestly Styled, and her personal brand, she has created spaces that offer inspiration, spiritual encouragement, and practical guidance for women, young couples, and others seeking purpose and growth.

At just 21, Anayah’s journey already reflects resilience, faith, and bold decision-making. Through sacrifice and conviction, she made the difficult decision to leave nursing school in order to pursue the path she believed God was calling her to. She later relocated to Buffalo to build a life and business alongside her husband, stepping into a new city, new opportunities, and new challenges with courage and determination.

Anayah’s entrepreneurship is rooted in service. As co-owner of God Is Love The Movement and founder of Intimacy Through Christ, she has developed products and resources that go beyond fashion and branding to help people navigate life, faith, identity, and personal growth. She is also recognized for creating journals, study materials, and encouraging content designed to help women and girls grow stronger in purpose and in their walk with God.

Those who nominated her described her as a woman of wisdom, grace, and authenticity who consistently offers encouragement, guidance, and support to others. She has been recognized for mentoring young women and couples, partnering with church and community efforts, speaking on panels, and using her voice to meet both practical and spiritual needs. Her leadership is reflected not only in the brands she is building, but in the way she shows up for others with integrity, compassion, and conviction.

What makes Anayah especially distinctive is the way she challenges norms with authenticity and faith. She does not simply follow trends. She builds with intention, leads from her values, and creates with a desire to leave people stronger, more confident, and more connected to purpose. As the 2026 recipient of the Dennis Wilson Jr. Entrepreneurial Spirit Award, Anayah Gross embodies the heart of this honor through her leadership, service, and commitment to uplifting others.

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**Celebrating the success and
promise of our honorees!**



**Majority Leader
Leah M. Halton-Pope
Ellicott District**

**With appreciation, celebrating the
accomplishments of our honorees!**



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**Zeneta B. Everhart
Masten District Council Woman**

Applauding the achievements of our honorees!

Honoree



Amari Clark

Founder, Momma Bea's Cuisine

Amari Clark, founder of Momma Bea's Cuisine, is a creative and community-minded young entrepreneur whose gifts in culinary arts and service continue to leave a lasting impression on those around her. Known for her strong work ethic, loving spirit, and creative thinking, Amari has built her business through determination, natural talent, and a heart for people. Her supporters describe her as someone who sees needs and responds with care, whether through her cooking, ministry service, or support for children and families in the community.

Amari's entrepreneurial journey reflects both skill and purpose. She brings originality to everything she does and is admired as a young leader whose vision, passion, and compassion inspire others. Through Momma Bea's, she is building more than a business. She is creating an experience rooted in care, creativity, and community. Her growing impact reflects the power of using talent not only to serve others, but also to bring people together through food, hospitality, and love.

Honoree



Ava Murphy

Founder of DJ AvaBre

Ava Murphy, known professionally as DJ AvaBre, is a talented young DJ who has already built a strong reputation through dedication, personality, and a growing mastery of her craft. A student at the Buffalo Academy for Visual and Performing Arts, Ava has spent the last five years developing her skills and building her brand through social media, word of mouth, and consistently strong performances. Her nominator described her as sought-after and successful, with an infectious personality and a commitment to learning and improving.

Through her work, Ava helps bring energy, joy, and professionalism to special events and celebrations across the community. She is also seen as a role model among her peers, with a work ethic and drive that stand out well beyond her years. Ava's journey reflects the power of starting young, staying consistent, and turning passion into a growing business with real community value. As she continues to build her name and expand her opportunities, Ava represents a new generation of entrepreneurs who are confidently creating their own lane.

Honoree



Demetreaus Cooks

Founder, Revision Gallery _____

Demetreaus Cooks, founder of Revision Gallery, is a young creative entrepreneur whose vision, discipline, and persistence have shaped a business rooted in originality and self-determination. He began developing his craft as a teenager and has spent years researching Black entrepreneurs, sketching designs, and learning what it takes to build a brand with intention. Supporters describe him as deeply dedicated, often sacrificing personal leisure to support his family while also funding and growing his business.

Through Revision Gallery, Demetreaus provides aspiring models and creatives with a platform to engage with his work and express themselves through fashion and design. His journey reflects resilience, sacrifice, and a commitment to building something meaningful from the ground up. He stands out as an emerging entrepreneur who is not only developing a brand, but also creating opportunities for creativity, expression, and inspiration within his community. His story is one of discipline, purpose, and a refusal to settle, making him a strong example of what it means to build with both vision and heart.

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**CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OF THE
YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS OF COLOR AWARDEES**
FROM BELLAMY ENTERPRISES
"CHANGE YOUR THOUGHTS, CHANGE YOUR WORLD"



Honoree



Deliani Abreu

Founder, Botanical Treehouse

Deliani Abreu, founder of Botanical Treehouse, is a certified herbalist and entrepreneur who is bringing wellness, education, and natural healing into the community through a business built with intention and care. Over the past two years, she has taken meaningful steps to establish and grow her LLC while expanding her knowledge and using her platform to educate others about herbs, healthy living, and natural products. Her nominators highlighted her commitment to listening to customers, using surveys and feedback to improve her products, and building something that serves adults, children, and even pets.

Deliani is also recognized as an active vendor and a positive presence in the community, using both her business and personal influence to promote a healthier lifestyle. Through Botanical Treehouse, she is meeting a unique need in Western New York by combining entrepreneurship, healing, and education in a way that is both creative and impactful. Her work reflects a thoughtful approach to business, one that is rooted in listening, learning, and responding to the needs of others. She is building a brand that not only sells products, but also encourages wellness, awareness, and lasting community impact.

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**CONGRATULATIONS TO THE
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AWARDS.**

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COMMUNITY.**

MINORITY LEADER OF THE
NIAGARA COUNTY LEGISLATURE
4TH DISTRICT

JEFFREY SIDER



BUFFALO SABRES
FOUNDATION



The Buffalo Sabres are Proud to Support
Empower716 Young Entrepreneurs of Color Awards
Congratulations to the Honorees

Congratulations to
The 2026 Empower716 Young Entrepreneurs of Color Honorees



Honoree



Jy'Ahzhannae Taylor

Founder, Blaze Athletics / Blaze
Cheerleading

Jy'Ahzhannae Taylor, founder of Blaze Athletics / Blaze Cheerleading, is a dynamic entrepreneur and youth leader who has created a powerful space for young athletes in Niagara Falls to grow in confidence, discipline, and leadership. A graduate of Niagara University with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Communications, Jy'Ahzhannae built Blaze Athletics from vision, perseverance, and a desire to give young people the kind of support and opportunity she knew they needed. Her nominators described the hard work it took to recruit participants, secure a location, raise funds, and build trust in the community, all while creating a program grounded in leadership, sportsmanship, and integrity.

Blaze Athletics stands out not only as a cheer program, but as a space for personal development, mentorship, travel, teamwork, and exposure to new opportunities. As the only cheerleading program of its kind in inner-city Niagara Falls, Blaze reflects Jy'Ahzhannae's deep commitment to youth empowerment and her ability to turn passion into meaningful community impact. Her leadership is helping young people see more for themselves, believe in their potential, and step confidently into new experiences. Through her work, she is building far more than a program. She is building confidence, character, and a stronger future for the youth she serves.

Honoree



Evan Chisholm

Founder, Evan Cinematix, LLC

Evan Chisholm, founder of Evan Cinematix, LLC, is a rising media entrepreneur and creative strategist who is using digital storytelling to elevate brands, preserve community narratives, and create opportunity for others. A SUNY Erie graduate, Evan has built his business by combining cinematic vision with strategic marketing, helping businesses, nonprofits, and local agencies connect with audiences in meaningful ways. His nominators emphasized not only the quality of his work, but also his commitment to community impact through donated services, cultural storytelling, and partnerships with organizations including the City of Buffalo, the African American Museum, and other community-focused initiatives.

Evan also provides internship opportunities and mentorship to aspiring creatives, using his business as a pathway for hands-on learning and professional development. His work reflects innovation, discipline, and a belief that media can be a tool for empowerment, education, and lasting change. Beyond creating compelling content, Evan is helping shape how stories are told and who gets to tell them. Through his vision and dedication, he is building a business that uplifts both clients and community while inspiring the next generation of storytellers and digital creatives.

Honoree



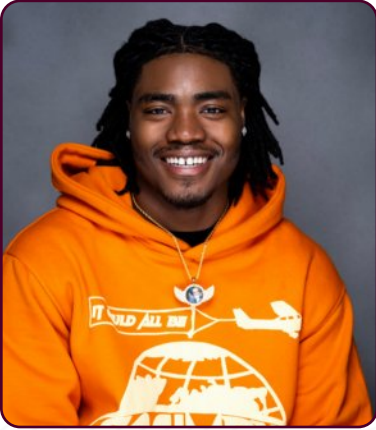
Kendra Davis

Founder, Kendra's Creations

Kendra Davis, founder of Kendra's Creations, is a thoughtful and innovative young entrepreneur whose work is rooted in problem-solving, creativity, and service. At just 14 years old, Kendra is already developing products designed to meet real needs, including a natural pain-relief balm created to provide temporary comfort and support. Her nominator described her as self-motivated, constantly learning, and eager to improve her products through testing, feedback, and advice from experienced business owners.

Beyond her product line, Kendra also serves her community in practical ways, including supporting musicians and mothers through caregiving and service. What sets her apart is her desire to help people and her willingness to keep refining her work until it truly serves others well. Kendra represents the kind of entrepreneurial spirit that begins early, grows through curiosity, and is guided by a sincere desire to make life better for those around her. Her creativity, compassion, and willingness to keep learning reflect the promise of a young entrepreneur who is already turning ideas into meaningful solutions.

Honoree



Kevin Suttles III

Founder, SoSimple Clothing

Kevin Suttles III, founder of SoSimple Clothing, is a determined young entrepreneur who has built his brand through hard work, independence, and a clear sense of style and purpose. Passionate about fashion and committed to creating clothing that is both comfortable and appealing, Kevin researched manufacturers, developed his own images and branding, and worked overtime to fund the growth of his business himself. His supporters described him as someone who wanted to create something that truly represented him and left a lasting impact.

In addition to growing SoSimple Clothing, Kevin works with youth through Child & Family Services and gives back by donating sweatsuits, creating shirts for church events, and organizing community product drops. He listens to his customers, responds to what people want, and continues to evolve his brand with intention. Kevin's story reflects initiative, humility, and a desire to use entrepreneurship as both self-expression and service. Through his brand, he is not only building a business, but also creating a reflection of who he is and what he values. His journey shows how passion, consistency, and community-minded leadership can come together in powerful ways.

Honoree



La'Tia Ferguson

Founder, Styled By T _____

La'Tia Ferguson, founder of Styled By T, is a skilled beauty entrepreneur from Niagara Falls whose journey reflects faith, consistency, and years of dedication to her craft. She began braiding hair at a young age and strengthened her skills through BOCES cosmetology training, practicing relentlessly and building confidence in her talent. Over time, she stepped out on faith, rented her own booth, and built a growing clientele that now includes women and men who travel to experience her work. Her nominators highlighted both her technical ability and her creativity, noting how she used social media to document her journey and grow her brand.

Beyond the chair, La'Tia has also given back through a backpack giveaway for youth and by helping teach braiding techniques to others. With eight years invested in her craft, La'Tia has turned passion into a respected business and continues to represent the drive, hustle, and excellence emerging from Niagara Falls. Her story reflects what can happen when talent is matched with consistency and faith. As she continues to grow Styled By T, La'Tia is not only building a beauty brand, but also inspiring others through her example of dedication, service, and entrepreneurial courage.

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Honorees
CHALLENGER
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Empower716 Young Entrepreneurs of Color Celebrating Our Past Honorees

Young Entrepreneurs of Color Honorees

Since 2021, the Empower716 Young Entrepreneurs of Color Awards have celebrated inspiring young entrepreneurs who have made significant contributions to their communities through creativity, leadership, and business success. These honorees represent the future of entrepreneurship in Western New York, and we are proud to acknowledge their achievements here.



Lynda Brundige
Marie Enterprise LLC



Anita Janice Collins
Saints and Friends, LLC



Anaiyah Marshall
Ni's DreamLab



George Wiley V
Spray Lab



Elias Torres
Eli Cutz



Eman Wajed
Buffalo Fashion
Runway



Jaden Martin
Jaden's Journey



Isaiah Gethers
IG Entertainment



Mekhi Edwards
Capture Me Visuals



Paulae Pope
UND



Rhalon Bragg
Legacy Tour



Avion Harris
Avion's Four Season
Service

Empower716 Young Entrepreneurs of Color Celebrating Our Past Honorees



Brenton White
Building with BJ



Chad Williams
dooProcess



Da'monique Hicks
Nailed.By.Nique



Donavon Armprester
Munchiez



Donte Naylor
Kingofausome



Eric Humphrey
EJ's Vending & More



Essence Shipp
Essence Lazae Beauty



Jada Ivey
XII XXI



Jaeona Buchanan
Nails by Jaeona



Josiah Ramirez
Holy Gains



Kayson T. Hill
Motivation to Succeed
Podcast



Khalil Carr
Everything Wunders
LLC



Kimorra Owens
Kim's Crystals &
Beyond



Laurice Walker
La'Mo Beauty & Spa



Legend Lewis
M.A.D.E by A Legend



LeMoyné Hill
Great4Life

Empower716 Young Entrepreneurs of Color Celebrating Our Past Honorees



**Madison Nicole
Bryant-Wagstaff**
Madison's Fabulous
Creations



Machi Gibbs
Brytelife



Mia Rodwell
Miracles in Autism



**Mya-Isabella
Samuel**
Bella's Study Buddies



Noah Fulton
Why Not Dream LLC



Olivia Brooks
Libby's Lemonade
Stand



Riya Michelle
Cocoa Cosmetics



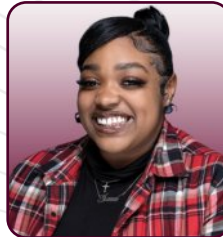
Roderick Brown
Make it A Movie
Entertainment



Shaniya-Kay Dix
SugaLips by
Shaniya-Kay



Stephen Forman Jr.
Paulie!



Teah Stevens
Mia Mon Amour

Empower716 Young Entrepreneurs of Color Event Coordinator



Madeline Little
The Abstract Way Marketing Consultancy

Empower716 Planning Committee

We gratefully acknowledge the dedicated members of the Empower716 Young Entrepreneurs of Color Initiative Planning Committee, whose leadership, creativity, and commitment continue to help bring this program and celebration to life. Their support behind the scenes strengthens the mission of Empower716 and reflects a shared belief in the power, promise, and potential of young entrepreneurs of color.

Committee Members



Mark Overall



Jada Ivey



Desiree Parker



Candice Thompson



Kenya David



Shanna Smith



Talisa King



Deana Stevenson



Shara Armprester

Emeritus Committee Members



Stephanie W.
Cowart



Tanika Shedrick

Thank You

- *Chelsea Lovell*
- *Shelden Gibbs*
- *Anita Fraiser*
- *Blanc Photographie*
- *Tamara Zantell*
- *Zandra A. Cunningham*
- *LMC Photo LLC*
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- *Empower716 Planning Committee*
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- *Anya Rodriguez*
- *Seneca One Tower*
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- *Sharpe Shooter Images LLC*
- *2026 Pitch Contest Judges*
- *Blue Images Photos LLC*
- *Social Yeah*
- *Villa Maria College*
- *True Community Development Corporation*
- *RL Experience, LLC Team*
- *The Exchange at Beverly Gray*
- *David Rust*
- *Thomas Beecher Jr.*

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the esteemed elected officials at the local, county, state, and federal levels for their invaluable support and presence. We also offer sincere thanks to all collaborative partners, parents, families, past honorees, and all other photographers who helped capture this event. Your contributions, seen or unseen, helped make this event a success. Your support fuels the future of Empower716 and the young entrepreneurs we celebrate.



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and opportunities they need to succeed."

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