

# **nfte!** SOUTH REGION YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP CHALLENGE

## **The Road to Nationals** **June 2, 2022**

Presented by EY and  
University of North Texas at Dallas

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# Welcome

Hello NFTE Students, Teachers, Volunteers, Staff and Supporters,

Thank you for joining us for NFTE South's Annual Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge!

NFTE activates the entrepreneurial mindset and builds startup skills in youth from under-resourced communities to ensure their success and to create a more vibrant society. The team at NFTE South has done a fantastic job this year, delivering the transformative power of entrepreneurship to over 4,000 students across the region! We continue to be one of the fastest growing regions in the nation and expect to reach 8,000 students per year in NFTE South by 2025.

Tonight, we are proud to showcase the top three NFTE South teams and celebrate all our NFTE students across Texas. The teams that will be presenting have been selected from 115 teams across 14 schools, and we will represent our region in the National Competition being held in New York City. To have made it this far is a remarkable accomplishment, so I want to congratulate all presenting teams. Your clarity of vision, and your confidence in presenting your businesses, is a demonstration of your commitment to the bright future you are creating for yourselves. We are thrilled to be celebrating YOU tonight and we will be cheering you on as you continue to the National Competition.

To all of our guests, please get to know our students who are presenting tonight. Visit the alumni booths. Strike up a conversation with our teachers and volunteers who bring this program to life throughout the school year.

We could not do what we do without the support of our NFTE community. Thank you to our NFTE teachers, administrators and volunteers, mentors, judges, and guest speakers. It is because of their generosity of time, energy, and expertise that our students continue to thrive in the NFTE curriculum. We would also like to express our thanks to the NFTE South Advisory Board, whose leadership and commitment to NFTE endure year after year.

If you are not already, we encourage you to get involved. Volunteer, serve as a mentor or judge, and consider donating to support the NFTE program. Join us as we help students realize that they can create their own futures, maximize their potential, and become whatever they choose for themselves. We are activating the entrepreneurial mindset of the next generation!

Thank you for joining us tonight and thank you for believing in NFTE.

Adrienne Palmer  
NFTE South Advisory Board Chair

# Agenda

## NFTE South Youth Entrepreneurship Showcase

Thursday, June 2, 2022

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Welcome</b>                           | The Honorable Michael Williams, <b>UNT Dallas</b><br>Nikki Miller Arledge, <b>Development Director, NFTE South</b>  |
| <b>VIP Panelists</b>                     | Russell Hayward, <b>EtiraRx, Inc.</b><br>Cassandra McKinney, <b>Comerica Bank</b><br>Valery Perez, <b>EY and NFTE Class of 2010</b>   |
| <b>Student Finalists</b>                 | <b>Reheats</b> - <i>Thomas Vo – Nimitz High School</i><br><b>ToolTooth</b> - <i>James Umoeka – Grand Prairie School for the Highly Gifted</i><br><b>TKicks</b> - <i>Alberto Arroyo – Molina High School, Career Institute South</i> |
| <b>Entrepreneur 2 Acknowledgements</b>   |   |
| <b>Volunteer of the Year Awards</b>      | Trish McKeel, <b>Regional Director, NFTE South</b><br>Nikki Miller Arledge, <b>Development Director, NFTE South</b>   |
| <b>EY Young Entrepreneur of the Year</b> | Valery Perez, <b>EY</b>   |
| <b>Closing</b>                           | Dr. J. D. LaRock, <b>President &amp; CEO, NFTE</b>  |



## Whose tomorrow will you change today?

We are committed to helping underserved students develop the entrepreneurial mindsets and skills needed to thrive in the working world of tomorrow.

Learn more at [ey.com/us/cr](https://ey.com/us/cr)

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The better the question. The better the answer.  
The better the world works.

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# Master of Ceremonies

## The Honorable Michael Williams

Distinguished Leader-In-Residence

*University of North Texas at Dallas*

Michael Williams has served Texas and the nation in a remarkable and spirited public service career spanning more than 40 years that encompasses significant contributions, ranging from serving as a federal prosecutor with the US Department of Justice, to heading the Office of Civil Rights at the US Department of Education, to leading two Texas state agencies, all while breaking racial barriers and providing insightful leadership and thoughtful perspective.

Williams' career has placed him squarely in the role of a number of groundbreaking firsts. He currently is the inaugural Distinguished Leader in Residence at the University of North Texas at Dallas. From 2012-2016, he became the only black commissioner of the Texas Education Agency, overseeing pre-kindergarten through high school education for more than five million students. And from 1999 - 2011 Williams became the only black American in Texas history to be elected to the Executive Branch of the Texas state government as the Texas Railroad Commissioner (Oil and Gas).

The son of retired, dedicated public school teachers, Williams narrates children's books, is a past Honorary State Chairman of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Texas and Chairman of the Texas Juvenile Probation Commission. He has established endowed scholarships at the University of North Texas at Dallas and his beloved alma mater, the University of Southern California, where he earned a Bachelor's, Master's and law degree.

Williams and his best friend, Donna, have been married 37 years.



# Student Finalists

## **Reheats** - **Thomas Vo** – *Nimitz High School*

Reheats provides the solution for construction workers working in the cold through electric heated gloves. The gloves fix the problem of bulkiness, grip, and the cold seeping through. Reheats electrical heated gloves have 3 modes of heat, grip on the palm all the way to the fingers of the gloves, and are made out of cotton and nylon to prevent the cold from seeping through and to regulate the heat from the electric padding.

## **ToolTooth** - **James Umoeka** – *Grand Prairie School for the Highly Gifted*

Throughout the last 150 years global warming has become a bigger problem and the dentistry industry has contributed to this problem exponentially. ToolTooth is a tub made out of PCL polyester, a biodegradable synthetic partially-crystalline polyester, filled with non-toxic, environmentally friendly toothpaste and accompanied by a PCL polyester finger glove with all around bristles for an eco-conscious tooth cleaning experience.

## **TKicks** - **Alberto Arroyo** – *Molina High School, Career Institute South*

TKicks is an online platform for sneaker enthusiasts that delivers great customer service by ensuring that our customers have confidence in knowing that they can buy, authenticate, sell, trade, and connect with other people on a safe, inexpensive, and dependable platform.

Proud to do our part to help bright minds achieve bright futures.

NFTE is dedicated to empowering students and giving them a chance at a brighter future.

An idea we can all get behind.

At Citi, we commend NFTE on their efforts and are pleased to support their invaluable work.

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# VIP Panel

## **Russell Hayward**

**CEO**

*EtiraRx, Inc.*

Russell is a serial entrepreneur with a background in Marketing and Business development having started and successfully exited multiple companies in different business sectors over his 43-year career both in his native Australia and in the US. With a wide range of experiences in business concept development, entertainment management and philanthropic development work, Russell has relied upon innovation to drive his companies to success and to stand out from the crowd. His last venture, the conception and development of the Ascension coffee brand here in North Texas, was a prime example of seeing the opportunity to develop a new breed of coffee café in what was then a stagnant monopolized market to excite the market and investors alike.

Always looking for a new challenge, Russell brings a big picture approach to his new business, the leadership at oncology biotech start-up EtiraRx, Inc. As a business strategist, developer and driver, he is leading the EtiraRx team forward through clinical trials of their breakthrough first-in-class drug to treat therapy resistant cancers.



# VIP Panel, *continued*

## Cassandra M. McKinney

**Executive Vice President and Executive Director,  
Retail Bank**

*Comerica Bank*

Cassandra McKinney drives growth and provides for excellent customer and colleague experiences and effective business processes at Comerica. Through strategic business objectives and transformational leadership, she strives to deliver the Comerica Promise and create lifelong customer relationships.



As a member of Comerica Bank’s Management Executive Committee, she is accountable for the Consumer and Small Business Banking lines of business and Retail Channel Services, Retail Delivery and Strategic Services, Customer Contact Center, Comerica Loan Center, and Front-Line Risk Management. Cassandra joined Comerica in 2005 as SVP, Retail Director of Product and Sales Management. She became SVP, Director of Retail Operations in 2011 and was named SVP, National Director of Retail Delivery and Strategic Services in 2016.

Cassandra is a change agent effective in driving innovation, revenue, efficiency and risk mitigation, with more than three decades of experience in financial services, sales management and technology disciplines across several industries. Prior to Comerica, Cassandra held various roles with Bank of America, leading key lines of business as well as providing strategic planning and technical support. She started her career at IBM. Cassandra is a graduate of Chemical Engineering from Columbia University, and Chemistry from Dillard University. Professional certifications include School of Retail Bank Management and Six Sigma Greenbelt.

Cassandra is a recognized industry leader, currently sitting on the board of the Consumer Bankers Association where she serves on the Education Committee. Cassandra is an advocate of diversity and people development – recognizing the value in leading through people. She’s sponsored numerous leadership and diversity efforts.

A dedicated community leader, McKinney currently serves on the Booker T Washington Advisor Board’s President’s Council and has served as Chair of the United Way of Metropolitan Dallas’ Women of Tocqueville Committee and of the General Campaign for Comerica Bank. She is a member of The Links, Inc. where she’s served in many leadership capacities including chapter president. Cassandra and her husband reside in Las Colinas, TX and enjoy two adult children, daughter-in-law and grandson.

## Valery Perez

**Senior Business Advisor**

*EY*

Valery enrolled in a NFTE class when she was a freshman in high school (NFTE class of 2010). She learned the basics of entrepreneurship and she came up with an idea for a unique balloon business: her balloons contained a natural rose inside them and were intended to be given as a romantic gift. She named her business Rosealloon and in time expanded her product line to include other surprising gifts inside a balloon. When asked how these things get inside the balloon, she exclaims, “That’s the magic!”

Although she was pleased to place second in a regional business plan and pitch competition, she could not participate in nationals due to personal reasons. However, she applied the lessons she learned to develop her business and that turned out to be worth a lot more than a trip to New York. When her father lost his job and could not make ends meet, he immersed himself in his daughter’s business and started selling Valery’s unique balloon creations himself. That helped pay the rent and saw the family through some very difficult times.

Valery says that she is forever grateful to NFTE for what it has done for her and for her family. “NFTE didn’t leave me alone. I got ongoing mentorship and guidance,” she recalls. As she continued her business, she won EY’s Youth Entrepreneur of Year award. She also used her NFTE experience on her college and scholarship applications — and was accepted to UNT Dallas with a \$25,000 scholarship. In 2019 she graduated from UNT Dallas with her Bachelor’s degree in Finance, becoming the first in her family to graduate college.

Today, she is a Senior business advisor at EY and continues to give back to NFTE, saying that her goal is to inspire other students who come from low-income communities to think with an entrepreneurial mindset and to aim high. She believes everything is possible for those who are willing to work hard for their dreams.



# NFTE South Advisory Board

**Adrienne Palmer** (Chair), Entrepreneur

**John Antos**, Value Creation Group, Inc.

**Murray Covens**, North Texas Nonprofit Resources

**Bill Kling**, Moonlight Ranch Winery

**Lisette Mendez**, AT&T Finance

**Natalia Mundo**, EY Personal Finance

**Steven Neuner**, Alkali - Benefits and Insurance Services

**Aamir Noorani**, United Smart Tech

**Joseph Picken**, Joseph Picken & Associates

# Volunteers of the Year

We are immensely grateful to all of our volunteers. This year, we are especially proud to celebrate our **Individual Volunteer of the Year, Adrienne Palmer**. Since 2008, Adrienne has been a regular volunteer and an advocate for NFTE to the Entrepreneur's Organization in Dallas, as well as a classroom speaker, coach and mentor to our young learners. Having joined the Advisory Board in 2017 and become its chair in 2019, Adrienne has shepherded NFTE South (formerly North Texas) through staff changes, local crises, and the past two years of pandemic, social unrest, and general unease. She continues to be a fiercely energetic and loyal supporter of all that NFTE does and we are honored to recognize her tonight.

And congratulations to our **Corporate Volunteer of the Year, Comerica Bank**. Comerica has been especially supportive during these past few years, providing special breakout sessions on financial literacy to students preparing for both this year's and last year's Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge. This year the led sessions on the Four C's of Credit, helping students learn all about credit scores and how they work. Thanks to Comerica for being such great partners, at to LaToya Rowell for accepting the award on their behalf!

## Get Involved

### Learn more about NFTE

Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE)'s mission is to activate the entrepreneurial mindset and build start-up skills in youth from under-resourced communities to ensure their success and to create a more vibrant society. As a global nonprofit organization, NFTE provides high-quality entrepreneurship education to middle and high school students from under-resourced communities, as well as programs for college students and adults. NFTE reaches 50,000+ students annually in 25 states across the U.S. and offers programs in 20 additional countries. We have educated more than a million students through in-school, out-of-school, college, and summer camp programs, offered in person and online. To learn more about how we are promoting inclusive capitalism and building the next generation of diverse entrepreneurs, visit [www.nfte.com](http://www.nfte.com).

**[JOIN OUR VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY! CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)**



We are proud to support the next generation of innovators in their pursuits to achieving their entrepreneurial dreams!

MARY KAY

**nfte!**  
Network for Teaching  
Entrepreneurship

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# NFTE National Supporters

Thanks to the commitment of NFTE's national donors, an increasing number of young people are prepared with the entrepreneurial mindset and startup skills required to succeed in today's innovation economy.

## Entrepreneurial Leaders (\$1,000,000+)



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## Equity Investors (\$500,000+)



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