



**nfte!**

**Midwest**

# **YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP CHALLENGE 2024**



**TUESDAY,  
28 MAY**



**06:00 PM -  
09:00 PM**



**Venue West  
221 N. Paulina Street  
Chicago IL, 60612**

*Presented by*



# Welcome

Welcome! The Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE)'s mission is to ignite the entrepreneurial mindset with unique learning experiences that empower all students to own their futures. NFTE Midwest is focused on fueling the future for the next generation of entrepreneurs. As we work to expand our mission across the region, it is critically important for us to build the next generation of thinkers, makers, and problem solvers. Our team has worked together with our educators, students, coaches, and partners, to make sure our entrepreneurial learners will continue to build their skills and become our future workforce.

This year NFTE was able to reach almost 6,000 students throughout the Midwest with our innovative, virtual hands-on curriculum, equipping them with the mindset necessary to prepare them for success in school, college, and the workforce. Our NFTE Midwest students have been working diligently throughout the school year to develop, refine, and perfect their businesses. Throughout this year, we have had over 300 volunteers providing over 1,000 hours of coaching and mentorship to our students to ensure they are able to not only succeed in their NFTE classrooms, but in their future careers and academic pursuits.

On May 9th and 16th, at our quarterfinal and semifinal rounds of the regional youth entrepreneurship challenge, almost 90 businesses were presented to judges. Seven young entrepreneurs earned a spot in NFTE's National Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge, held in New York City in October, where they will compete against finalists from all over the country. The winner of the national competition will receive additional prize money and compete in the NFTE World Challenge.

We are excited to present tonight's youth entrepreneurs, who will be vying for additional seed money for their respective businesses.

We want to take a moment to recognize our educators for their tireless dedication to our students throughout this year, and every year. We also want to thank our volunteer coaches and corporate and individual partners who have continued to support NFTE's work despite the ever-changing economy. We could not accomplish all we do without the support of all of our partners. And last but definitely not least, we congratulate all of today's competitors for all the hard work and perseverance it has taken to get to the NFTE Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge Regional Finals. We are so proud of all of you!

With thanks,

Dr. Scott Nasatir, Executive Director  
Deandre Allen, Lead Program Associate  
Vanee Brown, Volunteer Coordinator  
Lauren Patrick, Lead Program Associate  
Tiana Schlottman, Development Manager

# Agenda



## NFTE Midwest Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge Tuesday, May 28, 2024

- Emcee** Nas'jha Lucas, **NFTE Class of 2022**
- Special Guest** William Hightower, **Cuvée Concierge**
- Judges** Autumn Harmon, **Express Yourself Studio, NFTE 2022**  
Leopoldo Horle, **Ingredion, Inc.**  
Tim Liston, **EY**  
Dave Richards, **Slalom Chicago**  
Renita Young, **Schwab Network**
- Student Finalists** **Ty's Tech Repair** - Tywon Barber - Beloit Memorial H. S.  
**DigiPlan** - Ariana Whitaker - Thornwood High School  
**Lights On** - Raahi Pachbhai - St. Louis Science Center
- Fast-Pitch Competition** Lauren Patrick, **NFTE Midwest**
- Volunteer Awards** Dr. Scott Nasatir, **Executive Director, NFTE Midwest**  
*presented to:*  
**Laura Kline, EY**  
**Byline Bank**
- Guest Speakers** Dave and Lisa Zimmer, **Fleet Feet Chicago**
- Winner Announcements and Closing**  
Dr. J. D. LaRock, **President & CEO, NFTE**



# 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.

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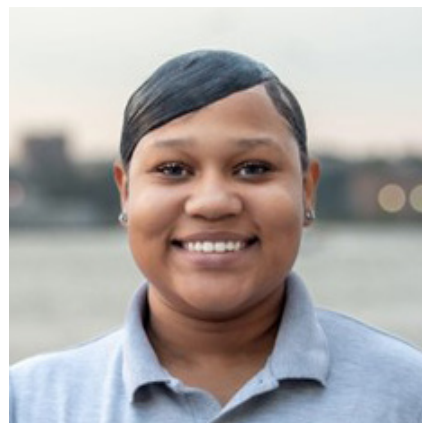
Building a better  
working world

# Master of Ceremonies

## Nas'jha Lucas

**Biology Student**

*NFTE Class of 2022*



Nas'jha Lucas is a graduate of the Perspectives Leadership Academy currently attending Southern Illinois University and about to transfer to Hampton University to work toward her degree in Biology. She works as a customer survival host at Walmart and also as a pharmacy technician at a Hospital, where she has the great opportunity to learn about medicine and saving others' lives.

In high school, Nas'jha and her friend Triston developed a business idea for the NTC Reusable Pregnancy Test because they wanted to create something that helps women in a unique way, but also helps the planet. NTC features a reusable test applicator and biodegradable, flushable strips for discreet testing. Nas'jha and Triston were among the teams representing NFTE Midwest at the National Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge in New York City in 2022. Her ultimate aim is to continue developing that business, which inspires her to concentrate in Biology with a minor in Business and Finance.

After her Junior Year of high school, Nas'jha served as a NFTE Fellow and had an opportunity to intern at EY, both experiences which have helped her further focus her future goals.



*Nas'jha & Triston accepting applause in 2022 (c) Carasco Photography*

# Guest Speakers

## **William Hightower** **Wine Concierge Director** *Cuvée Concierge*

William Hightower is the wine concierge director for Cuvée Concierge. His passion for connecting people and fine wine has fueled the concept for Cuvée Concierge. William is WSET qualified (Wine & Spirits Education Trust) and has extensive knowledge about all things wine.



He loves sharing what he has learned with wine lovers. His studies include expertise with all wine regions. His focus is bridging the gap between wine makers and consumers. He creates experiential wine events where he not only promotes brands that align with his values, but educates consumers about wine and it's culture. The core of his vision is bringing people together using wine as the platform. His connections allow rare wines to be placed into the hands of his clients. William believes that if he shares the truth about wine, in a setting creating memorable experiences, it will propel Cuvée Concierge forward to impact the wine industry for years to come!



## Dave Zimmer

**Owner & CEO**

*Fleet Feet Chicago*



## Lisa Zimmer

**Owner**

*Fleet Feet Chicago*



In 1996 Dave Zimmer came to his wife Lisa with an idea to open up a running store. The local couple with a huge passion for running. Neither had previous retail experience (Dave was in finance, Lisa in marketing), but they understood the transformational power of lacing-up a pair of sneakers.

Both quit their jobs to pursue a shared passion, soon opening Chicago's first Fleet Feet storefront on North Avenue. Today, Fleet Feet Chicago has grown to eight stores across Chicagoland, and is the highest grossing franchise in the 290-store collection. Their impact on the local running community is unparalleled, evident by the Zimmers' personal philosophy they infuse in every customer touchpoint.

The Zimmers also run Chicago Endurance Sports Training, a run/tri training program. They live, work, run and thrive in their local communities along with their 2 children who are 18 and 16.

"We live by a simple belief: Running Changes Everything," says Dave Zimmer. "It's more than a motto, it's something we live every day and believe wholeheartedly. From the customers and communities we serve, to the organizations we are then able to support, running has the power to change lives."





## Let's build better tomorrows, *together.*

Slalom is proud to sponsor NFTE in their mission to help young entrepreneurs take initiative and innovate in the face of challenges. Together, with a fiercely human approach, we can dream bigger, move faster, and build better tomorrows for all.

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Ingredion is proud to support the

## **Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship**

### Midwest Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge

We bring people, nature, and technology  
together to *make life better.*



# Judges

## Autumn Harmon

Jackson State University

Express Yourself Studio

*NFTE Class of 2022*

Autumn Harmon is an incoming sophomore at Jackson State University in Jackson, Mississippi. After winning the NFTE Midwest Regional Finals in 2022, she went on to compete in the National Challenge in NYC. Her school district honored her with a District 205 Medal of Honor in June 2022. Autumn also received the South Suburban Small Business Association's 2022 Annual Summit Award, and won second place for the WDB Marketing L.E.G.A.C.Y Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award. She was also the youngest panelist to speak at the She Owns It, She Biz Conference as well as winning second place in Jackson State University College of Business Pitch Competition. Autumn's Express Yourself Studio was created to provide a safe space for children, teens, and young adults to use dancing and singing as an artistic emotional outlet, allowing those with mental stress to be happy and express themselves. She continues to work to attract customers and market her business to the world.



*Amber presents in 2022 (c) Carasco Photography*

## Leopoldo Horle

VP and GM of Food and Industrial Ingredients

*Ingredion, Inc.*

Leopoldo is responsible for the profitability and strategic direction of the critical segment of Ingredion business he manages.

He has been with Ingredion for 31 years and has held roles of increasing responsibility in Manufacturing, Engineering, Sales, Marketing and Strategy areas. Leo has over a decade of experience in general management positions being served as President in several Ingredion affiliates as Argentina, Brazil and Mexico. In 2022, during his tenure in Mexico, he also served as the President of American Chamber – Chapter Guadalajara.

Leo has a Chemical Engineering degree from Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro and BA specializations at Universidade de Sao Paulo and Thunderbird School of Global Management.



2023 Challenge fast pitch (c) Carasco Photography

# Judges, *continued*

## Tim Liston

**Corporate Responsibility Leader, US Central**  
**EY**

Tim Liston is the Corporate Responsibility Leader for EY's US Central Region; though he is based in Chicago, he supports philanthropic and community engagement efforts for 31 offices across the Midwest and Southeast.

Over the last 16+ years, Tim's work has spanned corporate and nonprofit work – with experience at historic organizations, such as Big Shoulders Fund, Navy Pier, Old St. Pat's, and WXRT – and has almost always been at the intersection of social impact. In addition to his professional work, Tim serves as an active member of Social Responsibility Chicago, Corporate Coalition of Chicago, and Baumhart Center's mentorship program.

Tim is a Chicago native, who grew up on the southwest side of the city and currently lives with his wife and three children on the northwest side of the city. He loves local music venues, Chicago's restaurant scene, and traveling.





## Dave Richards

General Manager

*Slalom Chicago*

Dave Richards is a seasoned consultant with over 30 years of experience, beginning his career in 1988. Specializing in serving global and multinational retailers, Dave has dedicated most of his professional life to the retail industry. His expertise is deeply rooted in the development of thought leadership and innovative solutions, particularly in the realm of emerging digital technologies. Dave's work has extensively supported advancements in cloud computing, analytics, mobility, security and privacy, and personalization.

As General Manager of Slalom Chicago, Dave is committed to deepening Slalom's presence in the local business and nonprofit communities and to community development. He is passionate about providing outstanding career opportunities and mentorship to local business and technology talent. He aims to elevate Chicago as a city that its residents and people worldwide can admire.



# Judges, *continued*

## Renita Young

Host, *The Wrap*

Senior Markets Correspondent

*Schwab Network*

With stellar multimedia newsgathering skills and her unique style, Renita Young blends traditional journalism with her strong command of social media, using her entrepreneurial spirit to creatively bring the full vision into focus.



Currently, Renita is a Keynote Speaker, Voiceover Artist, Host of *The Wrap* and Senior Markets Correspondent at Schwab Network in Chicago. Formerly, she was a New York-based correspondent for Bloomberg Radio, TV and Quicktake. There, she pioneered the daily Bloomberg Black Business Beat radio show as host, and launched #YourMoneyStory, an Instagram Live interview series sharing the core concepts of wealth building. While at Bloomberg, Renita's 2021 radio feature on the social media influencer pay gap won her the Association for Women in Communications' Clarion Award for Radio Feature and First Place in the Radio Enterprise Reporting category for the Journalists Association of New York Awards. Previously, Renita worked with Reuters where she covered commodities markets and launched #GoldWach. During her career, she's reported for Reuters TV and USA Today on milestone events including President Barack Obama's farewell address and Chicago gun laws. During 2012, Renita took Jet Magazine to the London Olympics by managing its Twitter feed: she also was a BBC TV and Radio contributor. Renita launched her business news reporting career at K24-TV in Nairobi, Kenya's first local 24-hour news network.

An Active National Association of Black Journalists member, Renita co-chaired the Business Journalism Task Force and helped launch the NABJ Entrepreneur Network as Co-chair. She was also a board member for the Chicago Headline Club, the area's branch of the Society of Professional Journalists. Renita has been recognized many times for her stellar work. As a native Chicagoan, Renita holds a Bachelor of Arts in Communication and English from DePaul University and an MS in Broadcast Journalism from Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism, Media, Integrated Marketing Communications.

# Finalist Businesses



## **Ty's Tech Repair** - Tywon Barber - Beloit Memorial High School

Ty's Tech Repair is a tech repair shop where we hire a majority of teenagers as interns so they can learn tech repair skills at a young age. People will come in asking to have their computer repaired or upgraded and a lead technician will walk the interns through the process of the repair/upgrade. People will be able to have simple repairs and builds done, line installing or replacing basic hardware and comprehensive software issues solved as well.

## **DigiPlan** - Ariana Whitaker - Thornwood High School, Chicago

DigiPlan is an app that links with a high school or college student's educational-based learning management system (LMS) platform (ex: Google Classroom). With this student's assignment information, DigiPlan provides a customized schedule based on your assignments, extracurriculars, etc. From there, it'll put you on a plan to limit distractions and procrastination. One way DigiPlan maximizes productivity is by also linking with your Screen Time and shutting down any distracting, overused apps (ex: TikTok). Every time you complete an assignment, it will generate points and those points will eventually add up to a reward.

## **Lights On** - Raahi Pachbhai - St. Louis Science Center

Lights On is a company that focuses on the inclusivity of people with physical disabilities. This company is also a non-profit organization that creates adaptive clothing and prosthetics and also donates to charity. We focus on making sure our products have an excellent quality and are fully adaptive, functional, and durable..

# NFTE Midwest Advisory Board

**Pramit Mehta, (Chair) EY**

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**Sen. Brian Williams, Missouri Senator, 14th District, St. Louis County**

**Kevin Wilson, St. Louis Small Business Empowerment Center**



*2023 Challenge finliasts & judges (c) Carasco Photography*



# 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, Laura Kline**, Managing Director for Assurance Services - Risk Management, EY.



Laura's selection as the Midwest Region's Volunteer of the Year is a testament to her outstanding dedication and selflessness. Laura has consistently and enthusiastically served as a champion for our young entrepreneurs! Not only has she served as an exceptional business coach, but she has done a phenomenal job recruiting and energizing volunteer coaches to mentor our students. She has also gone above and beyond to create meaningful experiences for some of our most underserved communities, including pivoting mid-year to ensure that multiple schools without the technology infrastructure to support a virtual experience, have a highly engaging in-person coaching session.

We are also proud to honor our **Corporate Volunteer of the Year, Byline Bank.**



Byline Bank has been an integral part of NFTE's Emerging Entrepreneurship Program, which provides students with the opportunity to receive mentorship from business professionals through out the school year. Byline always brings their talent, expertise, and enthusiasm to every session. The Byline Bank professionals work diligently with the students to educate and empower them, so they can perfect their business plans. We are very excited to celebrate this exceptional partner!

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



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

Citi Foundation





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NFTE's efforts to help activate  
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through volunteerism. We are  
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## Learn more about NFTE

Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE) ignites the entrepreneurial mindset with unique learning experiences that empower students to own their futures. A global nonprofit founded in 1987, NFTE provides high-quality entrepreneurship education to middle school, high school, and postsecondary students.

NFTE brings the power of entrepreneurship to students, regardless of family income, community resources, special needs, gender identity, race, or ethnicity. NFTE has educated more than a million students, delivering our programs in school, out of school, in-person, online, or through hybrid models. To learn more, visit [www.nfte.com](http://www.nfte.com).



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