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**South**

**YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP  
CHALLENGE 2025**

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At EY, we're proud to support the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship. It's one of the ways we're helping to make our community a better place to work and live. A better and brighter future starts with all of us.

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Shape the future  
with confidence

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

# Agenda

## NFTE South Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge

Friday, May 16, 2025

- Host** Meshell Baker, **Chief Confidence Igniter**  
**Meshell Baker Enterprises, LLC**  
*NFTE South Advisory Board*
- Judges** Melinda A. Chausse, **Comerica Incorporated**  
Lincoln Cohoon, **EY**  
Amari DeFrance, **Dallas ISD, NFTE Class of 2017**  
James McGee, **Southern Dallas Progress Community Development Corporation**  
Kelli Vibert, **Fidelity**
- Finalists** **Lexi's Sweet Treats** - Lexi Hoffman - Henry Longfellow  
Career Exploration Academy  
**JC Productions** - Jonathan Campos - Career Institute North  
**Choose Bake Now** - Kevin Navarro - Nimitz High School  
**LittleLand Living** - J. Cruz Malagon & Raul Torres, Jr. - Price  
Career Institute  
**Child Guardian** - Kamsi Dukes & Aaira Masood - Grand Prairie  
School for the Highly Gifted
- Volunteer Awards and School / Teacher Awards**  
Jenn Lunt, **Lead Program Associate, NFTE South**  
Trish McKeel, **Regional Director, NFTE South**
- Guest Speaker**  
Sienzhi Kouemo  
**TI Leadership Fellow, United Way of Metropolitan Dallas**
- Winner Announcements and Closing**  
Dr. J. D. LaRock, **President & CEO, NFTE**

# Finalist Businesses

**Child Guardian** - Kamsi Dukes & Aira Masood

Grand Prairie School for the Highly Gifted

Our product is a watch that can ping a teacher's phone in situations where problems, including bullying, arise. The watch is worn all day by students in elementary through middle school. Our mission is to help bullied children overcome tough situations through child and teenage years.

**Choose Bake Now** - Kevin Navarro

Nimitz High School

Choose Bake Now is a cake baking service whose main mission is to provide cakes to those that are last minute shoppers and forgetful at times.

**JC Productions** - Jonathan Campos

Career Institute North

JC Productions is a premier drone service offering professional aerial cinematography. We are providing solutions for filmmakers, real estate agents, special event planners, and work for aspiring drone pilots.

**Lexi's Sweet Treats** - Lexi Hoffman

Henry Longfellow Career Exploration Academy

Lexi's homemade gluten free cookies come in many flavors including red velvet, sugar cookie, chocolate chip and brownie batter. Our cookies are tasty and affordable at only \$1 each! 10% of our earnings go to a nonprofit organization that helps homeless people.

**LittleLand Living** - J. Cruz Malagon & Raul Torres, Jr.

Price Career Institute

Little Land Living provides simple, functional, and eco-friendly tiny homes that are affordable, customizable, and family friendly. We help landowners maximize space and offer investors a smart, fast, and friendly opportunity through sustainable living solutions.

# Event Host

**Meshell Baker**

Chief Confidence Igniter

*Meshell Baker Enterprises, LLC*

NFTE South Advisory Board



Meshell Baker is a Sales & Confidence Igniter, Exhilarating Keynote Speaker, and a Confident Living Catalyst offers a unique ability to guide and encourage her audiences and clients to be their best and most authentic self. Her passionate storytelling and enthusiasm is a wonderful blend of theory and practical application inspiring you to calm the voice in your head and tap into your unlimited awesome.

Meshell understands that many founders, business owners, and sales leaders struggle with doubt, stifling their inner critic, and sustaining consistent revenues. She is on a mission to ignite unstoppable confidence in as many people as possible.

Meshell masterfully guides her clients and audiences to capitalize on their current conditions and leverage obstacles as opportunities and reenvision their problems as possibilities. She is renowned for her authentic value-based and no-nonsense approach to selling that inspires more conversations that confidently convert into raving fan clients. Meshell has phenomenal results, accolades, and awards and has compiled an incredible track record of raving recommendations with clients over the past 25+ years.



# Judges

## Melinda A. Chausse

**Senior Executive Vice President and Chief Credit Officer**

*Comerica Incorporated*

Melinda A. Chausse began her career with Comerica in 1988 as a participant in the Commercial Lending Training Program in Michigan, relocated to Texas with the acquisition of Grand Bank in 1989, and held various credit leadership and lending positions from 1988 through 2007, including Chief Credit Officer of the Texas Market and Divisional Credit Administration Officer for Business Banking and Private Banking nationally. In 2007, she served as Manager of Executive Administration reporting to the Chairman and CEO, acting as the primary contact for the office of the CEO during the headquarter relocation.



From 2010 to 2016, she served as Executive Director for Business Banking and was responsible for the development and coordination of all small business banking and Small Business Administration activities nationally, including development and alignment of strategic goals supporting the profitability, risk management and growth objectives of the business. Prior to being named Chief Credit Officer in May of 2020 she served as Executive Vice President, Commercial Underwriting and Credit Support Services, where she was responsible for leading the end-to-end credit transformation efforts for all commercial and private banking lending processes. She is currently serving as executive sponsor of the Comerica Texas Women's Forum, is a member of the United Way's Women of Tocqueville board, and on the board of Girls Inc. of Metropolitan Dallas.

Chausse graduated with a BS in Managerial Economics and Finance from the University of Michigan – Dearborn in December 1987.

She has served on the boards of the Dallas Arboretum and the Dallas Division of the March of Dimes, is a graduate of Leadership Dallas and Center for Creative Leadership's *Leadership at the Peak*.

## Lincoln Cohoon

**Partner/Principal**

**Indirect Tax Services - State and Local Tax**  
*EY*

Lincoln is a Principal in the firm's Indirect (State and Local) Tax Practice, where he leads the Dallas State In-come Tax Practice. He is responsible for supporting the coordination and implementation of indirect and state and local tax projects and services for Dallas and throughout the region. Lincoln is committed to providing exceptional client service through being a connected, responsive and insightful state and local tax advisor. He brings value to his clients by helping to implement best practices and by sharing industry specific knowledge related to the indirect and state and local tax matters for which he assists.



Outside of his day-to-day client commitments, Lincoln serves on EY's Entrepreneur of the Year (EOY) Southwest Advisory Board where he works closely with EY colleagues to ensure exceptional client service is provided to companies within the EOY ecosystem. He serves as a business advisor to numerous companies connecting members within the EOY network to aid companies in understanding and implementing business solutions based on the tax implications of their rapid expansion and continued successes. He is a member of the NFTE South Advisory Board and has also led initiative for the United Way, March of Dimes and the American Heart Association as part of giving back to the local community.

Lincoln is admitted to the Massachusetts Bar, the Michigan Bar, and the Texas Bar. He also is an active member of the American Bar Association, as well as the Dallas Bar Association and State Bar of Texas.

# Judges, continued

## Amari DeFrance

Marketing Coordinator, Workforce Development  
Dallas ISD

NFTE Class of 2017



Amari DeFrance has been part of NFTE since high school at Seagoville P-TECH in Dallas, Texas. She competed in a Regional BizCamp, took on internships, volunteered, and stayed connected through alumni programs. After graduating from P-TECH early college, she earned a Bachelor's Degree in Communications & Digital Media and now works as a Marketing Coordinator for Workforce Development at Dallas ISD, where she helps students access internships, career programs, and opportunities to grow their career opportunities.

Having experienced firsthand how NFTE opened doors for her, she's passionate about paying it forward. She knows how life-changing entrepreneurship education can be and wants to make sure students get the same chance to succeed. Seeing students gain confidence, develop their ideas, and build their futures is what keeps her motivated.



Amari's expo booth at the National Challenge in 2017  
(c) Margaret Fox

## James McGee

President & Chair

Southern Dallas Progress Community Development Corporation



James McGee is a transformative leader with extensive experience in the banking industry. His career has seen him hold pivotal positions with major financial institutions, including Citibank, Caliber Home Loans, and Bank of America.

Additionally, he contributed significantly to a local Community Bank, where he served as a Senior Compliance Officer for four years.

Throughout his professional journey, Mr. McGee has consistently exhibited a robust dedication to fostering equitable investment in marginalized communities. He actively participated in committees and boards of organizations working towards this goal, and he has led community advocacy efforts to advance these initiatives. In recognition of his leadership and commitment, he was elected as President and Chair of the Southern Dallas Progress Community Development Corporation in 2019.

A native Texan, James McGee was raised in the southern sector of Dallas, bringing a deep understanding of and connection to the community he serves.



# Judges, continued

## Kelli Vibert Client Services Leader *Fidelity*

Kelli is a passionate leader with 24 years in financial services, including 17 years at Fidelity. As a Certified Financial Planner™, she excelled in driving sales and building relationships with wealth management teams. Recently, she transitioned to leadership roles in Wealth Management and Brokerage, now overseeing 17 managers and 300 associates in Fidelity Brokerage Client Services. Kelli is committed to forging strong relationships with leaders and associates to help them be the best for their families, colleagues, and clients they serve.

Personally, Kelli and her husband Geoff are newlyweds who enjoy traveling and exploring new cultures, with favorite destinations like Aruba and South Africa. Kelli is also an All-Star Aunt, sports enthusiast, and fitness lover.



*The 2024 judge panel (c) Magaly Abbott*

# Guest Speaker

## Sienzhi Kouemo Texas Instruments (TI) Leadership Fellow *United Way of Metropolitan Dallas*

Sienzhi Kouemo views himself as a global citizen, having been born in Germany, semi-raised in Cameroon, and currently residing in the United States. Sienzhi was part of the second graduating class from The Barack Obama Male Leadership Academy (BOMLA) in Dallas, Texas. It is there that he cultivated his passion for business, advocacy, and service through an internship with AT&T. Sienzhi then made the journey to the northeast to pursue a Bachelor of Science degree in business with a concentration in marketing from Babson College. After graduating during the height of the pandemic, Sienzhi decided to further his education by obtaining his MBA from Southern Methodist University (SMU) with a concentration on strategy and entrepreneurship.

While at SMU, Sienzhi was introduced to the world of philanthropy by a remarkable mentor by the name of Dr. Froswa Booker, and had the opportunity to work closely with various non-profits across North Texas including St. Phillip's School and Community Center, Project Still I Rise, the African American Museum of Dallas, FRIENDS of BOMLA, and Catch Up & Read. Upon graduation, Sienzhi invested his time in better understanding the Dallas community by participating in Engage Dallas, Social Venture Partners Dana Juett Residency program, Marcus Graham Project, and the North Texas Commission Emerging Leaders North Texas.

Today, Sienzhi serves with the United Way of Metropolitan Dallas (UWMD) as part of the Texas Instruments (TI) Founders Leadership Fellows program helping support the organization's policy and advocacy efforts under the leadership of Hillary Evans.



# NFTE South Advisory Board

**Lisette Mendez, (Chair)** AT&T Finance

**Meshell Baker,** Meshell Baker Enterprises, LLC

**Winston Black, III,** Entrepreneur, Senior Life Science Finance Executive

**Lincoln Cohoon,** EY

**Michael Dominguez,** Associated Luxury Hotels International

**Judy Shen Jandera,** CFGI

**Bill Kling,** Benova RX

**Andrew K. Raines,** Comerica Bank

**Evelyn Solorzano,** Bank of America

**James Walsh,** Goldman Sachs

## 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).

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

# 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, Meshell Baker!**



Meshell Baker has quickly woven herself into the tapestry that is NFTE South. Chief Confidence Igniter with Meshell Baker Enterprises, LLC, Michelle first volunteered at Youth Entrepreneurship Summit (YES) events in 2023 and has been a constant and consistent source of support. Meshell has coached students, mentored student entrepreneurs, led workshops, and coached NFTE staff during all-staff meetings. She is eternally positive and always present. In today's environment, consistently showing up (especially in person) is a rarity, but Meshell can always be counted on to not only show up but bring a million-watt smile and infectious personality. She inspires those around her to be their best self and is always there to lend her time and tremendous talents to help make that a reality for all she encounters. Meshell is the incoming South Board Chairperson and NFTE South is excited to see what she brings in the coming years!

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



Fidelity cannot be matched in their eagerness to help grow the experiences of NFTE South students. They are proactive in their approach to volunteerism and are consistently reaching out to ask how they can help. They have coached and mentored students and recently involved NFTE South alumni and teachers in a panel discussion with an audience of over 500 Fidelity employees, both remote and in-person. They are a part of NFTE South's Summer BizCamp and are inviting BizCamp students to the Fidelity Headquarters for business plan coaching and a tour, hosting the camp's business plan pitch competition at the headquarters. In everything they have done and continue to do, they show true dedication to NFTE's mission, and their "how can we help" approach proves their intent in making a difference for NFTE South students.

Your prosperity is  
our purpose.

Santander applauds Network for Teaching  
Entrepreneurship for making a real difference.



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Empowering youth through entrepreneurial education to foster economic resilience and growth in a rapidly changing world.

We are inspired by these students' drive to make a positive impact and excited to see their solutions unfold in the real world. - Zuora

[www.zuora.com](http://www.zuora.com)



# 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.

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We are pleased to support NFTE's efforts to help activate entrepreneurial mindsets through volunteerism.

We are proud of our employee volunteers who contribute their time and skills to advance NFTE's impact.





Network for Teaching  
Entrepreneurship

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