

nfte! YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Showcase

2026

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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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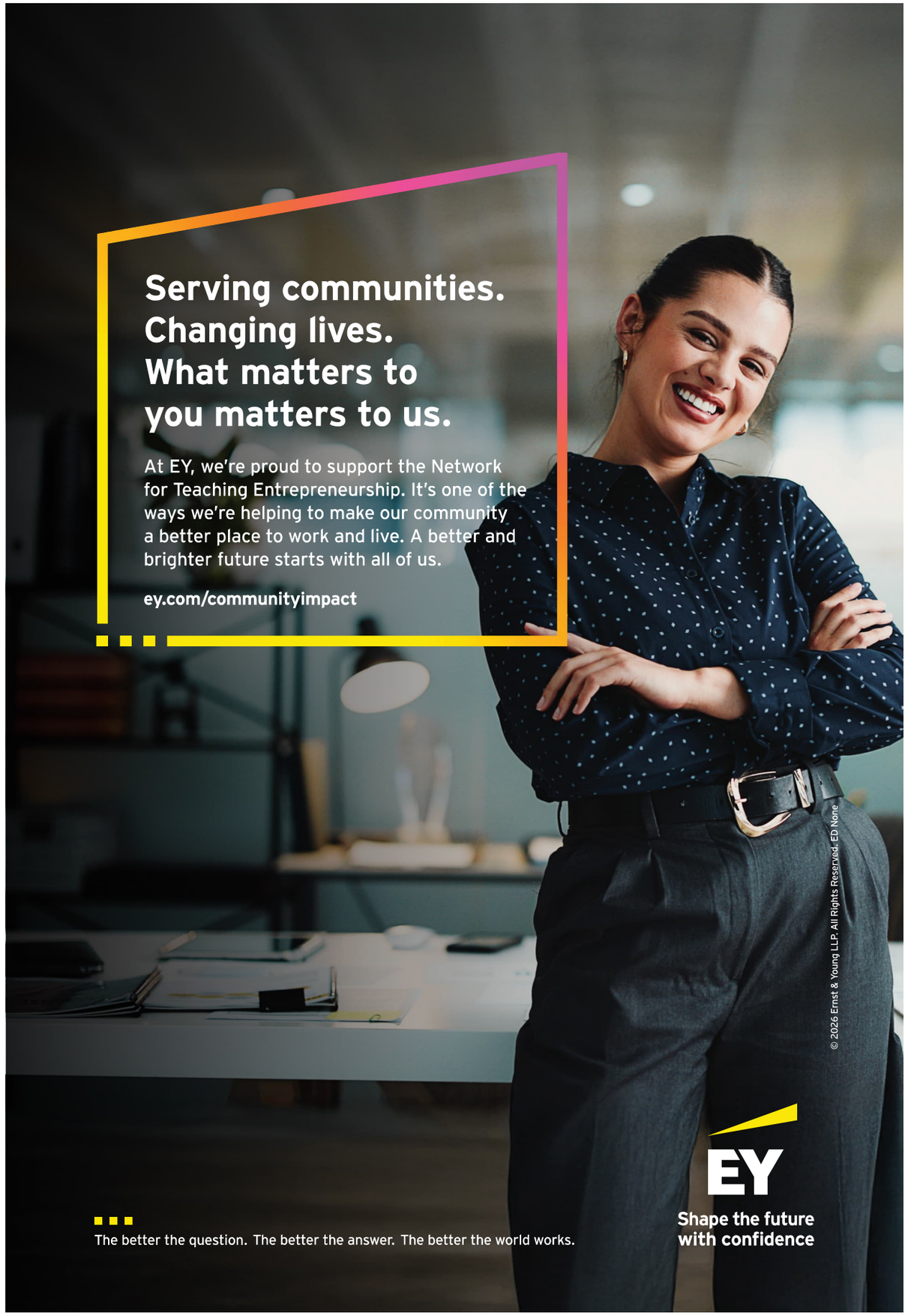
NFTE Showcase Team:

Stephanie Alvarado, Vice President, Product & Learning Experience

Gaby Andrews, Sr. Manager, Special Projects and Global Operationss

Cheyanne Ornelas, World Series of Innovation Program Manager

Suzanne Taylor, Director, Events



Alumna Host - U.S. Challenge



Brandom Guzman
Entrepreneur, Student
NFTE Class of 2025

Brandom Guzman is a college student and entrepreneur whose journey began with Kimberlite AP, an education venture he presented at the 2025 NFTE National Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge after placing second in the Mid-Atlantic competition. Inspired by his own experience with AP exams, he envisioned a platform that combines AI-powered feedback, customizable study guides, and tutoring to help students learn with confidence.

Since starting college, Brandom has earned an MIT certificate through a joint course with City College, where he built skills in customer interviews and iterative feedback. He has served as an undergraduate mentor in the CUNY HIRES high school research program, completed training in financial education, trading, and investing, and attended hackathons as far away as Cornell University and Johns Hopkins University. He arrived at nationals unsure whether his idea was developed enough, only to discover that every competitor was still figuring things out, and that passion matters more than perfection.

Returning as an MC, Brandom looks forward to connecting with the next generation of student entrepreneurs and sharing that entrepreneurship is about believing in an idea, learning from others, and turning it into value.



Brandom networking at the 2025 finals (c) Joseph Spiteri Photography

Judges - U.S. National Challenge



Jan Baker
Founder
Innovashion Group
NFTE Class of 2000

Jan Baker is a speaker, entrepreneur and champion of business, tech, social innovation/impact and design. She is the founder of the Innovashion Group, a consulting and design firm that prioritizes cultural elements in reaching customers through positive, emotional physical, digital/ immersive experiences and services.

Most recently, she served as the COO of Cybernetics Global, a technology firm focused on building next-level solutions in software development, artificial intelligence, managed IT services and tech community development.

Born in The Bronx, NY, with proud Jamaican heritage, Jan is passionate about bridging the digital divide by leveling up minority businesses thus putting them on the path to success. She strategically advises entrepreneurs/ventures helping them navigate the harrowing process of capital readiness and operations. Jan is a NFTE alumna, having participated in the program in 2000 at Harry S. Truman High School in the Bronx. She became a Certified Entrepreneurship Teacher with Babson College in 2004.

In 2023, the Mayor of Washington, D.C. appointed her as a Commissioner for Caribbean Affairs. For the past four years, she has served as a Tenants Association President in northeast Washington, D.C. (315 units) and as an advocate in the affordable housing community.

A true techie at heart, Jan was honored by Technical.ly's ReaLIST 2022, as one of the "Who's Who" that build bridges and grow the innovation economy for entrepreneurship and tech. Jan received her Bachelor's Degree in Business Management from Marymount Manhattan College and a Dual MBA/Master in Technology Management from The University of Maryland, along with several certifications.



Ty Kenworthy
Lead, Business Development and Global Sales Enablement
Pearson - Certiport

Ty Kenworthy leads Business Development and Global Sales Enablement for Pearson's Certiport business. He works with industry and education partners to expand access to professional certifications that help learners demonstrate career ready skills and lay the foundation for their career success. His experience spans business strategy, international partnerships, and workforce skills development. Based in Cambridge, England, Ty is committed to helping young people turn their abilities into meaningful futures. When not pursuing this objective, Ty can be found spending time with his family kayaking the waterways of the English countryside.



Andrea Sparrow
Director, Legal
PayPal

Andrea Sparrow is an innovative, strategic attorney with a primary focus on finance, payments, and product development for small business. Andrea's journey in the legal realm of financial services spans over two decades, marked by a steadfast commitment to regulatory excellence and product knowledge with a focus on navigating the complexities of digital banking, e- commerce and marketing within the fintech space. Andrea thrives on collaboration, championing initiatives and fostering business growth. Andrea is a staunch advocate for pro bono leveraging both traditional legal services and technology to help more people get access to justice. She currently serves as global pro bono lead for PayPal's legal organization. A few organizations where Andrea has provided pro bono services include Start Small Think Big, NY PACE, Black Connect, Veterans Services, NJ LEEP and Junior Achievement. Andrea received a B.B.A. in Finance from Howard University and a J.D. from the University of Texas. Andrea began her legal career at Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom, LLP and previously worked for American Express before joining PayPal.

Judges, cont'd.



Angela Moultrie
Region President
Santander Bank

Angela Moultrie has more than 20 years of experience in financial services and management. As President of Santander's Mid-Atlantic Region, she currently oversees the branch network and business banking which includes 200 retail branches and more than 1100 colleagues. Angela joined Santander in 2015. Prior to joining Santander, she spent 18 years at Citizens Bank as the Retail Director for the Western and Central PA region, responsible for more than 160 retail branches. Angela has also overseen branches in the Eastern Mid-Atlantic and New England Markets. She also held the position of National Sales & Service Director of In-Store Banking and has extensive experience with wealth management and business banking.

Angela was named a 2017 Woman of Distinction by the Philadelphia Business Journal, was among Boston Business Journal's 40 Under 40 recipients and was recognized with the YMCA Black Achievers Award. In 2020, she was recognized by the Philadelphia Business Journal with the Business Minority Award. Angela serves on the board of the Philadelphia Youth Network and NFTE and is passionate about workforce development, youth education, and financial literacy. Her previous service includes membership on the Board of the Homeless Children Education Fund and the Investor Panel for the Philadelphia Center for Advancing Entrepreneurs' Young Entrepreneurs Academy. She also volunteers year-round with the American Youth Football and Cheer program, supporting at-risk youth in the inner city.

Angela received a BA degree in Psychology from Boston College and is a graduate of the Consumer Banking Association's Graduate Management-Retail Banking program. Angela is passionate about the support and development of women. To date, her efforts have led to new opportunities and promotions for more than 45 women. Angela is a driven and dynamic leader who prides herself on creating a winning culture, motivating teams to greatness, and is a true believer in mutual respect in the workplace.

Angela also serves as an Executive Ambassador for the Bank's Black Organization for Leadership and Development (BOLD), one of Santander's Business Resource Groups. In her role, Angela provides strategic direction to efforts to help foster employee engagement, attract and retain the next generation of future leaders, and drive business impact by representing the voice of our customers and community partners.



Michelle Vice
Partner, Business Tax Services
EY

Michelle Vice is a Tax Partner in EY's Business Tax Services practice with 30 years of experience serving multinational clients in the technology, media, entertainment and consumer industries. She advises public and private companies on tax reporting, compliance and planning, as well as global accounting and reporting, and guides them through IPOs, mergers, acquisitions, spin-offs and restructurings.

A former program director for the EY Entrepreneur of the Year New York program and partner advisor for EY's Entrepreneurial Winning Women and Entrepreneur Access Network programs, Michelle is a regular contributor at conferences focused on entrepreneurship and provides thought leadership on business and tax matters for high-growth companies and entrepreneurs.

She holds a BS in Accounting from Purdue University, is a CPA in the state of New York and is a member of the AICPA.



Finals of the 2024 World Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge (c) Alyssa Ringler

Board of Directors

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LaToya Rowell
VP, National Community Affairs Manager
Comerica Bank

Dr. Alandra Washington
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David Wellisch
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Collage Group

Tucker York
Global Head of Goldman Sachs Wealth Management
Goldman Sachs

Michael J. Kacsmar (Chair Emeritus)
Partner
Ernst & Young, LLP

Inclusive Innovator Award

The Inclusive Innovator Award has been made possible through a generous grant from the MetLife Foundation. This award celebrates the spirit of innovation and inclusion that drives social change and economic opportunity for all, and the perseverance, grit and fortitude required to face a significant health challenge or physical disability. Awardees have created an accessibility-focused business idea that aims to improve the lives of people with disabilities, and/or fully embraced the entrepreneurial mindset while facing a significant physical or health-related challenge.



Natasha Aguiar
NFTE Class of 2025
The Extension Emporium
Berlin, MA

The 2026 award recipient, Natasha Aguiar, is a senior at Joseph P. Keefe Regional Technical High School and a student in Matt Warren's NFTE class.

Natasha has always loved styling hair, and she saw in hair extensions the opportunity for something far greater than a boost of confidence. Inspired by her mom, who has thinning hair, and her great aunt, who has alopecia areata, she created The Extension Emporium. The business will offer customizable hair extensions for people with alopecia areata or any form of hair thinning or hair loss, so every customer leaves feeling comfortable, happy, and hopeful. Clients will even be able to personalize their look with fun colors or tinsel.

For Natasha, the mission is personal. Changing her own hair has helped her feel like herself, and she understands how deeply self-image and self-confidence shape mental health. Through NFTE, she learned that anything can be an opportunity when you apply yourself and think creatively, a lesson that has changed the way she sees both entrepreneurship and the world.

A creative spirit, Natasha loves drawing, painting, and designing, and delights in turning an idea into something real.

Volunteers of the Year

Integral to the success of NFTE classroom programming are the generous time and talent offered by our volunteers. Volunteer speakers share their entrepreneurial journeys and insights in the classroom; coaches work one-on-one to support students' work on business plans; field trip hosts demonstrate real-life businesses in action; and judges provide important feedback at competitions.

Each of the volunteers selected by the NFTE regions displays an ongoing dedication to NFTE's mission to make a difference in the lives of our students.

2026 Corporate Volunteer of the Year

A key component of NFTE's programming is the involvement of local volunteers who create bridges from classroom learning to real world application, helping students build their personal and professional networks. This year we honor **EverBank** for their commitment to NFTE students and teachers.

Having been active supporters of NFTE's Southeast, South, and MidAtlantic region since 2020, EverBank was a new partner for the NFTE West Region this past year, and quickly became the most active volunteer partner in the region! They have dedicated themselves completely to our students and teachers, and across the country, NFTE is so grateful for their partnership. By investing their time, talent, and encouragement, they are helping NFTE students build the confidence to overcome any barrier and the skills to thrive in an ever-changing world.

EverBank's sustained, multi-regional support and dedication to student success through hands-on involvement make them a clear standout among our industry partners. Their continued investment of time, talent, and leadership truly exemplifies what this award is all about.

EverBank

2026 Individual Volunteer of the Year

Darius Davie
Co-Founder & Creative Director
Groom Guy



Darius Davie is the Co-Founder and Creative Director of Groom Guy, an award-winning luxury men's grooming brand bringing a fresh perspective to hospitality and wellness. Raised in New York City, Darius discovered his passion for entrepreneurship at age 14 through NFTE's BizCamp program in 2006. That early experience sparked a lifelong interest in business and community/economic development.

In 2020, Darius reintroduced Groom Guy, building relationships with leading hospitality brands including IHG, Salamander Collection, and PGA National Resort. His latest expansion into The Potomac Hotel, part of Marriott's Autograph Collection, continues that momentum.

His achievements have earned him recognition as a 2025 Washington Business Journal 40 Under 40 honoree and one of Modern Luxury's 2025 Men of Influence. Looking ahead to 2027, Groom Guy will expand into the $300-million Four Seasons Residences development in Georgetown, introducing a dedicated salon and Groom Guy Concierge as a preferred service partner.

Beyond business, Darius volunteers his time mentoring and speaking with students at institutions including Ron Brown College Preparatory High School, Ballou High School, Bowie State University, The Universities at Shady Grove, Paul Mitchell School and various barber schools across the region.

Nearly two decades after taking his first NFTE class, Darius continues to champion the entrepreneurial spirit that first inspired him, helping the next generation recognize the possibilities within their own ideas.



Alumna Host - World Challenge



Carlos Morett
Entrepreneur, Actor, and Student
NFTE Class of 2025

Carlos Morett is a Mexican entrepreneur, actor, and first-year student studying physics and computer science at the University of Pennsylvania, where he is a University Scholar and member of the Wharton Undergraduate Entrepeneurship Club.

He founded Tláloc, an AI project developing tools to improve how cities manage their water networks, and represented Mexico with the project at NFTE's World Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge in 2025. He also serves as president of the Mexican chapter of the World Youth Parliament for Water.

Carlos' background includes physics research at the National Autonomous University of Mexico's Institute of Nuclear Sciences and eight years of professional acting in productions distributed by Netflix, Disney+, and MUBI.



Carlos at the 2025 World finals (c) Joseph Spiteri Photography

Thank you, Volunteers

NFTE thanks the wonderful speakers, coaches, semifinal round judges and timer-tabulators for volunteering their time, energy and expertise. The support, feedback and suggestions they provide to our young entrepreneurs is a most generous gift.

Fernanda Abanus, SAP
Jose Abaroa, EY
Serome Akoroda
Teddy Chamorro, Pixel Experiment
Chris Clark, InHarmony Consulting Group
Jordon Clark, Pearson
Donisha Das, Google
Lochan Deshmukh, Saisystems Health
Peter Dodson, EY
Jennifer Dorre, KnitWell Group
Adriana Drysdale, Citi
Mike Evans, Microsoft
Dayana Falquez-Mesa, Citizens Bank
Jake Fisher, Attention
Melanie Fox, Speech Fox
Jayden Freeman*, Wharton Sch.of Business
Alan Fridburg, EY
Mariana Gallucci, EY
Genica (Xin) Gao, WomenELA
Kenya George, BUILD.org
Natalie Greaves, Greaves Comm. Strategies
Peter Harper, Screenmobile of Maplewood
Pepper Hayes, BUILD.org
Albin Joseph, Goldman Sachs
Kadiatou Kaba, Citizens Bank
Hemaxi Kared, Divine Entreprise
Gaeun (Chloe) Kim, EY
Adam Kirsch, West Monroe
Kenneth Kittrell, PayPal
Julia Koester, EY
Devesh Kumar, EY
Sara Leikin
Stuart Leventhal, Lexicon Communications Corp.
Marissa Mack, Webster Bank
Shanmukha Madras, Roche Diagnostics
Manu Mehra, Databricks
Dr. Fang Miao, Executive Coach & Leadership Strategist | Nonprofit Founder & President
Phillip Michael, NYCE
Derek Molina, EY
Theodore Nappo, Citi
Joseph Navi, Citizens Bank
Jude Ng, Citizens Bank
Satyam Pandey, Exelon Corporation
Lynette Pettinicchi, Lynette Nicole PR
Haoran Piao, EY
Jasmine Rodriguez*, Microsoft
Sophia Romee, DiscernIt
Gabriela Romero, Microsoft
Tom Salzer, Retired
Genevieve Santos-Bann*, Entrepreneur
Serhii Shadrin, Trendly
Sam Shear, YES Hearing
Jessica Sinclair, Sinclair Master of Ceremonies Inc.
Stephen Smith, Microsoft
Artem Soundelzon, INOVA MJD Inc.
Grace Starcher, Santander
Judy Stewart, Creative Sense, Inc.
Esperanza Straughter, Citizens Bank
Victoria Vanunu, Citi
Nadine Wilson, Citizens Bank
Amanda Wiss, Urban Clarity
Eileen Wolkstein, Self
Alexis Zhao, Valley Bank

** = NFTE Alumni - List incomplete at time of printing*

Judges - World Challenge



Suzanne Brume
Principal / Partner, Consulting
EY

Suzanne Brume is a principal with a proven history of success in working with Fortune 1000 companies and startups to develop and execute on Quality and Compliance, organizational design and operational strategies. She has extensive experience leading high-energy, fast-paced international teams to improve processes, implement excellence in managing project portfolios, and integrate operations within mergers, acquisitions and divestitures. Prior to EY, Suzanne worked with high-growth startups to develop growth strategies and operational excellence to support growth. She has years of experience working in the pharmaceutical and biotech industries in strategic risk transformation opportunities, especially in GxP (GMP, GCP, GLP) processes.



Rachel Itwaru
Global Lead, Nonprofit and Skilling Partnerships
Adobe

Rachel Itwaru is the global lead for nonprofit and skilling partnerships at Adobe, where she directs strategic grantmaking for the Corporate Social Responsibility team's Digital Academy initiative, helping prepare young people around the world for the future of work through creative tools. With more than a decade of experience at the intersection of social impact, operations, and technology, she has worked across early-stage startups and Fortune 500 companies, including on the philanthropy teams at BlackRock and Salesforce, where she designed and managed the processes and partnerships behind diverse, thoughtfully structured grantmaking programs. Rachel holds a BA in Anthropology from Harvard University and an MBA from NYU Stern School of Business, with a specialization in sustainable business.

World Challenge Judges



Molly Heffernan

VP, Marketing
Tory Burch Foundation

Molly Heffernan is Vice President of Marketing at the Tory Burch Foundation, where she leads marketing and communications, shaping the brand and storytelling behind some of the organization's most visible initiatives. She has helped advance the Foundation's goal to generate $1 billion in economic impact by 2030 through women-owned businesses, launched the inaugural Founders Award, and built platforms for growth and engagement, including ToryBurchFoundation.org, the Fellows Program, and the Business Webinar Program in partnership with Bank of America. Her work has elevated the Foundation's profile, strengthened its positioning, and deepened its connection to entrepreneurs nationwide.

Earlier in her career, Molly collaborated with Ogilvy on PSA campaigns supporting injured veterans and led fundraising event initiatives for North America's largest YMCA. Across sectors, her work has focused on building brands, expanding reach, and translating mission into meaningful community engagement.

She holds a BA from Elon University and an MPA from New York University's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service. She lives outside New York City with her husband and enjoys hiking and gardening.



Laeticia Mbog

Head of B2B Product & Partner Marketing
PayPal

Laeticia Mbog has spent 15 years building marketing engines that grow businesses, from zero-to-one market launches to global platforms generating billions in revenue. Today, she is Head of B2B Product & Partner Marketing at PayPal, where she leads a team of 20 marketers driving growth across PayPal's global business platform.

Her career spans the US and Europe and some of the world's best-known brands in fintech, payments and technology. At Square, Laeticia was the company's first international product marketer, building the function from the ground up and launching the business in European markets. She later led global product marketing for Square's retail, services and beauty solutions. Before fintech, she drove category-leading growth for Samsung and Sony across Europe.

Known for turning complex products into compelling stories and strategies that drive business results, Laeticia brings both a strategic and commercial lens to her work. She holds an MSc from ESSEC Business School and is an alumna of the McKinsey Black Executive Leadership Program.

World Challenge Judges



LaToya Rowell

VP, Corporate Responsibility Manager
Fifth Third Bank

LaToya Rowell serves as vice president and corporate responsibility manager for Fifth Third Bank, where she leads signature programs, financial education, enterprise community engagement and colleague volunteerism. Her work advances financial empowerment and community impact. Following the full integration of Fifth Third and Comerica, Rowell helped transition legacy volunteer programs, community partnerships and engagement practices into Fifth Third's broader corporate responsibility strategy. She now develops scalable volunteer opportunities, strengthens nonprofit and stakeholder relationships, and supports initiatives that expand entrepreneurship and economic opportunity across the bank's footprint.

Since 2006, Rowell has advanced through roles at Comerica and Fifth Third spanning business affairs, corporate contributions, volunteerism and community affairs. She has led community initiatives and partnerships, supported Business Resource Groups, shaped corporate responsibility strategies, and connected colleagues with financial education and service opportunities. In April 2024, Rowell joined the NFTE national board of directors, where she continues to champion youth entrepreneurship and the next generation of business leaders.

During her tenure, the company earned Civic 50 honoree status from Points of Light in 2024 and 2025, recognizing it among the nation's most community-minded companies. Junior Achievement of Dallas named Rowell its 2024 Company Coordinator of the Year, and she helped legacy Comerica earn the 2024 Junior Achievement President's Circle Award at the Bronze Level. She also contributed to its Hispanic Business Resource Group being recognized as one of LATINA Style Magazine's 2024 Top 16 Employee Resource Groups. The Wilkinson Center honored legacy Comerica as its 2023 Volunteer Group of the Year following volunteer recruitment efforts led by Rowell and presented her with its 2022 Great Volunteer Connector Award. Rolling Out Magazine recognized her as one of its 2022 Sisters with Superpowers.

Rowell earned a Bachelor of Applied Arts and Sciences, cum laude, and a Certificate in Volunteer and Community Resource Management from the University of North Texas, where she is a member of the alumni association. She also holds a degree in Multimedia Design with an emphasis in Multimedia Production from the Art Institute of Dallas.



Preet Sabharwal

Manageing Partner
Ocean Block Capital
NFTE Class of 2000

Preet Sabharwal is an entrepreneur, commercial real estate investor, and Managing Partner of Ocean Block Capital, a privately held real estate investment firm focused on the acquisition and development of net-leased retail, industrial, and medical properties across the United States.

Preet co-founded Ocean Block Capital in 2017 and has helped build the firm into a national investment platform with a portfolio spanning more than 150 properties across approximately 30 states. The firm focuses on necessity-based real estate backed by strong national and regional tenants, combining disciplined acquisitions with an entrepreneurial approach to development, asset management, and value creation.

A broker by trade, Preet also founded SAB Capital in 2019, building the firm into a national commercial real estate brokerage platform specializing in investment sales and advisory services. His experience on both the principal and brokerage sides of the business gives him a unique perspective on sourcing opportunities, structuring transactions, capital markets, and creating long-term value.

Throughout his career, Preet has emphasized an owner-operator mentality, relationship-driven investing, and disciplined execution. He remains actively involved in Ocean Block Capital's investment strategy, acquisitions, development initiatives, and long-term growth.

Beyond his business interests, Preet serves on the Board of Directors of the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE), an organization with a personal connection to his own early exposure to entrepreneurship. In addition, he spends his days helping to shape the lives of his three young children with his wife Tiffany.

Your prosperity is our purpose.

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

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2026 NFTE National Challenge Semi-finalists

Blakeman Technologies — Dane Blakeman, Neptune Beach, FL: a patented additive that prevents ice from forming, allowing stable deep supercooling for cryopreservation.

Forever Sleek — Kathlyn Augustin, Tampa, FL: a synthetic hair care brand that uses banana tree fibers instead of toxic materials.

Genuine Feel — Nathaniel Swann & Kennedy Tai, Orlando, FL: customizable hygiene products for neurodivergent individuals.

Gigi's Homers — Gizelle Terrones, Dallas, TX: data-driven training and specialized pitching machines that help competitive softball athletes reach new heights.

Helply — Malik Oladokun, South Holland, IL: an AI-powered platform that connects young people with community service opportunities.

InstaWave — David Hernandez, Miami, FL: a cooking appliance that cuts cooking time with built-in automated compartments for chopping and organizing fresh ingredients.

Kafele Kleaning — Nkosi Kafele, Los Angeles, CA: an Airbnb cleaning service offering consistent quality, vetted crews, and standardized checklists for guaranteed satisfaction.

LeftoSense — Saumit Pathak, San Jose, CA: an AI-powered app that analyzes photos of your food to tell you if it is safe to eat.

Little Miss — Elian Gutierrez, Los Angeles, CA: a pouch of menstrual products for girls and women.

Mindset — Jayla Moore, Ferguson, MO: a storytelling platform that helps youth build resilience through relatable fictional stories, reflection, and anonymous engagement.

MintMelt — Ahmed Aoun & Cole White, Port Orange, FL: a chewable toothpaste tablet for travelers, commuters, and anyone who needs oral care on the go.

Noor Makers — Abiha Haider, Perth Amboy, NJ: creative, hands-on workshops that connect young people to their Muslim faith.

NoScalp — Brody Boccuzzi, Port Orange, FL: anti-scalping software for the entertainment and retail industries that uses bot behavior analysis, resale intent indicators, and volume threshold monitoring.

Nova Guide — Isla Hughes, Ipswich, MA: an adaptive AI study co-pilot for students with executive function challenges.

National Semi-finalists, *continued*

Perfectly Padded — Giabella Catello & Celia Salsbury, Baltimore, MD: custom strap cushions that make carrying heavy bags more comfortable without sacrificing style.

PlastiCo — Bilal Raho, Columbus, OH: a process that turns plastic waste into usable fuel through pyrolysis, reducing waste and providing a lower-cost energy source.

Powerful AI Hydration Bottle — Carlos Anez, Dallas, TX: a smart water bottle that uses AI to improve your daily hydration.

RenewMed — Lucas Solomon, Fort Lauderdale, FL: refurbished medical equipment sold directly to consumers.

SideQuest — Sa'Maria Strong, Flint, MI: an app that matches students seeking income with employers offering short, paid tasks.

Social Charge — Bria White, Oxon Hill, MD: a wearable LED pin that displays your social battery level to help prevent social burnout.

TeacherLyft — Isaiah Boffill, Miami, FL: an AI platform that frees teachers from repetitive classroom tasks so they can spend more time helping students learn.

SiliFresh — Teyanah Laidley, Kissimmee, FL: fake food for restaurants and bakeries to display, so real food isn't wasted.

Trust Point — Nikolett Aranyos Horigian, Miami, FL: a global digital news platform that delivers verified, unbiased information with transparent sourcing and bias indicators.

United Dance Company — Kayla Grant & Mollie Obas, Palm Beach Gardens, FL: a performance-based dance studio offering training and performance opportunities to every dancer, including those with disabilities.

Valerie's Giggle Garden — Valerie Franklin, Stone Mountain, GA: a licensed overnight daycare with structured routines and supervision.

2026 NFTE World Challenge Semi-finalists

Bed Bug Bait Box — Sophie Keane, Ireland - Foróige: a compact device that uses an oscillating circuit, a hand warmer, and a trap to mimic human characteristics and attract bed bugs, with a reported 95% success rate. It is ideal for travelers who need a practical way to detect and manage bed bug infestations.

Chomm's House — Weeraya Inthamart, Ratibhat Napanurak, Kitjutanan Patbhuwade & Sirasit Ragtong, Thailand - ARIT: a portable, DEET-free herbal repellent film made from plant-derived ingredients for travel and outdoor activities. Using microencapsulation technology, it offers a convenient, fragrance-led alternative to conventional mosquito repellents. A circular packaging program extends the product's value after use and connects consumers to environmental and social impact.

Clario — Prisca Roshini, Singapore - Halogen Foundation: an AI-powered study buddy for students aged 11–16 that offers personalized, round-the-clock academic support. Students customize their AI companion then access curriculum-based content as podcasts, short videos, mind maps, and notes. Clario supports diverse learning needs and includes features for online safety, healthy screen time, and appropriate AI boundaries.

ClearSky — Paola Guerra, Emely Herrera & Carlos Moreno, Honduras - Western International Schools: a chimney air filter designed for the coffee industry. It captures smoke particles and keeps polluted air out of the environment, turning contaminated smoke into much cleaner air without changing the coffee production process.

CycleCoin — Marlon Mathieu & Leonardo Soares Sousa, Switzerland - sCETA: a reward-based mobility platform that makes cycling more rewarding. Users earn CycleCoins for every kilometer they ride and redeem them for benefits at local partner businesses, while companies can encourage employees to choose more sustainable commutes.

DnA VoiceLab — Kieu Diem Châu & Ann Nguyen, Vietnam - Global Citizen Group: an AI-powered voice-over platform that gives film producers and OTT platforms authentic translation and dubbing across languages, especially indigenous ones. Through a secure hybrid marketplace where AI and human artistry grow together, it aims to become Southeast Asia's standard for cinematic localization.

FLOWPASS — Jeong Won Mun, Su a Shin & Doo Hyun Sung, Korea - KAIST: a smart navigation service for large events such as concerts, festivals, and sports games. It analyzes users' locations and current and predicted crowd congestion to recommend the routes with the shortest expected travel time.

Gamers For The World — Andrés & Matías Garza, Mexico - Fundación E: a platform that connects the gaming community with NGOs helping communities affected by natural disasters, using gaming systems to make donations easy.

World Semi-finalists, *continued*

The Plato Forum — Rayan Ismail, Lebanon - ITLS: a platform where students find every opportunity they are eligible for. Students can search by level, field, and deadline, find opportunities that are verified by hand, build the skills to win them, and ask a human for help when stuck. It is free for students and live now at theplatoforum.com.

Second Canvas — Tom Cho, Brendon Kim, Brian Kim & Sung Soon Kim, Korea - URROUND: a circular system that turns discarded hotel bedding into affordable, high-quality art canvases through a low-impact, bio-based treatment process. It connects hotels with schools, art institutions, and artists, turning textile waste into accessible materials for creativity and education.

SIGN LINK — Caio Costa Quintana & Arthur Gimenez da Cruz, Brazil - ENG Transferência de Tecnologias (Certiport): an AI-powered EdTech platform that makes more than 300 sign languages worldwide easier to learn through interactive learning paths, a structured visual dictionary, and real-time AI feedback on signing. It also connects deaf and hearing communities through matchmaking and social features. Starting with Brazilian Sign Language (Libras), it is built to scale globally.

SMART STRAW — Shilo Abu, Yehonatan Davidashvili, Dvir Malka & Israel Maor, Israel - Unistream: a smart drinking straw that continuously detects drink-spiking substances as you drink. Its technology is built discreetly into an ordinary-looking straw, automatically samples the beverage, and gives a rapid visual alert when a targeted substance is detected, protecting you from the first sip to the last.

Speachie — Victoriia Fetisenko, Anna Korniienko, Olesia Osipova & Vsevolod Pugach, Ukraine - Ukrainian Future Business Incubator: an AI-powered platform that improves communication skills through speech and diction training and realistic job interview simulations. It gives personalized feedback, tracks progress, and helps users build confidence and professional communication skills in one place.

NFTE + BUILD.org Fireside Chat

A short, candid conversation about NFTE's upcoming merger with BUILD, featuring leaders and alumni from both organizations.



Dr. J. D. LaRock
President and CEO
Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship



Thais Rezende
President and Interim CEO
BUILD



Darius Davie
NFTE Alumnus
Co-Founder & Creative Director, Groom Guy



Marianny Solis
BUILD Alumna
Paralegal, Greenberg & Kaplan LLP

Marianny Solis graduated magna cum laude from Fordham University this year with a B.A. in Political Science and a minor in Business Administration. She currently works in probate and estate planning as a paralegal for Greenberg & Kaplan, LLP. Before joining the firm, Marianny worked in the Office of Congressman Ritchie Torres, for campaigns such as that of Adriano Espaillat, and held an internship with the New York State Appellate Division, First Department. Since 2021, she has served on the YAP x Gates Fellowship Youth Advisory Panel, researching equitable education policy and presenting at national conferences.

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