

MEA

Minority Enterprise Advocate

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2016

JOSET WRIGHT-LACY

**PRESIDENT OF NMSDC
BUILDING BRIDGES
THAT CONNECT
MINORITY SUPPLIERS
TO CORPORATIONS**

MEA

Power Player:

Emmett T. Vaughn,
Director, Office of Diverse
Business Empowerment of
Exelon Corporation

TOWANDA R. LIVINGSTON,
DIRECTOR, SLMBE OFFICE,
WSSC: WHERE
WATER MATTERS
AND IS STRENGTHENED
BY DIVERSITY





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President's Message



Sunny Ezeji
President

Maybe you don't know that MEA is more than a magazine. Like the name says Minority Enterprise Advocate (MEA). We promote and market the businesses in our publication to other businesses, Federal and local governments, as well as major corporations. Any one in business needs an advocate to make sure you are being seen and heard. Every industry has stiff competition. You have to stand out of the crowd. If you promote yourself, who is going to believe you? Everyone is going to say, I am the best. If a neutral person is saying you are the best it has more credibility.

Our long relationships with various Federal agencies and major corporations is an asset to anyone on a team. It is always a wise decision to team with the right team. The smaller your company the more you need these services to enhance your presence in this business world with so many people after the same contracts and developing strategies to create business and success.

If you are looking for someone to fight for you, MEA is a good place to look. We remain dedicated to diverse business entities for over 20 years. We are here to help you with business development needs and partnerships to take your company to the next level.

Sunny Ezeji

The life each of us lives is the life within the limits of our own thinking. To have life more abundant, we must think in limitless terms of abundance. – Thomas Dreier



Diversity empowers us

Exelon embraces the differences that make each of us unique, and enrich us all.

Together we can build a world where our differences make us stronger.

Exelon Diverse Business Empowerment Team:

Emmett T. Vaughn
Nikki Bigelow
Frank Kelly
Vernice Lewis
Terry Miller
Charlie Partridge
Maurice Williams

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Publisher's Message



**Debra Williams,
Publisher**

If you watched the Republican and Democratic Conventions you had to come away with a vision for where we are going with this election. The Republican Convention did not make us any more knowledgeable about Donald Trump. His wife and children made great speeches, but they did not humanize him so we have a sense of who this man really is. Donald Trump wants to be President for the sake of being President. That is all we can assume from the Convention's messages. The Democratic Convention made you more aware of the accomplishments of Hillary Clinton and what she means to so many ordinary Americans. She was seen in a very human, relatable fashion most of us never knew before.

America is strong, the people of America makes this country strong. So let us not succumb to decisions based on fear and anxiety about the future. But choose who is best for the job and have your best interest at hand.

I am really going to miss President Barack Obama and his extraordinary wife and family in the White House. He is a history making leader of the free world and now hopefully we will see the first woman President in Hillary Clinton, another history making leader.

Everyone should make sure they register to vote. Not just in this upcoming major election, but the local elections that affect your neighborhood more directly. All of these elections impact our way of life and security. We need to make sure we are involved and knowledgeable about some of the officials in our communities. Stop complaining, get out and vote!

The only thing we have to fear is fear itself – nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance.

– Franklin Delano Roosevelt

MEA Minority Enterprise Advocate

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US-Africa Business Council
Sunny Ezeji, Founder



to be a part of our
Supplier Diversity team

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Diversity News

WMBE Sets Its Sights on Inc. 500 List



Leah Smiley, founder
The Society for Diversity



AMERICA'S
FASTEST
GROWING
PRIVATE
COMPANIES



Indianapolis, Indiana: Can a women and minority owned business make the Inc. 500 list of the fastest-growing companies for 2016 by achieving over 2 million in revenue? Leah Smiley, founder of The Society for Diversity, thinks so.

Leah is an African-American woman who started her business back in 2009. When she first started the business, she had just had a new baby boy, the 4th child in the family. Like many women (and many men nowadays, too!), juggling the needs of career and family was a challenge.

Things got easier as the kids got older and her business also started to take off. The Society for Diversity has doubled in revenue every year for the past three years and she sees no end in sight. Part of her success has been in landing large government contracts. The Society for Diversity just received the Procurement Tactical Assistance Center (PTAC) Award for small businesses for her work delivering Diversity & Inclusion Training to twenty-five military executives from the Navy and Air Force at the

Pentagon last fall.

So, what does The Society for Diversity actually do that even the Pentagon has called on them for services? The Society for Diversity is the #1 provider of diversity and inclusion credentialing in the US. They have done training and credentialing for staff in organizations across the US including Cisco Systems, Wal-mart, Yale University, The US Postal Service, and many others.

The field of Diversity & Inclusion is still in the growing stages both in the US and internationally. Many organizations aren't sure what professionals in the field are supposed to be doing. Additionally, many professionals themselves aren't quite sure what to do as the field has almost no formal training in place.

This is where The Society steps in. Just like any other role in an organization, the purpose of a Chief Diversity Officer, EEO Specialist, or similar roles is to increase return on investment (ROI) by either saving money or making money. The Society helps practitioners align

their department initiatives around organizational goals and strategy.

Many organizations make the mistake of seeing diversity simply as a public relations or feel good strategy. However, you would not see a Chief Financial Officer that doesn't save the company money or a Marketing Director that doesn't make a company money. In the same way, diversity professionals must also be tasked with saving or making money for the organization, a perspective that has yet to be widely understood in the field.

Where does Mrs. Smiley see her organization going in the next few years? She says, "There is a lot of work to do in this field. Much of what has been done has been largely ineffective and senior leadership at many organizations are now jaded regarding D&I's efficacy. I see my business continuing to grow rapidly as our credential helps to define and establish a systematic approach for excellence for those in the field."



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Diversity...just the way we do business!

CCA President and CEO Named AAI 2016 U.S. Business Leader



Stephen Hayes
President and CEO,

Corporate Council on Africa (CCA) President and CEO, Stephen Hayes will be honored by the Africa-America Institute with the AAI 2016 U.S. Business Leader Award at the AAI 2016 Annual Awards Gala.

Mr. Hayes was selected in recognition for his dedicated leadership and strategic contributions to the growth and strengthening of U.S.-Africa Business Relations. Under his direction, CCA's work and initiatives have had a domino effect, transforming nascent policy and private sector engagement into greater and broader U.S. engagement with Africa. The award appropriately comes on the eve of President Barack Obama's Second U.S.-Africa Business Forum.

"There is no greater honor than those from peers, especially when those peers are so highly regarded as is the Africa-America Institute, an organization that has been a leader in building US-Africa relations through education," said Hayes. "I am deeply appreciative, genuinely surprised and humbled that they would bestow this honor on me. Of course it is really an honor for the Corporate Council on Africa as our contributions over the years have always been through a team effort of staff and board."

In his 17-year tenure as president, Stephen Hayes has led CCA to become fully engaged in a wide range of economic and political issues affect-

ing commerce between the U.S. and Africa. Mr. Hayes' personal dedication to African growth, development and prosperity through business and investment is evident in his work, which has garnered several awards. To date, Mr. Hayes and CCA are the only individual and entity in the United States to have been awarded the two highest awards given by the U.S. Government for international economic leadership. In 2008, Mr. Hayes was awarded the Ron Brown Award for International Leadership, the highest individual award possible from the United States Department of Commerce; and in 2015, under Hayes' leadership, the Corporate Council on Africa was presented with the President's "E" Award for Excellence in Export Service. The Award, presented by the United States Department of Commerce, was initiated by President John F. Kennedy in 1963. In addition to these awards, Mr. Hayes has also been honored by the Africa Chamber of Commerce of the U.S.; the Transnet Foundation, South Africa's largest foundation chaired by Bishop Tutu; and the United Nations Development Programme. He has also been honored for his leadership by Senegal and Kenya.

The AAI 2016 Annual Awards Gala will take place on Tuesday, September 20, 2016 in New York City during the opening week of the 71st United Nations General Assembly and the Second U.S.-Africa Business Forum. The Africa-America Institute is the premier U.S.-based international organization that works to increase the capacity of African individuals and institutions through higher education initiatives, leadership development, professional workforce training, convening activities, program implementation and management.

Other accepted honorees include: AAI 2016 African Business Leader Award: Mr. Aliko Dangote, President and CEO, Dangote Group; AAI 2016 Regional Integration Award and AAI 2016 Distinguished Alumnus Award: Mr. Sunil Benimadhu, Chief Executive, Stock Exchange of Mauritius.



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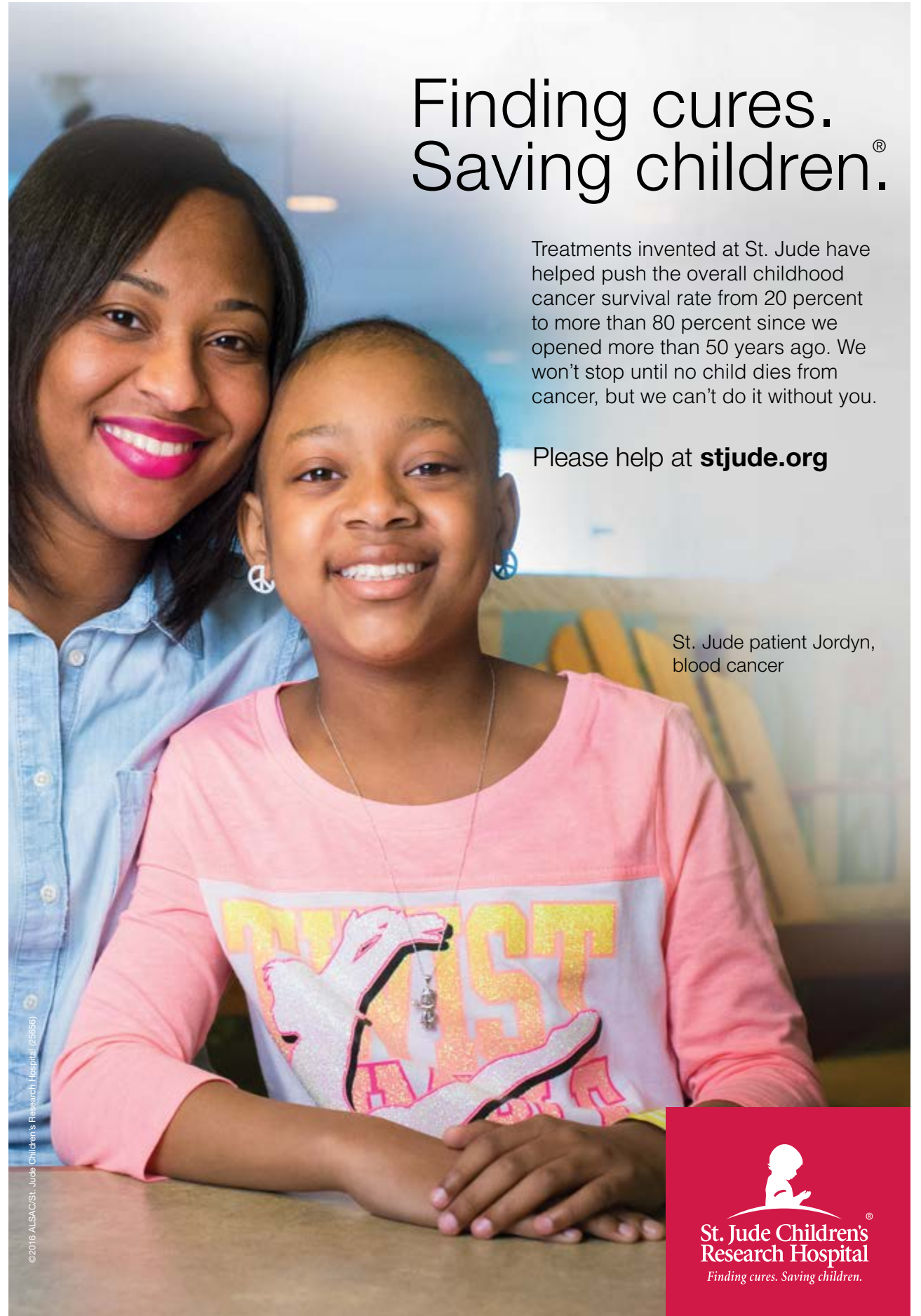
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WSSC ... Where Water Matters and is Strengthened by Diversity!

Towanda R. Livingston, Director, SLMBE Office
Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC)

by Sharon Moore Jackson

Towanda R. Livingston is the Director of the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission's (WSSC) Small, Local and Minority Business Enterprise (SLMBE) Office and she has been at the helm leading the charge since 2006. Prior to joining the Commission's Senior Executive Leadership Team, Towanda served as the Supplier Diversity Coordinator for Exelon/PECO Energy. Towanda is a strong advocate for diversity and inclusion who enthusiastically proclaims, "diversity...just the way we do business" is not a tag line but is a culture that is rooted in everything we do.

WSSC's Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) Program has been in existence since 1978. It was created to promote greater availability, contract participation and capacity development by MBEs, Women Business Enterprises (WBEs) and

Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBEs). The Small Local Business Enterprise (SLBE) Program was created in 2001, as a result of the 1999 Disparity Study findings, in an effort to increase the overall participation of small and local firms in the procurement of goods and services. Under Towanda's 10-year leadership, the public trust and confidence in WSSC's Supplier Diversity efforts have been restored, sustained and grown while delivering excellent customer service.

Towanda is not resting on her laurels. She consistently guides her small team of dedicated professionals that includes, an Outreach Coordinator, Program Managers, Project Manager, Compliance Officers and Administrative Support, all committed to ensuring that all vendors seeking to do business with WSSC, have equal access to contracting opportunities and

resources. Even though Towanda has been with the Commission for 10 years, her impact has been tremendous. Her strong work ethic, leadership, zeal and passion are all character traits that set her apart in the supplier diversity arena. She is dedicated to inform and empower the disenfranchised.

Towanda continues to seek new ways to reach the diverse business community-at-large by hosting workshops throughout the calendar year to assist vendors with doing business with WSSC, at no cost to the participants. "Courses ranging from Compliance Training, to Understanding the SLMBE Appendix A and to Bonding and Insurance" are all designed to help vendors compete on a reengineered playing field, and ultimately win, Towanda says.

Although WSSC is not a certifying agency, it does recognize certifications from the State of Maryland



**Towanda R. Livingston,
Director, SLMBE Office
Washington Suburban
Sanitary Commission**



Department of Transportation (MDOT), Prince George's County Supplier Development & Diversity Division (SDDD), D.C. Department of Small and Local Business Development (DSLBD), Capital Region Minority Supplier Development Council (CRMSDC) and the Women's President Education Organization (WPEO) for vendors seeking to do business with WSSC. However, WSSC approves small businesses to be in their SLBE Program. Given, WSSC is among the largest water and wastewater utilities in the nation, serving nearly 1.8 million residents in Montgomery and Prince George's counties. WSSC needs ready, willing and capable, value-driven business partners that can provide commodities, supplies, information technology, equipment and services. WSSC is not just a utility, it's a government agency/business as well and requires anything and everything needed to run a modern-day business. "We purchase everything from paperclips to pipes," Towanda says. To find and nurture new vendors, Towanda and her team have designed workshops and match-making sessions with strategic alliances, to identify potential vendors. Forming strong

and sustainable alliances to facilitate an environment of collaboration is not just a strategy; it is the key to long-term business growth, success and competitiveness. Towanda defines a strategic partner as, "one who knows, understands and shows their support

of our core strategies; can live up to our core values...is agile, innovative; can grow with us...has positioned themselves to bring us value by anticipating our needs and is able to deliver cost effective solutions with our customers in mind".

The expanded outreaches and collaborations are yielding great results. Coupled with Towanda's management and the commitment and support of WSSC's executive leadership, total M/WBE Contracts awards in Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 were \$150.9 million (27%) and WSSC's contract expenditures (payments) with MBE firms were \$114.8 million (20%). This is not to overshadow the \$44.7 million contracts awarded to SLBE firms and the \$31 million expended with SLBE firms in FY 2016. "Contract Awards are the promises to pay, what really matters and counts is the payments to MBE and SLBE firms...money in hand...this is the true measure of progress" states Towanda.





WSSC's SLMBE success is directly linked to WSSC's leadership and robust outreach initiatives. The mantra moving forward by Carla A. Reid, the first woman General Manager and CEO in the history of WSSC, is clear; simplify, focus, connect. Simplify the process so vendors can participate. Focus on what's important and connect with the customers. Towanda is moving in lock-step with the charge to help diverse businesses better understand how to navigate the process, and diverse contractors have been successful in competing and winning contracts as prime contractors for Goods & Services and Professional Services. Towanda's professional philosophy, "we will become an organization that thinks strategically, learns proactively and changes tactically" is making great strides.

Towanda further states that the four pillars of excellence for paving the road to supplier diversity at WSSC

are Supplier Advocacy, Compliance, Extensive Outreach and Supplier Development and the SLMBE Team is moving forward with quantifiable and measurable results.

Towanda's leadership, passion and tireless efforts have not gone unnoticed. She has received numerous awards from her peers and community partners over the span of her illustrious career ranging from her commitment to diversity, small and minority/women-owned businesses, to her dedication to personal and professional excellence, as well as for her described "superwoman" approach to giving back to her community that includes:

- * 2009 – The Commission's SLMBE/Supplier Diversity Program was recognized by Another Approach Enterprises as the MBE Champion of the Year
- * 2010 – Prince George's County Maryland Women Business Owner's as the

Minority Business Pioneer of the Year

- * 2011 – Nominated for MD/DC Minority Supplier Development Council's Advocate of the Year
- * 2012 – Recipient of the Maryland Washington Minority Contractors' Association (MWMCA) "Best Leader in Providing Opportunities to Minority-owned Firms" Award
- * 2012 – Supplier Diversity "Advocate of the Year" Award by MD/DC Minority Supplier Development Council (MSDC)
- * 2012 – Served on the Institute of Supply Chain Management (ISM) of Maryland's Board
- * 2013 – Advocate of the Year – Maryland/DC Minority Supplier Development Council
- * 2013 – Inducted into the Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC) Hall of Fame
- * 2013 – Distinguished



Community Service Award by Women Empowered to Achieve the Impossible (WETATi)

- * 2013 – Awarded the 25 Influential Women in Business Making a Difference Award by MEA Magazine

- * 2013 – Awarded the Minority Outreach Certificate by the Maryland Washington Contractors' Association (MWMCA)

- * 2013 – Hall of Fame Inductee by the Women Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC)

- * 2013 – Certificate of Appreciation from Shiloh Baptist Church of Landover, Maryland – Business Symposium

- * 2013 – Received Recognition for Continued Support and Partnering by the Women President's Educational Organization (WPEO)

- * 2014 – Celebrating Our Partners Award by the Women President's Educational Organization (WPEO)

- * 2014 – Through Towanda's leadership, WSSC was awarded the Maryland Hispanic Business Conference Sponsorship Award

- * 2014 – Received the MEA Magazine's 25 Influential Women in Business Award

- * 2014 – Capital Region Minority Supplier Diversity Council's (CRMSDC) Recognition Award
- * 2014 – Women of Prince

George's Recognition Award

- * 2015 – Awarded "Celebrating our Partners Award" by the Women President's Educational Organization (WPEO)

- * 2015 – Through Towanda's leadership, WSSC was awarded the Maryland Hispanic Business Conference 2015 Conference Sponsorship Award

- * 2015 – through Towanda's leadership, WSSC was awarded the Maryland Washington Minority Contractors Association's (MWMCA) 2015 Conference Silver Sponsor Award

- * 2015 – Women Business Steadfast Supporter Award from Women Business Owners of Prince George's County (WBO-PGC)

- * 2016 – Black History Hero Award from Maryland Washington Minority Contractors Association (MWMCA)

- * 2016 – Through Towanda's leadership, WSSC was awarded the Commitment to the Success of Women Business Enterprises Award by the WPEO

- * 2016 – Global Advocate Ambassador Certificate from Women Empowered to Achieve the Impossible (WETATi)

- * 2016 – Through Towanda's leadership, WSSC was awarded the Most Inclusive Corporation of the Year for Minority Business Award

from Maryland Washington Minority Contractors Association (MWMCA)

- * 2016 – The Supplier Diversity Executive of the Year Award from MEA Magazine

Most notable, Towanda has been deemed by Diversity MBA Magazine as one of their 2016 Top 100 Executive Leaders under 50. Towanda also takes time to provide career/business coaching and mentoring to both high school and collegiate entrepreneurs; in addition, she lends her expertise to non-profit programs that are dedicated to moving impoverished women and children from their temporary state of poverty to their future and permanent state of entrepreneurial success; she has also served on Boards dedicated to eradicating domestic violence. To learn more about WSSC's MBE and SLBE Programs, the 2015 Disparity Study Recommendations, the upcoming 2017 MBE Reauthorization Legislation, calendar of events and contracting opportunities, please visit their website at www.wsscwater.com/SLMBE.



AGB Adapting to Security Industry Changes

By: RaJah Welcome

Security Industry Changing

The Security industry is undergoing major changes. The normal responsibilities of security services are going beyond the scope of traditional work. Some of these changes includes: Increased specialization -security for retail, government, etc. The general purpose of security companies are becoming less important and more specialized. There are now more private investigators and security consultants and that is because companies want tailored security. They would prefer something that is designed exactly for them. More changes that are taking place is risk profiling where security companies must be better at identifying the risks that they are serving but how to mitigate the risks as well.

AGB Adapting to changes

We are not just a general purpose security guard company but are expanding into a cyber security protection firm as well. Recognizing these trends AGB is taking a proactive approach.

Specifically we are updating our business model to add cyber security. The Cyber Security market has a compounded annual growth rate of 10% and projected to be \$170 billion by year 2020. The estimated damage for Cyber Crime according to McAfee is \$100 billion in the U.S. per year and \$300 billion Globally per year. This damage caused by Cyber crime e.g. identity theft, intellectual property theft, stolen money, can take months and even years to repair.

AGB Background

Leading this new wave is AGB Investigative Services. "Leading with Solutions." A nationally trained, full-spectrum security and computer expert, John Griffin, Jr. founded AGB Investigative Services, Incorporated, April 13th 2001.

Led by John Griffin Jr., owner and CEO, an authority in security and risk mitigation, John Griffin Jr. has been involved in high-level security prevention and investigations for more than 15 years and has extensive local and national experience. John Griffin Jr. was trained by Department of Defense, Department of Homeland Security, and United States Secret



**John Griffin, Jr.,
AGB President and CEO.**

Service in computer forensics. John Griffin Jr. is a certified Forensic Expert Witness and continues to collaborate with local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies.

The minority-owned (MBE) security firm currently employs more than 300 people, many of whom are local residents who have been trained and afforded promotional opportunities at AGB. With a state-of-the-art facility located in the Beverly community, AGB offers a full spectrum of customized security solutions, including armed and unarmed protective services, Cyber Security, IT security solutions, private investigations, expert level training and certification, and training for government agencies and small to mid-sized corporations.

AGB is the first minority-owned security company to be ISO 9001:2008-certified in the nation. Some of the company's credits include International Executive Protection in Asia, being a GSA Schedule 84 Contract Holder and 8(a) Certified. Clients consist of the Executive Office of the White House, Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Defense Logistics Agency.



AGB has been acknowledged on local and national levels. AGB Investigative Services was awarded 2015 Small Business Person of the Year award in the Illinois Business District. They were also awarded 2015 Inner City 100 Award for the Fastest Growing Companies in America's Inner Cities. AGB was recognized as the Outstanding Business of the Year from the Illinois Black Chamber of Commerce as well.

AGB Expertise in Cyber Security

AGB Global IT Solutions (a division of AGB Investigative Services) takes Cyber security very seriously, and can be your strategic partner to provide best-in-industry IT security services.

Information Security means protecting your information systems from unauthorized access, use, disclosure, disruption, modification, perusal, inspection, recording or destruction.

Cyber Security is critical to the survival of businesses, organizations, and governments. Improperly implemented IT systems can lead to unintended data loss and threaten the very existence of your firm or organization. Securing confidential

information about your customers, finances and innovations is critical, as breaches in security can lead to lost business, legal actions, lawsuits or even bankruptcy. Protecting confidential information is an ethical business requirement, and in many cases, also a legal one.

AGB offers specialized services in network design, operations, management, and security to both small and large businesses and organizations. We work closely with you to thoroughly understand the relationship between your company's objectives and your employees, and the hardware and software you all use everyday. We optimize this relationship to deliver secure, effective, and cost efficient results.

Our network security services include: Intrusion detection and network penetration testing, IT security auditing and compliance, IT security risk assessment, Computer and internet fraud

detection, Server/application hardening, and IT security best practices implementation and compliance.

AGB can provide nationwide service for design and

implementation of large scale cyber security services. They can also provide forensic and investigative services for cyber security incident management.

AGB Future

Cyber Security risks is an ongoing threat and AGB will be there to protect you by keeping up with trends. AGB will continue to improve its business model, technical expertise and partner networking.

AGB as a SBA-certified 8(a) firm will continue to market its cyber security services to federal agencies that operate in a high threat environment.

AGB Investigative Services will bring this same level of professional excellence to all security services traditional and cyber security. "In the midst of an economic downturn and a number of challenges that could have closed our doors, we have remained resilient and managed to become one of the most successful businesses in the country," stated John Griffin, Jr., AGB president and CEO.

The Five Deadly Questions You Must Answer Before Starting a Business

Small businesses die daily, with most failing within the first 5 years, regardless of the circumstances. Some firms suffer a *fatal heart attack*; the owner is liable for an accident on his site, and assets are liquidated when the insurance company refuses to pay. Other firms shuffle along for several years, ignoring new technology and changing market conditions. Customers quietly switch to the fancy, tech-savvy competitor and death *by old age* creeps in. Death from *loneliness* is particularly poignant; the owner is weary and wants to retire, but nobody wants the business, including family members. The owner shuts down and the legacy vanishes into yesterday. However, when a business opens without the **answers** to the **five questions** below, the owner is a *murderer*. With reasonable answers to these queries, more firms might have a chance of survival.

1 Who is going to operate the business, and does he or she have the skills to be an entrepreneur?

Entrepreneurs take risks in exchange for freedom to make their own decisions and chart their own course. Success depends on the owner's education and experience, commitment, human capital, and vision. Education and experience provide problem-solving tools to mitigate the damages of an unexpected economic shift, or the entrance of a threatening competitor in the market. Social capital, or personal

support network, can offer assistance when the owner is away, or provide an introduction to a prospect for a future business opportunity. Success requires a strong work ethic and a fight-to-win attitude.

2 What kind of business and what is the business model?

A business model must reflect the strengths and weaknesses of the owner. Hairdressers thrive on creativity and customer service. A carryout offers a brief encounter at the cash register and requires an owner that can juggle many tasks at once. The business models are dissimilar; hairdressers make money from lengthy services and products from patrons that expect perfection, whereas carryout owners make profit on every item in the store, with a goal of a quick transaction from a large bag of expensive goodies. Starting an enterprise requires long hours and hard labor; an owner with passion, resilience, knowledge, and respect for the model enhances sustainability.

3 Why are you starting a business?

Desperation and innovation are opposites when starting a business. If desperation appears from unemployment, the ideal entrepreneurial tool kit may not be available. Self-employment is a reliable go-to-action when personal survival is the goal; a business plan is not necessary to paint houses in the spring and summer, or sell cookies on the weekends. If the goal is to open a



By Iris A. Cooper

restaurant to reap financial rewards from a popular family recipe, there will be a great deal of time and preparation needed before the ribbon cutting ceremony.

4 When will the business open?

What are the chances of survival during a recession, or when the owner is still working full time? What about seasonal risks when starting an enterprise? Timing is critical and seldom are the conditions perfect for launching a business. When the market is ripe, the owner may not have the resources to begin. A comprehensive business plan includes the path to financial stability, and identifies the resources, challenges, and remedies before the launch. Starting before systems are created, social capital is on board, funding secured, and marketing commences presents risks to the operation and the brand.

5 Where will you operate the business?

Certain kinds of home-based businesses require zoning approval. If you operate online, few assets are needed except a desk, chair, utilities, and a computer. Some businesses depend on foot traffic or ample parking. Other enterprises thrive next door to competitors. Each situation is different and analysis helps to pinpoint the ideal location, features, and amenities.



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FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION:

Black Dollars Pour into Black Banks

By Michael H. Cottman,
Urban News Service



Baltimore-based attorney Jelani Murrain plans to transfer his hard-earned money to an institution of financial empowerment: A black-owned bank.

"The fact that black people have dealt with financial discrimination is a matter of record," Murrain, a father of three young children, told Urban News Service.

Murrain, 38, said he and his wife decided last week to open an account with Atlanta's Citizens Trust Bank.

"A strong, vibrant black-owned bank will hopefully ensure black people have an alternative if faced with financial discrimination in the future," said Murrain, who drives to work one hour each way, every day, between Washington, D.C. and Baltimore.



John Scroggins
President and CEO of Unity

"A strong Citizens Trust Bank, of course, will provide better financial services to all people of Atlanta, not just black people," he said. "The success of Citizens Trust is a win for the black community and the United States."

While Washington's Industrial Bank is black-owned, Murrain prefers to invest in Citizens, since his father lives in Atlanta.

Murrain is not alone.

More than 8,000 people opened accounts at Citizens Trust between July 13 and 18, according to news accounts. New customers flooded the bank after hip-hop artist Killer Mike urged black residents to transfer their money there.

And officials at Houston's Unity National Bank say more than 700 new customers have opened accounts in the past week.

"It's fantastic. It's a beautiful thing. We're blessed," said John Scroggins,

president and CEO of Unity. "It's been overwhelming." Scroggins said eight to 10 people open accounts in a typical week.

Scroggins said a local pastor told him he would withdraw his money from Chase Bank and hand Unity a check for \$250,000.

"I've been in the lobby shaking hands and thanking customers," Scroggins said. He described them as African-American men and women professionals. "One customer told me, 'The cause is worth the wait.'" The cause, Scroggins said, stemmed from recent, high-profile police shootings of black men.

"But," he said, "the cause quickly turned to a social consciousness about black empowerment and supporting



black-owned businesses."

Scroggins said he plans to continue re-investing in the black community by approving more small-business loans.

The surge in new accounts at

"A strong, vibrant black-owned bank will hopefully ensure black people have an alternative if faced with financial discrimination in the future,"

Citizens, Unity and other black-owned banks springs, in part, from civil-rights leaders who consistently have pleaded with black Americans to support black-owned financial institutions.

But this sudden interest in black-owned banks also coincides with black Americans' protests against the police killings of Alton Sterling in Baton Rouge and Philando Castile near Minneapolis.

So, aside from symbolism, what does money in a black-owned bank

achieve for the black community that it doesn't deliver in a mainstream establishment?

Some black Americans believe that investing in a black bank will help circulate more money in the black community, revive crumbling neighborhoods, secure a black economic power base and enhance black customers' chances of receiving small-business loans.

There were 21 black-owned banks in America with approximately \$4.7 billion in assets in 2013, according to *HBCU Money*. But times have changed: There were 54 such banks in 1994, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation reports.

Murrain, however, said he likes the stability of Citizens Trust Bank, which was founded by five black businessmen in 1921. The nation's third-largest African-American-owned bank's assets exceed \$350 million, according to published reports.

"We are proud to celebrate 95 strong years of service to our customers and our community," says the bank's website.

Meanwhile Patrice Gaines, 67, said she will follow her daughter's lead.

Her daughter, Andrea Carter of Atlanta, 47, transferred her money to Citizens.

Gaines plans to open an account with black-owned, New Orleans-based Liberty Bank. It was founded in 1972 with assets of \$2 million. Alden

J. McDonald, Jr. has led Liberty since day one and has grown its holdings to \$374 million, according to the bank's website.

"Andrea's actions reminded me that I have a much longer view of this country and its history," said Gaines, a former Washingtonian who now lives in Lake Wylie, South Carolina.

"She never saw U Street in Washington, D.C. when it was lively with black businesses, including a black bank," she said.

Gaines said she is proud to invest in Liberty Bank, which has opened branches in Kansas, Mississippi, Missouri and Texas.

"There was a pride that came over me when I walked on U Street," Gaines said. "So, maybe this time is the time when my daughter can experience a fraction of the pride I felt when I lived in a neighborhood surrounded by black-owned businesses, and I followed my mother into the black-owned bank to get money out of her account."

Several African-American celebrities also plan to open accounts with black-owned banks. Performers Usher, Killer Mike and Jermaine Dupri joined Citizens Trust Bank in February.

Meanwhile, Gaines focuses on the big picture.

"My daughter has reminded me of the simple truth — that our money can still be used as a tool of power to make a point," she said. "Sometimes in a seemingly integrated business environment, we forget this. It's not lost on me that my daughter and a younger generation had to remind me of this."

There were 21 black-owned banks in America with approximately \$4.7 billion in assets in 2013, according to HBCU Money.

Humble Start, Early Tragedy Turn Latina Immigrant into Law Partner

By Luis Vasquez-Ajmac,
Urban News Service



Eva Plaza

Eva Plaza never dreamed of becoming a lawyer or owning a business. But the sudden loss of her father when she was just 8 dramatically changed her life.

Born in Torreon, Mexico, Plaza and her three young siblings were reared by a single mom in El Paso, Texas. Her father died tragically at 33, without seeing a doctor, from a ruptured peptic ulcer. Without role models, Plaza overcame long odds, paved her own way, and became a partner in a top Los Angeles law firm.

"When my father passed away, we lost our home, and we had to move into public housing," Plaza said. "Security, or lack of security, colored what I was going to do."

As the eldest child, she felt responsible for supporting her working-class family. "The usual answers were doctor or lawyer," she said. "I thought I would be a better lawyer."

But becoming a lawyer — let alone a partner — in a predominantly white, male-dominated industry was no easy feat for a female Mexican immigrant. "Nobody took me under their wings," said Plaza. "I learned by doing and not being afraid. And not accepting 'no' for an answer."

Plaza's accomplishments are rare.

Fewer than 35 percent of all American attorneys are women, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports. "The legal industry is nearly dead last in hiring and retaining women and minority lawyers," said Joel Stern, CEO of the National Association of Minority & Women Owned Law Firms. "Less than 2 percent are partners."

These disparities help explain why minority lawyers increasingly launch their own firms. "There are a lot of barriers, images and stereotypes that women have to push through, like women are not aggressive enough nor strong litigators and/or too combative and will not be good managers," Stern said.

"I learned by doing and not being afraid. And not accepting 'no' for an answer."

Despite these obstacles, Plaza graduated from U.C. Berkeley Law School in 1984. She served the U.S. Justice Department as a trial counselor and later oversaw enforcement of the Fair Housing Act as an Assistant Secretary at the Department of Housing and Urban Development in Washington, D.C.

After two decades, Plaza left her secure and comfortable federal career. For family reasons, and a strong desire to reinvent herself and follow intellectual pursuits, Plaza moved to Los Angeles to start her own law practice.

"An easier path would have been to remain in politics," Plaza said. "But that would have been more of the same. [The transition] took a lot from me, a lot of energy, my money and uncompensated time. This was not the road most easily traveled."

She opened the Plaza Law Group, which thrived. Plaza soon thereafter met Gerry Fox, founder of Gerald Fox Law, who offered her a partnership.

"Eva is a fearless litigator," said Fox, "but the most important thing about Eva is that she treats everyone with honor and dignity. Her presence is a role model for younger lawyers to learn how to act." Plaza sits on non-profit boards including that of the

Latino Donor Collaborative, where she met Luis de La Cruz, owner of Andale Construction, now her client.

"I am very proud to know Eva's background," said de La Cruz. Coming "from El Paso with limited... resources demonstrated that she is an awesome intellectual person. And being in a man's world, she demonstrated that the *Si, se puede* [Yes, you can] concept is still alive."

Beyond handling Fox's large cases, Plaza's pro-bono work helps low-income families. She also advances minority attorneys as co-chair of the Lawyers Committee of Compton, a non-profit that provides free legal services.

"Eva is paving the way for new attorneys, like myself," said Ingrid McCall, the groups' interim executive director. "Her mentorship has been invaluable. I encourage other lawyers to do the same and start to volunteer."

But law firms are businesses, too. Successful partners need to attract clients continually, which Plaza does.

"You need to have a method for bringing and serving clients, or you have to have a special skill that will help keep or attract new clients" said Francisco Montero, managing partner at Fletcher, Heald & Hildreth.

Montero also has seen technology transform the law business.

"The speed-of-response and

expectation levels for lawyers has grown exponentially," Montero said. "You are expected to respond at all hours to emails, social media and blogs."

Robert White of the California Minority Counsel Program applauded Plaza. "It's great to see someone like Eva succeed, who has persisted, who has done the marketing, put in the miles and developed her own business," White said. "Eva epitomizes what goes best in the legal field. We need more people like her."

Eva Plaza's journey confirms Alexander Graham Bell's observation: "When one door closes, another one opens."

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The FTC Family

By Brian Friel



Vaseal Montgomery
President and CEO

Favor TechConsulting, LLC (FTC) is having a banner year. Its workforce has expanded well past 100 employees. The company won five task orders in the first three months as a prime contractor on the Transformation Twenty-One Total Technology Next Generation, or T4NG, Indefinite Delivery / Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contract vehicle at the Department of Veterans Affairs, including the first T4NG task order won by a small business. FTC, through their Joint Venture, Innovative Information Solutions (IIS) was also selected this year as a prime contractor on a U.S. Special Operations Command IDIQ contract vehicle as well as The Centers of Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) Strategic Partners Acquisition Readiness Contract (SPARC) IDIQ. To top it all off, FTC was listed as #7 in Washington Technology's Fast 50 and No. 405 on Inc.'s list of the fastest growing companies in America, clocking \$19.2 million in revenue and a ten-fold growth rate over a three year span.

Just looking at U.S. prime contract dollars reported to the Federal Procurement Data System-Next Generation, the Vienna, Virginia-based company, a service-disabled veteran-owned, economically disadvan-

tagged woman-owned and certified 8(a) small disadvantaged business grew from \$1.5 million in prime U.S. federal contract obligations in fiscal 2012 to \$14.2 million in fiscal 2015.

The company is still growing. "It's the dedication and commitment of our people," says President and CEO Vaseal Montgomery, when asked about what's driving the growth of the company. "The success of FTC lies within everyone who is a part of our FTC family."

The company may have crested 100 employees now, but it started in November 2007 as a company of one. Montgomery was retiring following 30 years on active duty in the U.S. Army. At the time of her retirement as a colonel, Montgomery was the Chief Information Officer for the U.S. Army Surgeon General, working on health-care information systems integration and interoperability between the Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs.

Montgomery could very well have secured an executive position at a large company, but she was ready to take what I had learned in the military, the experience and the training that I gained being in the military, and put it in my own company," Montgomery

says.

The military had been a calling since childhood for Montgomery, a native of West Hollywood, Florida. From about the fifth grade, Montgomery had a set answer when anyone asked her what she wanted to be when she grew up. "I'm going to be a captain in the Army," she would say. At 17, she joined the Army reserve, went to basic and advanced individual training, and then stayed in ROTC through college at Morgan State University.

After school, Montgomery was commissioned in the Army Medical Service Corps, first as a platoon leader at Fort Polk, Louisiana and moving on through several other Medical Service Corps assignments around the country. It was during this early part of her career that Montgomery would be set on the path toward health IT.

The development that set her on that path was, of all things, the arcade game Pac-Man. Montgomery wasn't so much interested in playing it as she was interested in understanding how the game worked. It was 1984. Her interest in IT led to enrollment in a systems automation course, which led to a series of health IT focused jobs that culminated in the role of CIO for the U.S. Army Surgeon General.

Positions along the way included Program Manager, Tri-Service Infrastructure Program Office; Chief Information Officer (CIO), North Atlantic Regional Medical Command; Chief Information Officer, Walter Reed Army Medical Center; Director Information Management, Womack Army Medical Center; CIO, Martin Army Community Hospital; and CIO, Gorgas Army Community Hospital.

After launching the company, Montgomery in July 2008 secured the company's first subcontract, working on healthcare information systems with the Department of Veterans Affairs. She was carrying on the mission of improving health IT for military service members and Veterans, only now as an entrepreneur.

Her business started expanding after FTC secured a position as a subcontractor on a team for the Department of Veterans Affairs' first central information technology services contract vehicle, T4 (Transformation Twenty-One Total Technology). FTC hired its second employee, Chief Operating Officer Benjamin Lin.

Montgomery and Lin continued to build the company with a key philosophy: no debt. They built relationships with prime contractors, generated performance qualifications through subcontracts and started winning prime contracts. They kept themselves focused on the mission of improving government operations.

Service and support were key tenets of Montgomery's service in the military, and those tenets continued at FTC.

The company's prime contracts and task orders have included:

- CIO workforce strategic planning, policy, and performance improvement program support for the Tricare Management Activity (now the Defense Health Agency);
- Agile requirements management support for Customs and Border Protection at the Department of Homeland Security;

- Data strategy for the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Employee Education System (EES);
- Web site development for CMSs at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS);

- Data analytics and integration support development services for the Washington Headquarters Services (WHS)

- Program Office and Cyber Systems Engineering support for the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), Chief Information Officer, Security Coordination Center (SCC)

With recent task order awards on T4NG, the company is poised to keep growing during the next five years.

Montgomery attributes the growth to the quality of FTC's workforce. She and the company's leadership team have focused on recruiting top-notch staff who are committed to what they do. Montgomery notes that as FTC has expanded, the employees have become the face of the company. "The company's most valuable resource is everyone who is part of our team: the people," Montgomery says.

In August, FTC was named to the Inc. 5000 for the second year in a row in 2016. The company has also been named among the 50 fastest growing woman-owned companies by Inc.

FTC's steady, planned growth includes recent appraisal at Maturity Level 3 for Services of the Carnegie Mellon University Software Engineering Institute's Capability Maturity Model Integration, also known as CMMI Level 3. The company achieved that appraisal in February. A few months later, the company earned certifications for the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 9001:2015 Quality Management and ISO 20000-1:2011 IT Service Management by the Foundation for Policy and Governance in Marlton, NJ for its Quality Management System and Information Technology Service Management System, respectively. FTC has also recently received its appraisal for

CMMI ML 3 for Development.

These certifications and appraisals have increasingly become a sign of a small business's increasing maturity and focus on standard, high-quality processes.

They have increasingly become prerequisites for winning some U.S. federal contracts, so FTC's attainment of those certifications will help it grow even more in the next few years.

FTC clearly drew on its commitment to continuous improvement from Montgomery. Montgomery holds four master's degrees. She earned a Master of Science in Counseling from Eastern Washington University in Cheney, Washington, a Master of Science in Management of Information Systems from Nova Southeastern University in Davie, FL, and a Master of Divinity and Master of Art Christian Education from Virginia Union University in Richmond, VA.

She puts her master of divinity to good use by running a Veterans Ministry at her church. Through the VetCare Ministry, the church does whatever it can to support local Veterans, including adopting Veteran families, supporting children and meeting with Veterans on a monthly basis.

The recent expansion of FTC's footprint at the Department of Veterans Affairs through the five task order wins on the T4NG contract give Montgomery and the FTC staff even more opportunities to improve the lives of Veterans. At the end of the day, Montgomery says it's the employees of the companies that will make the difference.

"You cannot have a company and have it all about me, the president," she says. "It's all about the people that make things happen."



Joset Wright-Lacy, President of NMSDC Building Bridges That Connect Minority Suppliers To Corporations

The DNA of a Supplier Diversity Leader

By Sharon Pinder

When great leaders are “dissected” scholars have found the great extent to which the leaders’ life experiences and families of origin have impacted their evolution. Joset Wright-Lacy is no exception.

Wright-Lacy is President of the National Minority Supplier Development Council (NMSDC), the nation’s premier corporate membership organization focused exclusively on advancing opportunities for Asian, African-American, Hispanic and Native American owned businesses.

As the eldest of three children, Wright-Lacy learned at an early age that only the strong survive. Wright-Lacy was raised by a single mother, whose dedication and commitment still serves as an inspiration.

“As the eldest child my mother expected me to help take care of my siblings and keep them in line”, said Wright-Lacy. “Often when they were sick I was the one who took care of them in the middle of the night,

changing the sheets if they were ill. I did this willingly because I saw how hard my mother worked to provide for us.”

Wright-Lacy’s grandparents educated her about racism in the United States through stories about their parents and grandparents. She traces her family tree back to the 1700’s. Her grandfather’s ancestors, the Roberts, were free people, a white Englishman who travelled to the U.S. with his Black family. When North Carolina was considering a law eliminating the rights of Native Americans, freed Blacks and poor white servants, the Roberts family moved, in the company of members of a local Quaker community. The family settled in a small farming town north of Indianapolis, Indiana. The Roberts family thrived in their new location, many becoming teachers and preachers.

“My great grandfather was a barber/surgeon, which was a big deal in those days. He owned his own shop and employed several other barbers. Since the family was racially mixed

they knew how to do everyone’s hair and their customers included Blacks and Whites. He was very successful.” said Wright-Lacy.

Her grandmother’s family was born into slavery. They were part of the Beldsoe plantation in west Tennessee. When slavery was abolished, the Beldsoe’s actually gave her great-grandfather 40 acres and a mule. He was a successful farmer and preacher.

Wright-Lacy remembers story one, in particular, “My great-grandfather was away from home, preaching, and a white man came to the house harassing my great-grandmother and two of her youngest children. My great-grandmother came out of the house waving a gun and screaming for them to get off of her property. She was known as Crazy Joanna, and the white men kept away from her.”

By the 1920’s, when even Crazy Joanna couldn’t stop the threats, the family had saved enough money to move out of the south. They left the Memphis area and moved to Indianapolis.



Joset Wright-Lacy
President of NMSDC

When Wright-Lacy started attending a Catholic school on the north side of Indianapolis she learned about racism first hand.

Wright-Lacy says, “Little Black girls were to be seen and not heard. They really didn’t want to see us or hear from us. They did everything that they could to marginalize all the Black kids in the school. There were only about five of us when I first started.”

In fourth grade her life changed. Wright-Lacy found a strong advocate in her teacher, Sister Margaret. Her class was assigned to memorize a poem. (Back then they asked that you memorize a stanza or paragraph at a time.) Wright-Lacy memorized the whole two-page poem in one night. The next day at school she recited the whole poem verbatim with no mistakes. Sister Margaret was so impressed that she insisted that Wright be cast as a leprechaun in the school play.

“Here I was”, said Wright-Lacy, “a black kid in a green leprechaun suit that Sister Margaret got one of the White parents to let the class borrow. She had to really convince the parent to lend a Black girl the costume.”

Later in the year the school was producing another play for a priest who

was celebrating the 25th anniversary of his ordination. They needed an angel who would narrate on stage between the scene changes and the set up.

Wright-Lacy said, “So Sister Margaret recommended me and the principal and others rejected it. The priest was very racist. Sister Margaret told them that if they didn’t want to cast me in the play the 4th grade wouldn’t participate. The irony was the racist priest got to see this Black girl play the lead role about his life. My mother had to contain her laughter as she watched

me perform.”

This experience gave her confidence and the insight to recognize the powerful role of an advocate. It is then she set her life course to help others through advocacy. Wright-Lacy decided she could best do that as an attorney. She graduated law school and held many different leadership roles in public and private organizations.

After practicing law for about 10 years, she received an opportunity to work on a project involving supplier diversity.

“During college I had an opportunity to work for Richard Lugar, Mayor of Indianapolis. There, I began to understand the role minority business played in driving economic development in the Black community. Her formal introduction to minority supplier development came when she was attorney for the local telephone company and one of her clients came to her with a question about the company’s MBE program. She describes herself as being “hooked”. Her career at that company led ultimately to being named as the company’s first Vice President for Procurement and Property Services. Now she had an even greater opportunity to ensure that minority businesses had an opportunity to participate in the company’s supply chain and other busi-





ness opportunities. It was during her tenure as Vice President that she heard the legendary Harriet Michel at a board meeting and seeing the passion she had for the work. Wright-Lacy reports that she “wondered if I could do something like that?”

But, the universe knew that Wright-Lacy had other commitments to meet and more preparation to do. Life goes around in cycles, and in June 2010, Wright-Lacy’s career came full circle. She was hired to lead the dynamic National Minority Supplier Development Council. She took the helm at a time when corporations began to challenge the value proposition. The competitive landscape had changed for all advocacy organizations.

Under Wright-Lacy’s leadership the organization successfully implemented a five-year strategic plan aimed at increasing efficiencies while improving customer service to its members.

Although NMSDC remains

the gold standard for certification and discrimination still exists in the marketplace, clarity around minority supplier development is even more important than what was demanded by those who may have supported these efforts decades ago. NMSDC has been in existence for over 44 years and the

“The tide is shifting and soon many other groups will be in play. My focus is on keeping the NMSDC relevant and increasing our value proposition. As Albert Einstein said, we cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.”

expectation from the organization and marketplace is that it needs to be taken to the next level. NMSDC must define itself in the 2.0 era.

As a seasoned business leader and strategist, Wright-Lacy is leading NMSDC on a significant redesign to provide innovative and customer driven services to over 1,750 corporate members, 12,000 MBEs, 23 regional affiliates, and five international affiliates.

“The NMSDC was founded in 1972, and unfortunately we are still dealing with lack of opportunities for MBEs. In some cases, especially challenges in accessing capital, very little has changed since 1972. We have not eliminated what I call – America’s second sin. The original sin is what early settlers did to the native people of this land. Our second sin is



what was done to African people who were brought here to build the first economies of this country. This nation was able to ignore the sin against native people who were relegated to “reservations” and were mostly out of sight. They were effectively written out of the American story, except as caricatures. The history of people of color in this country cannot be re-written. People of color are still here and in increasingly larger numbers. We are visible. We are seen every day. We are part of the fabric of this nation. Despite this reality, or perhaps because of it, this country is still the victim of prejudice and bias. Despite the narrative of liberty that underscores the American ideology, the country’s economy was driven by the enslavement and involuntary servitude of people of color. So when people ask “why hasn’t anything changed.” Well, we haven’t expunged racism yet.”

As a leader, Wright-Lacy recognizes that when a nonprofit organization is created, the founders often have a vision that the organization will exist forever. To truly exist in perpetuity, an organization needs to be able to quickly and effectively pivot.

Robert Wallace, PH.D., in his book

Pivot Point Intelligence provides a definition of what it means to pivot as a business entity. Expanding briefly on his definition, to pivot as a nonprofit means to be able to quickly change tactical and strategic direction without losing momentum all while remaining true to the organizational mission.

For Wright-Lacy, pivoting means being a change agent for NMSDC and the supplier diversity community in general. She is focusing on increasing the organizations value proposition while remaining true to the NMSDC founders’ intent. She feels a sense of urgency to take the organization to the next level. As the leader of the organization Wright-Lacy feels that the urgency exists and the time to pivot is now.

She said, “The tide is shifting and soon many other groups will be in play. My focus is on keeping the NMSDC relevant and increasing our value proposition. As Albert Einstein said, *we cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.*”

Although Wright-Lacy is committed to serving its corporate members, she always goes back to the premise of the executive order that created

the Council.

“If we build a better business for minority communities, we are all better off” she said. “We use corporations to make it happen. And while the corporations are the members, they have to buy into its mission. And that mission is to make it better for MBEs to compete and contribute to the larger society.”

Wright-Lacy stands on the shoulders of her influencers; God and her family of origin. She listens to the voice of the mother and grandmother. She finds comfort in scripture and prays for the right outcomes. With their guidance she is sure she will always do the right thing.



Emmett T. Vaughn- Bringing His “A Game” to Supplier Diversity

By Sharon Pinder

The way to get to the height of any profession is constant improvement. You have to know the game and you have to work at it to always bring your “A” Game.

Emmett Vaughn can fill a room just by his very presence. He commands your attention solely with his broad shouldered physique and orator’s voice. He holds your attention and garners your respect when he speaks about his passion...his lifelong calling, as an advocate for minority owned business.

Vaughn is currently Director of the Office of Diverse Business Empowerment at Exelon Corporation. In this role he provides strategic direction and oversight for approximately \$1.5 billion of business deals done between Exelon and diversity certified businesses annually. He joined the company in 2005 and has been the catalyst for much of Exelon’s success in national supplier diversity and economic development. Under Vaughn’s leadership, Exelon has generated more than \$3.8 billion in “new business” for MWBEs.

Vaughn grew up in a middle-class neighborhood in St. Louis Missouri,

the oldest son of well-educated parents who instilled the value of excellence in their children. Anxious to never disappoint his family he was educated in public schools with curriculum tracks for the gifted and talented. In addition to his stellar grades, Vaughn was awarded a fellowship to the prestigious Julliard Institute, and scholarships to play college football. He chose Northeast Missouri State University for his undergraduate education. Vaughn received his MBA from Kellogg School of Management.

At an early age Vaughn became aware that growing up a Black man, in the first generation post-civil rights movement, presented many challenges and uncertainties. Although legally, African Americans had access to more opportunities, Vaughn recognized that in order to succeed, Black men had to bring more to the table than their Caucasian counterparts. This realization resulted in Vaughn establishing two



Emmett T. Vaughn
Director of the Office
of Diverse Business
Empowerment
Exelon Corporation

foundational principles, which he follows to this day; Do not be afraid to assert yourself, and; Strive for continual improvement. Following these principles has resulted in Vaughn bringing his A game to his career, as well as his personal life.

In fact, Vaughn says that he is, “An acquired taste. Some people may not appreciate the edge with which I’ve chosen to push the envelope, in the spirit of affecting change.”

Vaughn’s first job after college was at Junior Achievement as a fundraiser and public relations associate. His performance there was so impressive that he was transferred to their corporate headquarters and later to Chicago. His move to Chicago presented Vaughn with unprecedented access to Chicago’s political powers, including John Rogers Jr., founder of Ariel Capital Management and George E. Johnson, Sr., founder of Johnson Products, the first African American-owned company to be listed on the American

Stock Exchange. Through these men, who he considers two of his earliest mentors, Vaughn learned firsthand how to effect change within a heavily politicized environment.

Vaughn was introduced to supplier diversity through a position at RGMA. RGMA’s CEO, Ralph Moore, is considered a supplier diversity pioneer and is still regarded as an iconic figure in this arena.

“Emmett Vaughn is a combination strategic thinker, master communicator, stand-up comedian, wannabe store-front preacher and most importantly he is a thought-leader in the field of supplier diversity.” says Moore. “When I hired Emmett to join RGMA over 20 years ago he had no experience in supplier diversity, but what I saw was his leadership skills and a future change agent. Based on Emmett’s outstanding contributions to supplier diversity and economic justice, I view being one of Emmett’s mentors as one of my proudest achievements.”

His entry into the corporate world of supplier diversity came when a RR Donnelley division president was so impressed with Vaughn’s suggested approach in response to a marketplace business and minority community outreach crisis, that he asked Vaughn to launch the corporation’s first supplier diversity program.

Rev. Jessie Jackson Sr.’s, Rainbow Push Coalition had targeted RR Donnelley as a diversity unfriendly corporation. When Jackson learned about RR Donnelley’s new hire he demanded a meeting with Vaughn. During this powerful two-hour meeting Jackson insisted that Vaughn work for him instead of RR Donnelley. He wanted Vaughn in his succession plan.

Jackson contacted the chairman of RR Donnelley and after much negotiation agreed to allow Vaughn to be “loaned executive” to Jackson for one year.

“The year was incredible” said Vaughn. “Jesse treated me like a son.



I spent a lot of time traveling with him and being with his family. He is an amazing man. Working for him tremendously sharpened my negotiation skills, but most important, Jesse taught me how to lead courageously.”

When Vaughn’s stint with Jackson was completed, he returned to RR Donnelley. Subsequently, he led the successful business turnaround of a fledging minority owned printing company, Fidelity Print Communications. He was then recruited to lead Albertson, Inc., a leader in the retail grocery industry, in their Supplier Diversity / Ethnic marketing Program.

In 2005, Exelon was attempting to merge with N.J. based PSEG. One of the tension points in the merger was Exelon’s modest use of diverse suppliers. Exelon executives decided that their corporate supplier diversity effort needed to be strengthened. Vaughn was introduced to the Exelon CPO, through senior executives at Chicago based ComEd and was hired almost on the spot. Business is about relationships.

At Exelon Vaughn reunited and resumed relationships with several former colleagues from different

stages of his career including current Exelon Board member, John Rogers. Vaughn credits these relationships with establishing credibility within Exelon’s “C-Suite”. That credibility was integral to getting Exelon moving in a direction that immediately integrated the supplier diversity process into the corporate strategic direction.

Vaughn considers supplier diversity his calling. He loves getting up and going to work every day, but he acknowledges that he has a hard job. “To succeed in this field, you cannot be afraid of tense discussions or corporate consequences. It takes both traditional and contemporary business competencies. You should be working all of the time to improve your competencies and stay current with business trends. People sometimes say I am sassy. Well, when you know what you’re talking about and people respect that knowledge you can be a little sassy. Sometimes you have to be bold to sell your ideas.”

Vaughn is concerned that many supplier diversity programs do not have what is necessary to make a real impact. He says that, “There are more antiquated supplier diversity programs than minority businesses that are ready to do business. Who would have thought that there would be so many minority owned businesses operating at revenue levels in the high hundreds of millions and even billions? The number of these businesses are rapidly increasing and supplier diversity programs have to ‘up their game’ to keep pace with them.”

He is also concerned about how and where corporations position the supplier diversity function. Vaughn has worked tirelessly within Exelon to build a strong business case for supplier diversity and to help his

Vaughn establishing two foundational principles, which he follows to this day; Do not be afraid to assert yourself, and; Strive for continual improvement.



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colleagues understand that supplier diversity is inclusive of economic development, intergovernmental relations, and driving market growth.

“Corporations should use supplier diversity as a cornerstone in economic development and sustainability efforts,” says Vaughn. “When there is no connection to other aspects of external market strategy it is not as effective. Now my office is called *Diverse Business Empowerment*. I wanted to send an internal signal that benefits to the Exelon supply chain would not capture the essence of the



work done for the entire corporation.

Vaughn works closely with Exelon’s divisions of economic development, external affairs, sales, marketing and government and investor relations. All of these divisions are beneficiaries of what Exelon does well in supplier diversity. “My colleagues are very smart people who do their jobs well. My team’s work provides them with extra tools for their effort and provides them even more powerful value added resource.”

Vaughn urges corporations to be more rigorous in the level they set for supplier diversity professionals. As minority entrepreneurs are becoming more sophisticated so must supply diversity professionals. He is not suggesting that everyone have an advanced degree, but he is concerned that often times the individuals heading these offices do not possess the professional experience or business skills to garner respect from or adequately advocate for the stakeholders they serve.

“You cannot sell a rigorous supplier diversity, or any other program within a corporation unless you have credibility,” said Vaughn. “If your internal audience does

not fully understand the universal strategic benefits of this process to the entire corporation, your program will consistently be on threat alert.”

On a personal level Vaughn is a deeply spiritual person who believes he has been given a mission to help people of color and serve the underserved communities. He has a son, two daughters, a son-in-law and three grandsons.

Vaughn is strongly influenced throughout his life by his guiding scripture Psalm 119:71 *It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.*

“To succeed in this field, you cannot be afraid of tense discussions or corporate consequences. It takes both traditional and contemporary business competencies.

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Carol H. Williams Advertising (CHWA).

By CH Hood Jr.



Carol H. Williams
CEO

A commercial can capture one's attention in the blink of an eye. It can also, just as quickly, fade. Then there is "strategic advertising," so finely and meticulously executed that it can captivate audiences and build a lasting bond. Early in her career, industry titan Carol H. Williams, built a marketing/communication agency innovative enough to provide both clients and consumers alike, a transformative view of advertising. This agency is known as Carol H. Williams Advertising (CHWA).

Since 1986, CHWA has been a full service agency with offices located in Oakland, San Francisco, Chicago, New York, Detroit, as well as strategic global partnerships, all providing clients with an array of integrative services. The company's motto, "Whose Eyes Are You Looking Through When You View the World?" enables the team to create inclusive and impactful messages that pull at the very cores and values of not only multicultural consumer markets, but mainstream as well. As a result, CHWA excels at strategic targeting—produced and implemented by each and every campaign the team touches.

No brand has ever lost with CHWA at the helm. Clients, such as: U.S. Army, General Motors, PG&E, Disney, and more, learned to connect with new audiences and in a meaningful way, giving voices to huge underserved markets while having consistently impacted clients' bottom lines. CHWA has even partnered with Exelon

corporation, a business fully dedicated to inclusivity with diversity certified businesses.

Now, coming upon its 30th anniversary, the NMSDC and HubZONE certified CHWA has risen above the challenges of an unpredictable economy and endured in this ever-changing landscape. Today, CHWA remains the only major multicultural agency that is 100% woman/minority owned.

The beating heart of this talented agency is Carol H. Williams, CEO and CCO. Williams, a living legend, has produced some of the most memorable advertising campaigns in history, including the timeless Secret antiperspirant campaign "Strong Enough for a Man, But Made for a Woman", the highly successful Pillsbury frosting campaign "Paper Knife", and the entertaining Pillsbury campaign "Say Hello to Poppin' Fresh Dough". As a young professional, Williams was exposed to the creative geniuses of Leo Burnett Advertising Agency, responsible for everlasting campaigns and catch phrases influencing the food, travel and tobacco sectors. For Williams, this proved to be the perfect incubator for her intellect, intuitiveness, and eventual success at a table with few people of color and certainly no women. "On a daily basis, I was exposed to this amazing energy that allowed me to take my craft to a higher level and rise above many in the market," says Williams, and

surrounded by such ingenuity, she set course to blend brilliance, boldness, and courage that would catapult her toward greatness.

CHWA boasts a highly diverse and skilled staff that continuously churns out award-winning advertising and marketing campaigns for Fortune 500 companies. Successful campaigns in recent years include the highly successful "Pass Those Cookies" campaign for Lactaid, the Effie award-winning "Our Stand" TV ad for Allstate Insurance Company, the captivating "Poetry in Motion" campaign for General Motors, the groundbreaking "Imagination" for The Walt Disney Company, and even the No. 1 general consumer-rated TV ad for 2007, "Signs," for The Walt Disney Company.

To round out 2016, CHWA is experiencing a blockbuster year, having signed the US Census, San Francisco Housing, and US Bank to its ongoing list of clients; however, no matter how large the organization grows, the personal care, the passion, and the love for innovation remains top of the line. Williams shares her talent, resources and optimism by enhancing positivity within the community grounded in a strong testament of faith quoted from an unlikely source. "As that great American Philosopher, Winnie the Pooh once said; You are stronger than you seem, braver than you believe and smarter than you think."

Strategic Communications begins with asking yourself, **whose eyes are you looking through when you view the world?**

A commercial can capture one's attention in the blink of an eye. It can also, just as quickly, fade. Then there is "strategic advertising," so finely and meticulously executed that it can captivate audiences and build a lasting bond.

Carol H. Williams Advertising (CHWA) is a marketing & communication agency that is innovative enough to provide, both clients and consumers alike, a transformative view of advertising. Visit us at www.carolhwilliams.com.



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Ideal Electric: Shining a Light on Business Sustainability, Customer Needs and Corporate Responsibility

by Sharon Moore Jackson

Cora Williams, President and CEO of Ideal Electrical Supply Company (T/A Ideal Electric), comes from a long line of mom and pop businesses in Newport, Arkansas. Located approximately 90 miles North East of Little Rock, the site where the landmark Brown v. Board of Education decision was issued by the U.S. Supreme Court, Cora quickly learned that education and economic empowerment are synonymous.

"I always had an entrepreneurial spirit, it's in my blood", says Cora. With that innate desire, it is not an accident that Cora pursued her dream of owning a business. To understand and appreciate Cora's story, we must first reflect on her journey from a small town in Arkansas to President & CEO of Ideal Electric Supply Company located in the nation's capitol, in Washington, D.C.

Cora began her professional career in the Federal Government as a Management Intern and ended her

Federal career as a Special Assistant to an Assistant Secretary, all at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). During her employment at HUD, Cora discovered an opportunity that allowed her to sell DIY (*Do-It-Yourself*) prepackaged electronic security systems for residences. She immediately jumped at the opportunity to tackle a new home business venture that tapped into her entrepreneurial spirit. At this point in her career, she did not want to wait until retirement to take a risk and do something different. Many of her peers questioned her desire to begin her side business but supported her nonetheless.

Despite the concerns, Cora knew her passions for owning her own business and her work ethic would not fail her. As she prepared to transition from government employee to business owner, Cora started selling these systems by inviting people into her home on the evenings and weekends to demonstrate how the systems

worked. Customers frequently requested additional electrical products to enhance their electrical systems as a caveat to purchasing the electronic security system. As an innovator, she realized there was a greater need for these types of systems in her community. She would go to townhouse and condo complexes where there had been some burglaries to conduct demonstrations to the home owners associations. Sales increased tremendously. As the business started to grow, two things happened: 1) it did not take long before the light bulb came on and Cora figured out that there was a greater need for the electrical products than for the security systems; and 2) Cora had to make a decision. She did not have enough time to perform 2 jobs since the part-time job was requiring her full-time attention. She elected to resign from HUD in 1985 and in that same year, Ideal Electronic Security was established. In 1991, Cora and her husband, Ken Rogers, decided



**Cora Williams,
President and CEO
Ideal Electrical
Supply Company**



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to change the name of the company to Ideal Electrical Supply Company, in keeping with the current product offerings.

Stepping out on faith, Cora knew she had to make something happen quickly so she withdrew her retirement to finance the business. At that time, banks would not lend her money because she was a small start-up, minority and a woman business. However, she was determined to make it work.

Even today, the wholesale electrical supply industry remains a male dominated field, with very few women and even fewer minorities. Cora cracked the glass ceiling by being persistent and not accepting "no" as the final answer. Instead, she insists on hearing "*not right now*" which allowed time to pass before she revisited the clients to ultimately hear the word "yes". With driven purpose and vision, she has positioned Ideal Electric to successfully compete in a male dominated market since its inception.

There have been challenges along the way but they did not deter Cora, she refused to give up. Persistence and providing excellent customer service are her winning strategies. "We only exist because of our customers; it is a mindset that exemplifies the core values of the organization" says Cora.

Building strong relationships and networks provided Cora with several recurring customers. In fact, Cora still sells products to her first big customer. Having strong relationships, coupled with her knowledge and experience with the Federal Government and her husband Ken Roger's decision to join the firm and bring his global corporate knowledge, she soon obtained 8(a) certification from the Small Business Administration (SBA)

and Local Certification with the District of Columbia Government. Unfortunately, the 8(a) certification did not yield significant contractual opportunities because at that time, the Federal Government did not set aside products in the security wholesale electrical supply industries; but conversely the District of Columbia Government did. Ideal Electric's biggest customers are electric utilities. Ideal also sells to government agencies and some select contractors. Most recently, Ideal Electric Supply Company was awarded a GSA schedule but still the vast majority of Ideal's customers are from the private sector. Also, Ideal Electric has been awarded the Capitol Regional Minority Supplier Development Council's (CRMSDC) (National Minority Supplier Development Council local Council affiliate) "Supplier of the Year Award" twice and is the proud recipient of the "Regional Supplier of the Year Award". Cora serves on the Board of Director of the CRMSDC. Last year, Ideal Electric was sponsored by Exelon and inducted into the NMSDC Corporate Plus Program.

Cora attributes her longevity to surrounding herself with a quality team, core values and again, excellent customer service. Her leadership style is one that pays close attention to detail and she relies on her husband, Ken Rogers, former Vice President of an aerospace company, for strategic advice. Ken retired from the firm but came back to work as the business grew. He is now on the Board of Directors and still does a lot of work for the firm. He brought tremendous global and financial expertise to the company and fostered business partnerships with many of the firm's major customers.

Cora Williams and her husband

have grown Ideal Electric Supply Company from a 2 person operation in 1985 to 22 full-time employees to date. Many of the employees have been with Ideal Electric for 10+ years and all employees are viewed as family. Cora Williams also has a passion for education and golf. That said, Cora and her husband merged their two passions, established a non-profit company and started an annual networking golf tournament. The sole purpose of the golf tournament was to provide scholarships for needy inner city graduating high school seniors. The Ideal Companies Scholarship Fund has awarded more than \$250,000 in scholarships from the proceeds of this event over the last 21 years. Cora is a talented woman of action and conviction who left her government job to start a business that continues to grow. Her legacy has lit the way for future women business-owners who also want to leave their mark in a male dominated industry. She is a true example that you can achieve your dreams with faith, hard work, dedication and determination. For more information on Ideal Electric Supply Company, please check out their website at www.idealelectric.com

**"I always had an
entrepreneurial spirit,
it's in my blood"**

nTech Solutions

Sridhar Kunadi and Surajit Sengupta, co-founders of nTech Solutions in Columbia, Maryland, are proud of what they've achieved.

Part of what they're proud of is winning the prestigious Supplier of the Year Award from the National Minority Supplier Development Council at their 34th Annual Leaders and Legends Award Ceremony. The award recognizes an outstanding minority business enterprise with revenues between \$1 and \$10 million that has demonstrated high performance standards in the delivery of product and services to corporate members. This is one of the highest awards bestowed on a minority owned business.

Both with Masters of Business Administration degrees and work experience in other government con-

tractors, they had become frustrated with the bureaucracy that limited their productivity in other companies. In 2005, they decided to form their own business and do it better—to provide a better work environment that enabled people to do their best work, and at the same time, provide better services for their customers.

nTech was founded with one clear mission – to earn the trust of clients by consistently delivering superior, proven solutions. nTech achieves this by embracing a partnership philosophy that creates relevant, innovative solutions to improve program performance and ensures success.

That mission has been achieved:



Sridhar Kunadi
Co-founder and CEO of
nTech Solutions, Inc.

Surajit Sengupta
Co-founder and President of
nTech Solutions, Inc.



by Gary Shumaker

nTech is ranked as one of Inc. 500's fastest growing companies in not only the Baltimore area, but the country as well. nTech has grown by a staggering 608%.

A key element in their approach is their value scheme. They place a very high premium on honesty, integrity and transparency.

Sridhar and Surajit understand customer relations in a big way. They use this understanding to drive a methodology for project success that they apply to every effort. Before they start a project, their client relations department uses a specialized team of experts to meet with the customer to develop detailed requirements and skills documents. They use this to ensure that they fully understand the requirement. They use this to develop very deep descriptions of the skills that will be used on the effort, thereby reducing lag time to hire new resources or make internal reassignments. This increases the likelihood that their staff has the right number of people with the correct skill sets to meet the requirement completely and produce exceptional quality products.

nTech president, Surajit Sengupta, expresses their approach to recruiting well when he says, "Our guys know how to find talent."

Once they select the staff and start a project, they consider every employee to be an entrepreneur. They provide corporate support to make sure that it happens.

In running the company, Sridhar and Surajit work as a team, but they also have areas of specialization.

EVERYTHING AS A SERVICE

nTech Solutions is the type of place where you look forward to coming to work every day. We pride ourselves on maintaining high standards and efficiency, while enjoying a relaxed work environment.

nTech Program Manager

* Sridhar's new-school methodology has been a major factor in his success in building the company. He works hard to put himself in the shoes of his clients before providing them with solutions to maximize their return on investment for any capital spent. Sridhar's roles include directing nTech's business development and internal talent acquisition departments, client relationship management, and community outreach programs. He is a thought leader regarding the implementation and creation of strategic service offerings, as well as the development of nTech's integrated sales, marketing, and delivery programs.

* Surajit's roles include directing business development and internal talent acquisition, client relationship management, and community outreach programs. He is often characterized as a thought leader in the data-driven field of customer analysis, and has been recognized for providing advisory services to both middle and senior management of mid- and large-sized organizations regarding various aspects of technology implementation with the eventual goal of providing a 360-degree view of the customer. Surajit is a Chief Technical Officer who brings his clients' technical challenges

into nTech's excellent team environment to strategize and provide effective solutions which include business process changes. Surajit is skilled in strategic planning, project and program management, resource and financial management, business and practice development, and offshore methodology, development, and deployment. He earns the trust of clients by consistently delivering superior, proven solutions. Surajit achieves this by embracing a partnership philosophy that creates relevant, innovative solutions that improve program performance and ensures success.

Their approach is portable, to the point that since their start in a basement in Owings Mills, Maryland in 2005, in addition to their corporate office, now relocated to Columbia, Maryland, they now have additional offices in Michigan, Pennsylvania, Chicago, New York and Texas. Their customer base includes Fortune 500 organizations across a wide variety of industries and County, State and Federal agencies. The company has doubled in size every year for the past three years.

nTech is ranked as one of Inc. 500's fastest growing companies in not only the Baltimore area, but the country. nTech has grown by a staggering

608%, doubling in size every year for the past three years.

The co-founders care about the repeatability of their processes and the quality of their products. That's a key reason that Sridhar and Surajit made the decision to invest in gaining ISO 9001:2008 credentials—it's an internationally recognized standard for just that: repeatability and quality.

Both Sridhar and Surajit are dedicated to their values. They study requirements closely and they deliver what they promise to their customers. They value the words customers write about their performance, and believe it will come back in the future.

The partners believe that it is important to give back to the community that has made their success. They do this in two ways:

And their employees love them! On the web site where employees can anonymously criticize their bosses and talk about what the company is really like, Glassdoor.com, nTech gets 100% favorable scores for Recommend to a friend, CEO approval and Positive Business Outlook!

For more information about nTech, go to ntechsol.com.



Linda Malloy and the American Dream

Providing World Class Staffing Solutions.

By Gary E. Shumaker

Linda Malloy believes in the American Dream, and she thinks integrity and ethics are key to business success. She demonstrates that every day, in the leadership of her company, LLM Placements, LLC.

Of course, it takes more than just integrity and ethics to succeed, and along her way; with nearly fifteen years of experience, she's paid her dues.

She built on her academic credentials with a bachelor's degree in Urban Affairs from St. Augustine's University and a master's degree from National Louis University in Human Resources, Staffing Methodologies, Policies and Procedures.

Out of college, Linda had difficulty finding a job in her the South, so she went to Washington, D.C. She liked Washington, so she stayed!

Her first real job was contract support for healthcare opportunities. "The business owner gave me the opportunity to do recruitment for healthcare opportunities and introduced me to marketing business development, and how to do pricing for business proposals."

Linda got experience in running a business by working as a consultant for

multiple businesses, performing some of the less glamorous, back office roles like recruiting, benefits, business development and marketing. She also started doing technical recruiting.

She stuck her toe in the water by forming her own staffing business in 2005, but she continued to work her day job, until she went full time with her own shop in 2010. Then, in 2014, she obtained certification in the Small Business Administration's 8(a) Business Development program. She's doing a lot of things right; she currently has over 100 employees in various states. And, she just won another contract, this one with the U.S. Army Recruiting Command, under which she will control the work of another 280 people: 143 of her own and 137 from her subcontractor.

Linda believes in the value of

"The business owner gave me the opportunity to do recruitment for healthcare opportunities and introduced me to marketing business development, and how to do pricing for business proposals."



Linda Malloy
Founder & CEO

diversity and she demonstrates it across her entire company. Her staff looks like a text book study for diversity in hiring.

Her first contract was with the Army's Fort Drum, home of the 10th Mountain Division, in Jefferson County, New York in 2014. The contract gives her company a solid dose of financial security; it runs through 2019 and it gives her a strong opportunity to grow her business as a Department of Defense contractor.

She has won other contracts with the Walter Reed National Medical Center in Bethesda, MD (2015); and U.S. Army Recruiting Command, headquartered in Fort Knox, KY, also in 2015. She travels a lot to keep up with her rapidly growing empire!

She's even experienced something no business person wants to go through: an employee's death, experience no entrepreneur wants to have. She personally took charge of

LLM Difference:

- Woman and minority-owned small business
- Nationwide service provider for government agencies
- Experts in credentialing and onboarding personnel
- Award-winning employee management capability
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Industries Served:

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- Life Sciences
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- Pharmaceutical
- Research & Development

many of the details to assist the family.

As she grows her company's core business in staff augmentation for medical facilities, she's looking for the next step, possibly more

staff augmentation for information technology requirements.

But Linda has paid a price for her success. She has felt the loneliness at the top. She finds she has less

time for personal friends, and the relationships have been strained by her busy schedule. Her father died in the last 90s, and her mother died in late 2015. She describes her parents as working class people who believed in education, good grades and church.

Linda believes in paying back to her community for all of the success she has enjoyed. She is very active in her church, the New Samaritan Baptist Church, as she describes it, "in the 'hood" of Washington—although she admits that the area is becoming more gentrified. She's the Hospitality Ministry Leader and has held other lead positions in the Women's Ministry, including helping parishioners prepare for job interviews, learn interview skills, improve resume writing skills, improve their health with skincare techniques, hair, massage, food preparation and event planning for major church functions. This program started out as a six-month program but has grown significantly beyond that.

Integrity and ethics mean something. For Linda Malloy, in spite of the bumps along the way, integrity and ethics are the cornerstone of her ability to realize the American Dream!

Gary E. Shumaker is the founder and senior consultant for Gary E. Shumaker, Inc. and President and CEO of C2 Solutions Group, Inc. He has spent 20 years inside government and nearly 30 years in the industry as an executive, business developer, chief operating officer and chief executive officer for multiple small companies in the federal contracting market. He helps small companies develop the intellectual infrastructure to succeed in the federal marketplace. For more information, visit garyeshumaker.com.



Building On a Strong Foundation; Moving Essex Forward

Jonathan Blunt, President and Chief Operating Officer, Essex Construction, LLC

by Sharon Moore Jackson

From a very young age, Jonathan Blunt was taught that preparation is directly tied to success. That consistent message was drilled into him by his father, Retired Major General Roger R. Blunt, the owner of Tyroc Construction and Chairman of the Board of Essex Construction, LLC. Despite the fact that Jonathan's dad laid the groundwork for the businesses, Jonathan was still expected to learn all he could about the construction industry, which began at entry level. No job was too small for him to perform so he emptied waste paper baskets, vacuumed the floors, worked as a laborer and assistant superintendent, doing whatever was required in the field and as well as in the office, all in preparation for a time such as this, President and Chief Operating Officer of Essex Construction, LLC.

Jonathan started his formal education at the University of Maryland College Park working towards a B.S. Degree in Business Administration. During his studies, Jonathan discovered the University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES) an HBCU (Historically Black College University) was the only campus in the Univer-

sity of Maryland System that offered a 4-year program in Construction Management Technology (CMT), so he eagerly enrolled. Jonathan reflects on those teachable moments with pride because they have helped shape him as a person and as a leader.

To get a better understanding of the evolution of Essex, we must journey back to 1972, when Tyroc Construction, an asphalt paving company, was created by his father. This was a small operation at first until after a few years of aggressive marketing and bidding it became a formidable competitor in the Asphalt Paving and Bridge Construction sectors. This is also during the time when the Federal Government created the 8a Set-Aside Program to ensure that minority businesses would have an equal opportunity to compete and win contracts. The late Congressman Parren J. Mitchell, from Baltimore, Maryland, was the driving force and advocate for minority inclusion in government contracting. As Chairman of the Small Business Committee, Congressman Mitchell attached an amendment to a \$4 billion Public Works bill that compelled state and local governments, seeking federal grants,



**Jonathan Blunt,
President & CEO
Essex Construction, LLC**

to set aside ten percent (10%) of the funds to retain minority businesses as contractors and subcontractors. Tyroc Construction was one of the minority companies that benefited from the 8a set-aside program.

Unfortunately, this was the same time period when gas prices were skyrocketing and interest rates were in double digits. Cash flow was not flowing so Tyroc had to make a business decision; remain in the horizontal construction space, (road/bridge construction, landscaping and concrete flatwork) or expand into new, uncharted territory; vertical construction, (which is referred to as ground-up construction). Relationship building became the new order as Tyroc moved into vertical construction and developed joint ventures with companies such as John G. Davis, George Hyman and Omni which is now Clark Construction. In 1982, Tyroc began to slow down operations and Essex was established. Retired Major General Blunt saw a new horizon in Prince George's County, Maryland and moved the headquarters to Oxon Hill in 1986.

With over 25 years of construction



experience under his belt, Jonathan is now leading the charge and guiding Essex Construction as President and Chief Operating Officer. Moreover, with 115 employees under his leadership and revenues hitting the best numbers in decades, Essex is definitely on the move. Projects like MGM at National Harbor, Corvias Solutions Clean Water Partnership, St. Matthews Baptist Church Design-Build and Ivy League Community Charities, are among the local Prince George's County projects Essex Construction is currently working on while pursuing projects of interest nation-wide. Jonathan's professional affiliations and designations includes founding member and Vice Chairman of the Board of the Minority Building Industry Association, Vice Chairman of the Board of the University of Maryland Eastern Shore Construction Management Advisory Board, his alma mater, and was a member of the Engineer's Club of Baltimore.

Essex's success is attributed to a team of experienced and responsive construction professionals who take great pride in achieving the highest standard of quality in the products and services Essex delivers. "Cost estimating is one of the most important steps in project management, and if your business is not making a profit, you're not in business", says Jonathan. Superior management and timely, cost-effective completion in each engagement is the goal. Essex approaches every project as a new privilege to demon-

strate excellence in performance and pride in their work.

Additionally, Essex's personnel bring demonstrated strength in working effectively in team relationships to deliver complex projects. On the social responsibility side, Essex gives back to the community to which it serves and has adopted Arrowhead Elementary School to mentor young students on opportunities realized in the construction field. It also allows Essex to help educate and enlighten students about the complex field of construction. Construction is not just brick and mortar or digging ditches but to the contrary, it is a rewarding career with salaries starting at \$52K a year for those students who may select vocational education over a 4-year institution.

As a certified MBE, Essex sought the designation before they needed it. Has it been a benefit for local certification, the answer is a resounding yes. Jonathan insists that he is positioning Essex to strategically align its services with the estimated \$6-\$8 billion economic development slated for Prince George's County within the next 5-7 years.

In addition to certification with Prince George's County, Essex Construction is also certified by City of Baltimore MBE; State of Maryland Department of Transportation MBE/DBE; Prince George's County Public Schools MBE; New Jersey Transit MBE/DBE; Metropolitan Transit Authority State of New York DBE; Commonwealth of

Pennsylvania Department of General Services MBE; Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority; and the Commonwealth of Virginia MBE.

Since its inception, Essex Construction has been recognized as an industry leader and provides general contracting, construction management and design/build services for commercial and institutional clients in the Greater Metropolitan Washington, DC region and the Baltimore Metropolitan area. Essex specializes in complex interior renovation projects for hospitals, universities and office buildings. Additionally, Essex's construction services include religious, educational and multi-unit housing. Essex has received awards of excellence and craftsmanship awards from Baltimore and Washington contractor and building associations, and a Preservation Project Award by the Maryland Historical Trust. Jonathan provides executive oversight for all operations and he formulates the company's strategic planning to achieve the objective of the business plan. Thirty plus years in operation and 25 years under his belt, Essex is still standing and that is a testament to the company's founder. Those critical lessons learned from Jonathan's dad have helped mold and shape both Jonathan and Essex as they continue to move forward. For more information on Essex Construction, LLC, please visit their website at www.essex-llc.com

NextGen Consulting, Inc. - Delivering NextGen Service, NextGen Results

by Sharon Moore Jackson

Saif Rehman, Ph.D., is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of NextGen Consulting, Inc. (NGCI), an Information Technology (IT) company located in Washington, DC that provides strategic consulting, technology services and value added reseller services to commercial, not-for-profit, and government agencies. NGCI specializes in integrated solutions designed to enhance the performance of your business. "Achieving results in diverse industries while meeting the needs of the customer is paramount to what NextGen Consulting, Inc. does", declares Dr. Rehman. Results matter is not just a catchy phrase or buzz word but is at the core of NextGen Consulting, Inc.

As a result of working for the federal government and numerous IT companies during the mid-90's, primarily Silicon Valley in California, the home of many of the world's largest high-tech corporations and thousands of start-up businesses, Dr. Rehman developed a tactical plan as to how he would one day own and operate his own IT business. He continued to work and learn as

much as he could in his full-time employment while strategizing how and when he would branch out to make that move.

This was the same time period of the dot.com explosion when the internet changed our lives immeasurably by altering every aspect of our lives from shopping, to communication, to receiving news; the internet has affected the way business has evolved now and beyond. Ironically, the majority of publicly traded dot.com companies that were started during the dot.com explosion quickly folded and trillions of dollars of investment capital evaporated.

After the dot.com bubble burst, Dr. Rehman decided to venture out on his own and launch NextGen Consulting, Inc., the "Next Generation" technology company providing consulting and value-added reseller services to its customers. He recognized during his time with his former employers that there was a huge disconnect in the government contracting arena and he wanted to be the solution to that problem. Focused and determined, he set out to carve out a niche market by establishing himself as an expert,



**Saif Rehman, Ph.D.,
CEO of NextGen
Consulting, Inc**

differentiating himself from his competitors was key. Realizing timing was critical for executing his plan of entrepreneurship; Dr. Rehman proceeded to move forward.

Armed with best industry best practices, experience, determination and a passion to serve, NextGen Consulting, Inc. was created in May 2006. The business has been operating in good standing for 10 years with revenues reported at \$65K in 2006 and 1 employee to over \$8M and 65 employees to date. Results measures efficacy and the results you get, in any endeavor, measures how effective your actions have been. NextGen Consulting, Inc. has successfully completed all projects on time and within budget, and delivered numerous systems (new and upgrades) and thousands of products to their clients resulting in savings, stream-line processing and satisfied customers.

It takes time to establish oneself as a subject matter expert in a niche market but once you do, the knowledge and expertise you build within that niche can help you apply your energy, effort and resources in an area that can earn a high return. These results have not

gone unnoticed. NextGen Consulting, Inc. has been recognized nationally as a top diversity-owned business by DiversityBusiness.com numerous times, the nation's leading business-to-business internet site which launched in 1999, with over 46,000 members, as one of the top businesses in the United States. The companies listed on the top business list represent the nation's top multicultural earners. In addition, NGCI has also been recognized by various other organizations including ranked #154 nationally as the fastest growing small business by Inc. Magazine.

NextGen Consulting, Inc. core offerings include;

- Program & Project Management Support
- Value-Added Reseller (more than 800 OEM partners providing more than 3 million products)
- Cloud (ServiceNow & Salesforce)
- ERP implementation & upgrades (PeopleSoft & Oracle)
- Staff Augmentation

Looking ahead, Dr. Rehman says he thinks of his family, especially his children, and building legacy wealth for future generations along with creating more employment opportunities to help at the local and State level. In terms of expansion of services, Dr. Rehman's business plan is to grow the business triple the current size in the next 5 years and continue to provide excellent service to all both its existing and new customers. To further promote the



business, Dr. Rehman says he uses several social media platforms to help in that regard by making frequent announcements, or posting the latest job descriptions for openings, to recognitions or technology updates, all with keeping the lines of communication open, all essential to building and strengthening the brand. Likewise, when recruiting talented and qualified candidates, LinkedIn is the preferred vehicle of choice for reaching a targeted mass of

**After the dot.com
bubble burst, Dr.
Rehman decided
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launch NextGen
Consulting, Inc., the
"Next Generation"
technology company**

professional candidates in Information Technology. Interested job seekers are strongly encouraged to monitor the website periodically for new postings. NextGen Consulting is an Equal Employment Opportunity

(EEO) employer.

In addition to overseeing the day-to-day operations of the company, Dr. Rehman makes time to volunteer. In that regard, Dr. Rehman served as the FCC Committee Chair for the US Pan Asian American Chamber of Commerce (USPAACC) from 2011-2012. The purpose of that committee was to help USPAACC members better understand how to do business with the Federal government and help increase awareness and opportunities for Asian American businesses in Federal agencies. Dr. Rehman believes in volunteering in areas that he is fully committed and he is a strong advocate for minority business and inclusion.

Mr. Rehman also serves on various boards nationally and volunteers his time locally with non-profit County organizations.

NextGen Consulting, Inc. is a certified Small Business and Small Disadvantaged Business and is also certified 8(a) and HUB Zone under the Small Business Administration (SBA). Additionally, NextGen Consulting, Inc. is also certified by various State and Local agencies as Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) and Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) business along with the MBE certifications under the National Minority Supplier Development Council (NMSDC) and the US Pan Asian American Chamber of Commerce (USPAACC) organizations. To learn more about NextGen Consulting, Inc., please visit their website at www.ngciglobal.com

Above and Beyond - A Profile of Corinda Davis

By Brian Friel

Many companies struggle to survive, and many don't make it past the one-year mark. Corinda Davis has built a business that is still growing after 13 years. The keys to her success are tenacity, a commitment to excellence and faith.

Beyond The Bottom Line, Inc. (BBL, Inc.), based out of Largo, Maryland has grown since 2003 into a 25-employee company with commercial and government clients, which include: National Science Foundation, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Department of the Interior, U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Department of the Navy, Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and the Maryland Department of Transportation. The company's most recent award came from the Maryland Department of Disabilities to handle the payroll services for 250 youth in one of their summer jobs program.

Ms. Davis was born in Washington, D.C., and raised in Seat Pleasant, Maryland, located just outside the District of Columbia. The oldest of three sisters, she helped take care of her siblings and other family members. Her spiritual upbringing

has kept her rooted in faith, which has helped her overcome adversity.

As a child, Ms. Davis loved math. During a third-grade career day at Bladensburg Elementary School, one of the speakers said "if you like math, you should be an accountant".

This advice set her on the path in which she's still on today. She went on to develop leadership skills as the captain of her state championship high school basketball team. After graduating from DuVal High School in Prince George's County, Maryland, Ms. Davis went on to receive her bachelor's degree in business administration with a concentration in accounting from Howard University in 1997. This accomplishment made her the first person in her family to graduate from college.

In the workforce, Ms. Davis quickly developed a reputation for accounting excellence. Her expertise and proficiency was sought out by CPA firms, commercial companies and government contractors.

One of her employers included Washington-area government contractor Heritage Services, Inc., where Ms. Davis met Collenia Linzy, an established, experienced accountant. Ms. Linzy served as Corinda's supervisor, but, unbeknownst to her at the time, this



**Corinda Davis
President**

would be her eventual partner and co-founder of BBL, Inc.

Ms. Davis supported several clients on the side while working her full-time job. She began bringing in enough side-work that she contemplated forming her own business. Ms. Linzy encouraged Ms. Davis to do so and on May 30, 2003, the company, now known as Beyond The Bottom Line, Inc., was officially founded with Ms. Davis as President and Ms. Linzy as Vice President.

BBL, Inc. took on clients in need of accounting services, continuing to build Ms. Davis' reputation in the Washington area as a top-notch financial executive.

In 2007, Ms. Davis decided it was time for the company to become her full-time focus, which was not an easy decision. She had a lucrative stable full-time job at Thomas and Herbert Consulting, LLC, and had just bought a house to support her family.

She had the strength, vision, and courage to take the leap. After making the full-time commitment to BBL, Inc., success came quickly for Ms. Davis. She secured several clients including the law firm Williams Worthy LLP. From there, word of BBL, Inc.'s excellent work performance spread and the company kept growing.

With Ms. Linzy's continued



support, Ms. Davis set a goal for the company to become a government contractor in its own right. BBL, Inc. gained entry into the Small Business Administration's 8(a) program in March 2008 and secured a General Services Administration, (GSA) Schedule in December 2008. Those two achievements created entry points into prime federal contracting for the company.

Ms. Davis' reputation, and the reputation of her company, have been the key to the company's success. Word-of-mouth and relationships have produced her growing federal and commercial client list.

BBL, Inc. was awarded a sole-source 8(a) contract from the National Science Foundation to produce the biennial report for Congress on behalf of the Committee on Equal Opportunities in Science and Engineering.

The company's second prime federal government contract also came via relationships and reputation. BBL, Inc. was hired to provide food services for The U.S. Coast Guard Telecommunication and Information Systems Command (TISCOM) in Alexandria, Virginia. The U.S. Coast Guard also selected BBL, Inc. to provide catering for the Coast Guard cadets who marched in the 2013 Presidential inauguration.

Ms. Davis' company was clearly moving beyond its accounting roots. The focus on excellence continued as the company expanded its business

lines. As a testament to that, since March 2010 BBL, Inc. remains the contractor at the U.S. Coast Guard today, with a recently renewed contract extending their services until 2021. Other highlights of BBL, Inc. facility management was the careful moving of historical artifacts for the Department of the Interior and a second food service contract with the Maryland Department of Transportation.

The company's burgeoning reputation has led to a wide range of contracts; maintaining an old accounting system for the Navy, while employees were being trained on a new accounting system; providing lifecycle IT support for Department of Commerce NTIS; performing forensic analysis of funds for the Bureau of Land Management.

One of BBL, Inc. special niches is forensic accounting—a line of business that requires intense reconstruction and scrutiny of financial records that sometimes leads to the uncovering of fraudulent activity. USDA is BBL, Inc.'s third forensic accounting client. In one of their prior contracts, they discovered over \$750,000 in fraudulent activity.

In 2012, Beyond The Bottom Line, Inc. was nominated for the Emerging Small Business of the Year award at the annual Prince George's Chamber of Commerce Awards Gala.

Recently, Ms. Davis' achievements were recognized by MEA with its

Financial Executive of the Year award in 2016. The award acknowledged both her success as an entrepreneur and her commitment to helping the next generation grow into business leaders.

Just as a career day in the third grade helped launch Ms. Davis on the path to success, she is also giving back. She has made it a priority of hiring high school students to work at the office in order to learn about business. BBL, Inc. also provides an internship program for college students, pursuing an accounting degree, to receive practical experience and earn money at the same time. One of her favorite commitments is teaching children's church which she has done for over 20 years. She also speaks to students participating in the Rangel scholars program at Howard University each year regarding personal finance as they start their business careers.

Ms. Davis participates in the Principal for a Day program, which is hosted by the Prince George's Chamber of Commerce for schools across Prince George's County. Outside of work, she enjoys gospel music, cooking, and laughing with family and friends.

Ms. Davis epitomizes the mantra of paying it forward. She is training young men and women to be future business leaders in their own right. BBL, Inc. has become a source of success not only for Ms. Davis, but for the next generation of business leaders that are learning the ropes under her guidance.



Moving Technology Forward by Connecting, Controlling and Communicating with Diverse Devices and Applications

by Sharon Moore Jackson

Darryl Green, Major, USAF, NC (Ret) is the President and Chief Executive Officer of The Green Technology Group, LLC (TGTG, LLC) located in Fairfax, Virginia. As a retired officer with over 20 years experience as a Registered Nurse, Darryl began focusing on IT Healthcare Consultancy within the Information Technology (IT) environment in 2001, after completing an Education With Industry Fellowship in Redmond, Washington with the Microsoft Corporation. This Fellowship was sponsored by the Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT) and Darryl was the first nurse selected to participate in this program with Microsoft. After spending 3 years in Japan, earning his Master's Degree in Management Science, and working in the industry, Darryl decided there was an immediate need to provide a high-level healthcare focus in "IT" for the military healthcare population.

A lot has changed since 9/11 for both citizens and first responders. There were no smart phones and social media sites like Facebook or Twitter before 9/11 and people were relying on newspapers, the radio and television solely for their news and informa-

tion. Moreover, hospitals and universities were not using remote devices to communicate internally or externally. Building a good plan forces you to think through constraints, resources and contingencies. Darryl began preparing himself for the launching of TGTG, LLC.

Darryl says he got bitten by the "IT" bug while spending time in Japan, where everything was "10 years ahead of what was happening in the United States". He got so excited about the possibilities in "IT" that when he returned to the United States to begin work at Andrews Air Force Base, he spoke to his Squadron Commander about creating a Chief Information Officer (CIO) position for their squadron, something that had never been done before. It was a very interesting proposition and timely because the Department of Defense (DoD) was beginning to build what is comparable to WebMD, an on-line publisher of news and information portal pertaining to health and wellness, entitled Tricare-On-Line. Darryl persuaded his Squadron Commander that he could represent their surgical squadron on the new DoD offering for enrollment population, which was similar to the web page from the WebMD creation, all while

preparing to start his own business a few years later. Darryl retired in 2007 from the Air Force and began working in the consulting healthcare industry. One year later, The Green Technology Group, LLC (TGTG, LLC) was born, with a focus on Healthcare IT. TGTG, LLC's Advisory Team was assembled to include Cal Sturdivant, Chief Technology Officer and Glenda Roberts, Program Manager, both working out of the Seattle, Washington metro area, another "IT" hot spot anchored by tech giants Amazon and Microsoft, as well as the region's aerospace mainstay the Boeing Company, and smaller companies, such as Expedia and Zillow.

Darryl says what happened at Microsoft with the exchange of ideas from colleagues Cal and Glenda, was a paradigm shift. Cal and Glenda brought a different type of perspective to TGTG, LLC that has strengthened the core competencies for the company, while setting them apart from their competitors. TGTG, LLC started winning contracts from the Federal Government, and received their Small Disadvantaged Business and SWAM Certifications. TGTG, LLC also applied and received 8(a) Certification with the Small Business Administration (SBA) and Service Disabled



Darryl Green
President and CEO
The Green Technology Group

Veteran Certification (SDVOSB), three months later.

Technology has changed by leaps and bounds since 9/11 and the new advances have helped in a lot of ways. Information travels faster than ever and mainstream media is no longer the dominating force behind the flow. TGTG, LLC has positioned itself to be ahead of the "IT" curb with DaGuardian, "the next generation of Remote Management Services". DaGuardian is an on-premise, cost effective, software solution that TGTG owns. It is designed to collect data for analysis to give users access to "the right information, at the time" from any location. DaGuardian also provides an "ecumenical" standard for unifying and simplifying device management, communications and operations. Clients from various industries, (e.g., Education, Private Clinics, Home, Hospitals and Business), can all realize a significant ROI (Return On Investment) by increased efficiencies and saving critical resources, specifically, time, money and staff, by controlling myriad devices via a single interface.

"Thanks to the new technology and communication devices, it's amazing

how things have evolved, and since 9/11, more money and time has been spent on equipment and infrastructure improvements", Green said.

"DaGuardian is being utilized in various industries now", says Cal Sturdivant and we are looking at opportunities where we can use it in healthcare. Glenda Roberts further states, "there are challenges, certain restrictions in healthcare (medical insurance and providers) that impact patient care, but we are pressing forward".

What's on the horizon for TGTG, LLC? According to Darryl and his team, "providing secure access, management and control of any IP-enabled device in new application areas is our goal".

Business isn't only about profit. The joy that comes from profit is usually short-lived if that profit isn't sustained. But the joy and fulfillment that comes with having positive relationships last longer. The more fulfilled you are, the more motivated you will be to establish even more relationships. TGTG, LLC has developed and sustained key relationships with partners that include, Planned Systems International, Inc., Total Solutions, Inc., IBM, Oracle, TechData and Microsoft. These relationships help you penetrate areas that would have been a challenge and they open doors to opportunities.

Community engagement, mentoring is very important to TGTG. In an effort to give back, TGTG mentor's small firms who are looking to grow their businesses. Darryl is actively involved with his fraternity, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. and supports charity golf tournaments to help raise funds for young men to go or remain in college.

The Green Technology Group main-

tains expertise in the Healthcare Program Management Support Services Platform, widely known in the industry as CPHIMS and PMI, and ITILv3. TGTG offers support for large and small enterprise management systems. It's great for program integration and enables immediate response to high profile, critical issues used by DoD/VHA governmental agencies and commercial initiatives across the full system development life cycle. TGTG's Platform provides four main features:

1. Maximize Management - Using this platform, TGTG's qualified consultants combine knowledge and expertise with personalized service to help reduce costs, maintain compliance and understand the principles of Healthcare Business Intelligence, Market Analysis and the application of the right resources in your environment.

2. Improve Reliability - TGTG takes the time to first examine the clients' needs and requirements then help them attain their desired business outcomes & objectives.

3. Increase Awareness - TGTG can help you improve the quality of the healthcare delivery process by leveraging emerging technologies and proven best business practices, including Customer Relationship Management and ERP.

4. Innovative Deployment - TGTG delivers critical business productivity easily to the users in the Right Place at the Right Time. For more information on The Green Technology Group, LLC and career opportunities, please visit their website at www.tgtgllc.com



The Green Technology Group, LLC.

"the right information, the right time"

You've Raised the Money, Now How do You Keep it?

by Mel and Pearl Shaw

Financial management and investing is critical to nonprofit sustainability. As a board member or trustee you have a fiduciary responsibility. But how do you fulfill that responsibility? What do you need to know as it relates to financial management and investment?

For some perspective we talked with Leland Faust, founder of CSI Capital Management. In addition to degrees from the University of California (economics) and Harvard Law School, Faust managed over \$1.5 billion in assets from 1978 through 2011. Barron's has named him four times to its annual list of top 100 independent investment advisors in the country.

Faust also has a long history of engagement with nonprofits, having served on the boards of diverse organizations that include Maccabi USA, Planet Hope and Alive and Free.

The first question we asked Faust was about the impact Wall Street can have on the financial health and viability of nonprofits. Here's his response.

"Wall Street can have a significant impact on the financial health of nonprofits. Charging higher fees than necessary obviously leaves less for

the operations of the nonprofit. A quick example will illustrate this. If a nonprofit earned 7% per year on its endowment after necessary expenses, then \$1 million of principal would earn \$70,000 per year to fund its projects. If it is charged an extra 1%, then the annual amount is reduced to \$60,000. Obviously this is a loss of \$100,000 over 10 years. Higher fees generally lead to lower returns and do not correlate with higher returns on investment.

"Too often Wall Street encourages nonprofits to engage in more risky investing than is prudent. This exposes the nonprofit to greater risk of losing its principal and thereby jeopardizing its programs. CalPERS, the largest state pension fund in the country, provides a very recent example. For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2016, it earned approximately 0.6% while a conservative mix of stocks and bonds for the same fiscal year would have earned about 4%. This underperformance cost California at least \$10 billion."

But how is risk evaluated? Faust responds, "In the CalPERS example they invested too much in speculative ventures like hedge funds and start-up companies. It may be



Mel and Pearl Shaw

appropriate for a nonprofit to invest a small portion of its endowment in a wide range of risky assets, but the danger becomes unacceptable when the proportion is too high." He encourages board members to look closely at the asset allocation.

We also asked about the most



Leland Faust, Founder
CSI Capital Management



important things nonprofit boards and CEOs should be aware of as it relates to management of funds in general, and investment of endowment or reserve funds in particular

Here are his top five.

1. "There are, of course, many important factors in managing endowment funds. First and foremost: the manager must be a fiduciary. That is, the manager must be required by law to put the client's interest ahead of its own. This is really the golden rule: client first, no excuses."

2. "Don't pay layer upon layer of fees. Are you paying a consultant, and an investment advisor, and a fund of fund manager, and a private equity manager? If you are, you can easily be paying 4% annual fees plus as much as 25% of profits. If a conservative and uncomplicated investment program would yield 5%, a complicated structure subject to all these fees would have to earn over 11% to have the same performance. Over time that's essentially impossible if the investments are all equally risky."

3. "Don't invest in hedge funds, options, or derivatives, and don't engage in short sales. Nonprofits should invest for the long term and not participate in gambling disguised as investing."

4. "Investing with the previous few years' top-performing managers usually results in poorer performance going forward. Study after study has shown that on average the recent winners are more likely to be the losers later."

5. "If anyone claims they have proprietary information or skills that no one else does, head for the doors."

Closing out our interview Faust shared a learning from his work as a nonprofit board member. "Board members should be wary of slick presentations. Also, don't hire those who claim to know all the answers and predict the future. Strange but true, the more certain the prediction, the more likely there will be error. A celebrity advisor guarantees nothing, and the fact that a firm is large, well-established and respected is no guarantee either."

Faust's forthcoming book *A Capitalist's Lament: How Wall Street Is Fleecing You and Ruining America* publishes October 11, 2016. It is written for those who want to know how to protect themselves, their businesses, and the nonprofits they work with from "business as usual." Order or preorder at Amazon.com.



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Mel and Pearl Shaw are the authors of the just published book *FUNdraining Good Times Classics*, available now on Amazon.com. For help growing your fundraising visit www.saadandshaw.com or call (901) 522-8727.

Veterans' Business at Veterans Affairs

By Gary Shumaker

So you'd like to get some business with the Department of Veterans Affairs, even though you're not a veteran-owned company?

It just got harder.

A 2006 law required that, if certain conditions are met, VA "shall award" its contracts to small businesses owned by veterans. (There are two categories of businesses owned by veterans: Veteran Owned Small Businesses (VOSBs) and Service Disable Veteran Owned Small Businesses (SDVOSBs), which are a subset of VOSBs.) VA interpreted that requirement to exempt certain purchases, such as those using General Services Administration schedule contracts; if they bought from a GSA schedule contract, they decided that these rules did not apply, and they did not need to award to a VOSB. Historically, VA uses GSA schedule contracts for some 130,000 acquisitions each year.

The first case involved a company called Aldevra. VA attempted to purchase certain supplies for a VA Medical center through a GSA Schedule contract on an unrestricted basis. A veteran owned company

called Aldevra filed a protest with the GAO, arguing that before using the GSA Schedule, the VA should have conducted market research to determine whether two or more offers (see discussion of "Rule of Two" below) would be received from eligible SDVOSBs, and if so, should have set-aside the acquisition for SDVOSBs.

Aledvra protested to the General Accountability Office. GAO reviewed the acquisition and issued an opinion in Aledvra's favor.

But the catch is, GAO's opinions of protests are just that: opinions. Most agencies accept GAO's recommendation and fix the problem. VA chose not to accept the GAO opinion.

After Aledvra lost, another company called Kingdomware Technologies, Inc. picked up the fight.

And it happened again: Kingdomware protested, GAO upheld the protest, and VA chose to ignore the GAO opinion. And again. And again. Finally, after about a dozen tries, GAO got fed up and announced that they would no longer accept these protests, since clearly, VA had no intention of implementing them.

So Kingdomware escalated the game



Gary E. Shumaker

by taking it to the Court of Federal Claims. The Court ruled in favor of VA, and a divided panel of the Federal Circuit affirmed.

So Kingdomware took it to the Supreme Court. It was argued in February of this year, and in June, the Court issued a unanimous decision, written by Justice Clarence Thomas, in favor of Kingdomware's position.

So what happens now?

At this point, contracting officers will continue with requirements that have been set-aside for SDVOSBs or VOSBs that have been verified in the Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization Vendor Information Pages (VIP) database.

The GSA FSS program does not require SDVOSBs or VOSBs to be verified in VIP; however, VA does. Going forward, VA contracting officers must include a requirement in all solicitations that for evaluation purposes, only VA will consider only SDVOSBs or VOSBs verified in the VIP database and non-VIP verified firms will be considered non-responsive and ineligible for award.

Other agencies follow the Small



Business Administration ruled for determining if companies qualify as veteran-owned, but VA has their own system, and maintains a data base of companies they have verified as veteran or service-disabled veteran owned.

Contracting officers must conduct market research that considers SDVOSBs/VOSBs to determine if there are two veteran-owned companies that are capable of performing the contract, is conducted and documented, as appropriate, in the contract file. Judgements about capability may consider capability of subcontractors in addition to that of the prime contractor.

In evaluating this market research, contracting officers follow the "Rule of Two" requirement and that the VA data base has been reviewed. This is irrespective of whether an initial decision was made to set-aside the acquisition to SDVOSBs or VOSBs.

If market research clearly demonstrates that offers are likely to be received from two or more qualified, capable and verified SDVOSBs or VOSBs, the Rule of Two applies and the action should be appropriately

set-aside.

So what does the Kingdomware decision mean to you?

If you're a large business that wants to get into VA, you'd better pay more attention to opportunities to do so as a subcontractor.

If you're a small business (or for

If you're a small business (or for that matter, even a large business), but you're not a veteran owned company, it's going to be harder for you to get your foot into VA.

that matter, even a large business), but you're not a veteran owned company, it's going to be harder for you to get your foot into VA.

If you are a veteran owned business (and can prove it by meeting all of the requirements for listing in VIP database), it means that there are a lot more VA solicitations that will be on the table for you to compete for.

It probably also means that GAO will resume considering protests related to VA acquisitions that are not awarded to veteran owned companies.

Even so, there are a lot of unanswered questions that can only be answered as new VA acquisition strategies display decision making that losing bidders don't agree with. They'll only be resolved after proposals are submitted, awards are made and losing bidders protest.

But that's the sort of thing that keeps government protest lawyers in business!

Gary E. Shumaker is the founder and senior consultant for Gary E. Shumaker, Inc.

Henderson Tours Guides Travelers Back to Their African Roots

By Michael H. Cottman,
Urban News Service

Gaynelle Henderson is the second-generation owner of Henderson Tours, a trailblazer among African-Americans in the travel industry.

Her late parents, Jacob and Freddie Henderson, were visionaries who founded the agency in Atlanta in 1955. Rosa Parks was arrested that year for refusing to move to the back of a segregated bus in Montgomery, Alabama.

Freddie Henderson wanted to create a cultural and business niche overseas, even as Jim Crow blocked many blacks from the polls, barred them from many restaurants and hindered their travel in the Deep South.

Freddie felt that Africa would embrace African-Americans. She believed that blacks here could experience freedom, education and entertainment in Africa, rather than endure pervasive racism at home.

Henderson Tours pioneered African tourism, according to Gaynelle Henderson. It was the first travel agency to offer large, multi-group tours to West Africa. Freddie and

Jacob led their first group of clients to Africa in 1957, when Ghana celebrated its formal independence.

"My parents were taking clients to Africa before Pan Am was flying to Africa," Henderson said. "It was known as the 'Dark Continent' back then."

Gaynelle, her sisters and her brother, grew up in their parents' office. "Mom and Dad would give us paper tickets to write out by hand with dates, departure times and destinations for up to 100 people," Henderson said.

Henderson Tours' clients have included Olympic gold medalist



Gaynelle Henderson



Jesse Owens, author James Baldwin, and Fela Kuti, the popular Nigerian musician and activist.

Henderson Tours made history in 1964: Freddie and Jacob arranged a high-profile trip for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his entourage to Oslo, so that he could accept the world's highest honor.

Andrew Young, America's former United Nations ambassador, recalls the voyage like it just happened. "I went with them to Norway when Dr. King received the Noble Peace Prize," Young, 84, told Urban News Service. "Freddie Henderson arranged that trip. She understood first-class, sophisticated travel overseas. It was a wonderful experience."

Young said that Henderson Tours introduced him to Africa. "They were the first black-owned travel agency that I know of to focus on Africa and the Caribbean," he said. "They were well-established in Africa, they arranged for the best hotels, and they made personal



contacts in Africa and all over the world."

Travel to Africa has blossomed for black Americans ever since. Gaynelle Henderson said demand surged in travel to South Africa in 1994.

"After Nelson Mandela was elected president, there was immediate and tremendous interest in South Africa," Henderson said. "For our travel agency, South Africa is still the most popular destination in all of Africa."

Henderson said the family enterprise was created because many blacks wanted to visit Africa to learn more about their heritage. So, her parents coined their agency motto: "Education through Exposure." "We were pioneers in African-American tourism," Henderson said in her Silver Spring, Maryland office. "Today, we offer customized and tailored trips to Africa."

What difficulties confronted an African-focused travel agency early on? Henderson said that her parents

The Internet is another major challenge, Henderson said. It empowers consumers to bypass travel agents and book flights and hotels directly.

"The trade-off," Henderson said, "is that we offer personalized and customized trips to Africa." Harold Cook, the agency's director of tours, joined in 1989 and has traveled to 47 of Africa's 54 nations.

"We offer clients Africa from a unique perspective," Cook said. "We interact with African people, and we offer welcome dinners in the homes of Senegalese families in Dakar. Clients get home-cooked meals and warm hospitality."

Henderson arranged an African excursion in March for a special group of African-Americans: Her own family and friends.

Thirty-two people journeyed to South Africa, including couples, singles, 13 children and five grandmothers.

"To see all of this experienced by three generations of the same family is a wonderful experience," said Henderson. "And that motivates me to encourage more of our people to travel to Africa."

had to charter planes from Paris to Africa. U.S. airlines had yet to fly there.

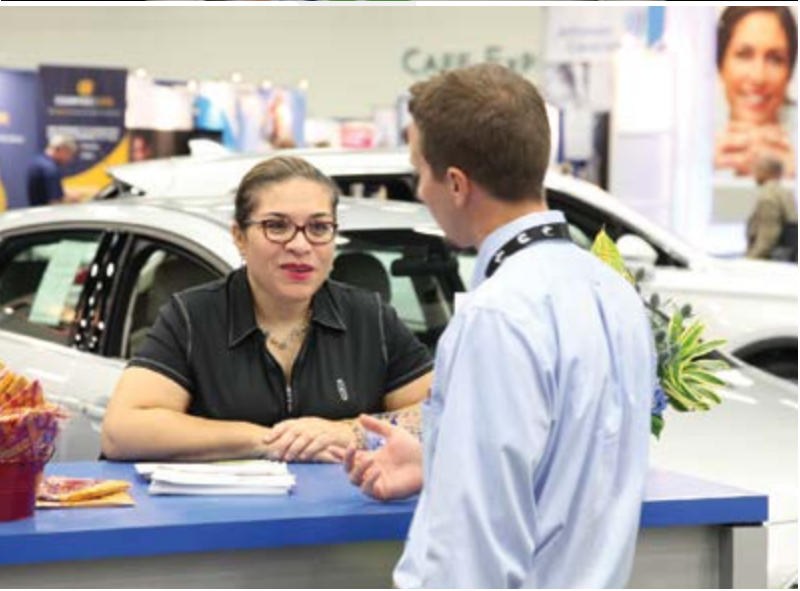
Henderson said that, even today, some black Americans are skeptical about traveling to Africa and wonder if it offers first-class hotels and high-end accommodations.



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Corporate Co-Chair

Advocate for Minority Car Dealers Pushes Diversity

By Avis Thomas-Lester
Urban News Service

Damon Lester's phone typically starts ringing at 7:30 a.m. And it keeps ringing until after 10:00 p.m.

Since taking the wheel of the National Association of Minority Automobile Dealers in 2006, Lester has become the face of the group that advocates for dealership owners of color.

By 9:00 o'clock on a recent morning, he had spoken to a National Highway Transportation Safety Administration executive, a congressional staffer, a dealer and a prospective dealership buyer.

"Mine is definitely a 24-hour-a-day job," said Lester (no relation to this writer). "Of the 18,000 new automobile dealerships in the United States, only 1,128 are owned by an ethnic minority. People of color buy 30 percent of the cars in this country, but own only about 6 percent of the car dealerships. So, there's a lot to be done."

Based in Largo, Maryland, the

association was founded in 1980 to promote "diversity and inclusion in all aspects of the automotive industry," according to its website. The organization lobbied then-President Jimmy Carter to assist minority dealers in the wake of the 1979 government bailout of Chrysler.

"Damon is very passionate and dedicated about representing NAMAD and all of its dealer members, vendor and manufacturer partners," said Jenell R. Ross, president of the Bob Ross Auto Group in Dayton, Ohio.

Lester, 43, wasn't particularly interested in the auto trade before he joined the association's staff in 2002.

Born and raised an only child in West Philadelphia, Lester studied hard, played sports and sang in the First United Baptist Church's children's choir. He commuted



Damon Lester
President
National Association of
Minority Automobile Dealers

by rail 90 minutes each way to Archbishop John Carroll High School, in the upscale suburb of Radnor, Pennsylvania, where he became familiar with wealth.

"I knew I wanted it for myself," Lester said.

He worked part time at the Super Fresh grocery store in tony Wynnewood, where customers included members of the Philadelphia 76ers and singer Patti LaBelle. He enjoyed meeting celebrities.

Lester majored in accounting at Temple University.

His first accounting job was with black-owned Milligan & Company, LLC, in Philadelphia. Three years later, he moved to Gelman, Rosenberg & Freedman in Bethesda, Maryland, which audited the minority dealers' association.

Lester joined the association in 2002 as vice president of operations. He became president in 2006, just before dealers



got stung by the 2007-08 economic slowdown.

His "whole focus was trying to save as many members as possible" from losing their dealerships, said Jose Pozos, a past chairman of the association and owner of car outlets in Texas and Louisiana.

As the industry stalled, manufacturers shuttered economically challenged retailers. Thirty percent of minority dealerships folded, Pozos said.

"They would give you a financial buyout and thought you should be happy," Pozos said. "But the dealers weren't into it for that. They were into it for the entrepreneurship, the family legacy and the American Dream."

As the economy reeled in June 2009, Lester asked for his board to visit Valerie Jarrett, President Obama's chief of staff, to discuss the financial fate of minority dealers. Obama attended.

The group asked Obama to order the Small Business Administration to lend directly to minority dealers, as Carter did.

"The president listened to us, but in the end he didn't give us what we were asking for," Lester said. "But we were able to enter into a memorandum of understanding with General Motors" to address dealers' financial concerns.

Todd Bullard, the association's attorney, said the agreement included binding arbitration and wind-down payments of up to \$1 million for dealers who lost their stores.

Dealers' fortunes have improved. About 17.5 million new cars were sold last year. Dealers expect to match or exceed that in 2016, Lester said.

He is trying to add members. The number of minority-owned dealerships peaked at 1,805 in 2005, dropped to 1,156 in 2007 and bottomed out at 873 in 2011. On Dec. 31, America had 1,128 minority dealerships: 552 Hispanic-owned stores; 264 owned by blacks; and 215 Asian-owned dealerships, according to Lester's

organization.

Ford had 63 black dealerships out of 3,238; GM had 49 out of 4,245; Fiat Chrysler had 27 of 2,385; Nissan had 21 of 1,077; and Toyota had 14 of 1,245.

As he celebrates 10 years as president, Lester, the father of two sons, is proud of his association's success in pushing diversity to the forefront of the auto industry's agenda.

"It's in their best interests to adopt diversity as a business imperative because they want to increase their market share," Lester said. "It makes good business sense."



Automotive News

GET OFF THE ROAD!

2016 Lexus RX 350: Sophistication with an Edge



The 2016 Lexus RX comes to market with a completely new more luxurious interior to match its fresh, new, chiseled body style. An emboldened spindle grille, more aggressive front bumper, and triple L-shaped LED headlamps highlight the new front end. Inside, the 2016 RX's new luxurious cabin's elegant, high-quality trim exudes warmth and class. Under the RX 350's hood is an upgraded and more powerful 3.5-liter V6 delivering 300 horsepower, which is mated to a new eight-speed automatic transmission.

BY DAN LYONS

The latest edition of Lexus' most popular SUV, the RX 350, makes a strong styling statement. The look is more sport wagon than SUV, and it leads with its expressive chin.

The face frames the Lexus-signature spindle grille with a set of slanting, squinting headlamps. Sharp creases highlight the side view, which is capped by a narrow, low-slung roofline. RX brings up the rear with a milder reprise of the front spindle theme.

Though identical in height to the previous editions, the fourth-generation RX 350's are substantially longer (nearly 5 inches), with a wheelbase that's stretched almost 2 inches longer than before. The difference in dimensions makes for

a mixed bag inside. The RX picks up an additional 1.2 inches of rear-seat legroom, for an adult-friendly total of 38 inches. That's better than competitive models from Acura, BMW, and Volvo. However, the lower roof reduces cargo capacity to 18.4 to 56.3 cubic feet (depending on how you arrange the seats), which lags most offerings in this segment. Rear seatbacks don't fold to a completely flat load floor, but lift-over height in back is comfortable, and adjustable rear-seat travel allows you to shift more space to the cabin or to the cargo hold.

Inside, the biggest difference between the current 2016 model and previous versions is the available, 12.3-inch display panel. The tablet-sized screen provides a crisp,

panoramic view from its location atop the center stack. Luxury crossovers are fertile ground for new technology, and practically any tech feature that you can think of is offered either in trim levels, as a stand-alone, or in an option package.

Several sound system upgrades are available, capped off by an 835-watt, 15-speaker, 10-channel Mark Levinson surround sound system. An optional, heads-up display projects select speed, navigation, and audio information onto the windshield, requiring little diversion of your eyes from the road.

The RX 350 employs a combination of conventional switchgear and an available joystick controller known as Remote Touch. Offered as part of the Premium package, the electronics interface is used to

operate navigation, audio, phone, and also HVAC if desired. The problem with this approach (as well as other similarly designed controllers) is that they require more finesse by the driver, which can potentially be more distracting than simpler, straightforward switchgear would be.

The RX 350 is offered in two variations -- base and F SPORT -- as well as a hybrid-powered model. Prices for the base RX 350 start at \$41,900 (FWD) and \$43,300 (AWD). The MSRP for F SPORT is \$49,125 (AWD is standard). The RX 450h hybrids are available in FWD, AWD, and F SPORT versions with prices ranging from \$52,235 to \$55,645.

My test drive time was split between the base and F SPORT models. Hybrid models aside, the RX 350 powertrain pairs a 3.5-liter V-6 engine with a new eight-speed transmission. The engine makes 295



the RX 350 are 19/26 (AWD) and 20/28 (FWD).

While few RX 350's are expected to venture off-road, many buyers will look to the all-wheel-drive versions to help combat snowy winter roadways. Lexus' Dynamic Torque Control

AWD system collects information from various sensors (wheel speed, steering angle, etc.), and directs power from front to rear wheels as needed to maximize traction. The power distribution can vary from 100 percent front to 50/50 front/rear, depending on road conditions and driving dynamics. When launching on a slippery surface, torque is applied through all four wheels for better grip. Eco, Normal, and Drive Modes are selected via console-mounted dial, each with corresponding programming for suspension settings and throttle and shift mapping.

F SPORT models are fitted with an array of show-and-go equipment and are notably fun to drive. Though not to be confused with a sport sedan, the RX 350 F SPORT is quite agile for the breed, and happily, the added driving dexterity doesn't come at the expense of ride quality.

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horsepower and 267 lb.-ft. of torque. That's a substantial power boost over the former model (adding 20 horsepower and 19 more lb.-ft. of torque). The 0-to-60 mph time is in the mid to high-7-second range. While not the quickest in its class, the RX 350 feels responsive under foot, with ample power to pass, and it cruises quietly at highway speeds. With eight speeds to spread the power (compared to six speeds previously) the new transmission helps boost fuel economy numbers for 2016. EPA estimates for



Automotive News

Audi A4: Upgraded Power and Style

BY SUE MEAD

Beauty and brains. Audi's redesign of its best-selling 2017 A4 joins an improved engine with innovative design to its long list of advanced technologies and other smart upgrades and imbues the ninth-generation model with strikingly good looks and notable automotive intelligence. It sets a new benchmark for the luxury sedan segment.

The 2017 Audi A4 is offered in three levels: A4 Premium starts at \$37,300; Premium Plus at \$41,100; and Prestige at \$45,900 for front-wheel drive models. Choosing Quattro all-wheel-drive adds \$2,100; destination and delivery is \$925 on all.

We concentrated our drive on the Prestige with AWD. Its power-on-tap is stirring, especially when engaging the paddle shifters. Steering is more precise as a result of a new five-link front suspension and changes to the steering rack. There are three suspension settings with an adaptive continuously damping version standard, along with settings to accommodate enthusiastic romps or comfortable cruising.

The all-new 2017 A4 is powered by an evolved version of its fuel-injected and turbocharged 2.0-liter four-cylinder engine that's more powerful than its predecessor. It delivers 252 horsepower and 273 lb.-ft. of torque, with the promise of a sportier driving experience. Paired with a newly developed seven-speed S tronic dual-clutch transmission, the five-seater accelerates from 0-to-60 mph in just over 6 seconds (FWD), and has a top track speed electronically limited to 130 mph. Premium fuel is required; economy ratings are 25 miles per gallon city, 33 mpg highway.

Beauty begins outside with a reshaped exterior that has cleaner, sportier proportions and is emphasized by powerful



The redeveloped engine to the available Audi virtual cockpit, there are technological innovations found throughout the 2017 Audi A4 all-new sedan. The exterior has been redesigned to feature sportier proportions. The interior has a greater feeling of spaciousness and lightness. Featuring a completely redeveloped powertrain, the 2.0 TFSI engine can generate 252 hp and 273 lb.-ft of torque. A significant weight savings was achieved through the aluminum-hybrid lightweight construction.

wheel arches and a sharp shoulder crease that flows from the headlights to the taillights. Up front, the sedan's wide visage is enhanced by the horizontal diamond-inspired "singleframe" grille and xenon headlights with LED daytime running lights; in back are LED taillights with dynamic turn signals. (LED headlights are standard on Premium Plus and Prestige trims). Even though it is slightly larger than its predecessor, its lightweight aluminum-hybrid construction shaves 50 pounds from front-wheel-drive models and 99 pounds from AWDs.

Good looks carry over inside with a freshened design highlighted by crisp, eye-catching lines and high-quality materials and features, such as Aluminum Trimmarin inlays and ventilated front sport seats with lumbar support. Its dimensions are slightly larger, adding increased shoulder and headroom in front, and improved legroom in back.

Three-zone automatic climate control is standard, as is ambient LED lighting, leather seating, and power sunroof. The available Audi virtual cockpit (standard on Prestige) is a 12.3-inch digital display that transitions from a classic instrument cluster to a panoramic infotainment mode. An available full-color head-up display projects relevant driving information onto the driver's windshield.

Audi's smartphone interface offers Apple CarPlay and Google Android Auto integration via USB connection. Navigation, telephone, and music are accessed via voice, steering wheel controls, or via the MMI controller, with handwriting touch

recognition on the top trims.

The A4's smart genetics bring an impressive collection of more than two dozen technology, safety, and convenience features, including standard Audi pre sense city, which can detect vehicles and pedestrians and can alert the driver to a potential collision and apply automatic braking to help prevent or minimize an impact. Additional available safety technology systems include side assist (radar sensors and optical warnings alert when a vehicle is in the car's blind spot), active lane assist (helps steer the vehicle back onto its intended course, when the car is drifting out of its lane without use of the turn signal), and traffic jam assist (combines acceleration, braking, and steering guidance at speeds between 0 and 37 mph, allowing for semi-autonomous driving in congested traffic).

The redesign integrates the second generation of Audi connect, which brings convenience and safety features both in-car and via smartphone apps, starting with Connect CARE (with peace-of-mind services such as automatic and manual emergency call, online roadside assistance, stolen vehicle locator, and service reminders). Connect PRIME provides driver-oriented services like Google Earth and Street View, semi-dynamic route guidance, and real-time information and streaming content when paired with an AT&T 4G/LTE connection. Curfew, speed, and valet alerts with geo-fencing, remote lock and unlock, and online car finder are also available.

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Automotive News

Cadillac XT5: Crossover Touring New for 2017

BY SUE MEAD



Cadillac's first-ever 2017 Crossover Touring 5 (XT5) is a comprehensively upgraded luxury crossover and the cornerstone of a new series of crossovers in the brand's ongoing expansion. The 2017 Cadillac XT5 is bold, distinctive, and sophisticated with superb driving dynamics. The XT5 has a strong visual presence with proportions that convey the driving experience and the lightweight construction underneath the surface. There is a lean, taut, liquid quality to the surfaces with flowing, uninterrupted lines separated by crisp edges.

Dare

Greatly is Cadillac's newest tagline.

And it's especially fitting as this crown jewel in General Motors' portfolio makes a brave move from its Detroit headquarters to the "Big Apple" in New York City.

Cadillac's new way forward, updated brand mindset, plus attitude of courage and determination show in the development of the all-new 2017 Cadillac XT5.

The new Crossover Touring 5 (XT5) joins the luxury market's strongest-selling segment, and it's the second vehicle in Cadillac's crossover line to wear the new alpha-numeric "XT" designation.

The re-imagined five-passenger model comes in four trim levels, with front- and all-wheel-drive versions: a base model is available in FWD only and starts at \$38,995; Luxury begins at \$44,895; Luxury AWD at \$47,390; Premium Luxury at \$51,895; Premium Luxury AWD at \$54,390;

and range-topping Platinum in AWD only at \$62,500. (Plus \$995 destination charges.) Optional are packages that bring enhanced navigation, LED lighting, and a variety of additional safety and security upgrades; most of these are standard on up-level trims and all on Platinum.

Designers penned the crossover with a more modern expression of classical luxury, while maintaining Cadillac's edgy art and science theme. The result is an eye-appealing blend of styling cues, attractive lighting, and uplevel trim features. Most distinguishing is the crossover's new vertical headlamps that add gorgeous eye candy to the front face. Platinum gets a unique grille and exhaust, stainless steel skid plate, along with 20-inch, 12-spoke polished wheels.

The XT5's interior is charming and clean, featuring both wider and more horizontal surfaces to emphasize the efficient use of space. Assembled with cut-and-sewn wrapped panels, cabin choices come in five color and trim combinations, with decorative trim

options ranging from carbon fiber to two types of aluminum and three types of genuine wood.

Rear-seat legroom is increased 3.2 inches, compared to the previous SRX model; total passenger volume is 104.5 cubic feet. The remote-operated, fold-down rear seat splits 40/20/40, reclines, and slides fore and aft giving more room to second-row passengers, or up to 30 cu.-ft. of cargo space behind, with a maximum of 63 cu.-ft. of cargo behind the front seats.

Its redesigned 3.6-liter V-6 engine was tapped as one of Ward's "10 Best Engines" for 2016. It produces 310 horsepower, 271 lb.-ft. of torque, and features Active Fuel Management cylinder deactivation. This technology seamlessly and automatically switches to a fuel-saving four-cylinder mode under low or moderate loads, and combines with Stop/Start technology to save fuel and reduce emissions. It's rated at 3,500 pounds max towing.

Also new is an eight-speed automatic transmission with Electronic Precision Shift that

reduces noise and vibration. The all-new AWD system automatically delivers traction for a wide variety of conditions and can send all the torque to either axle and even vector all to one wheel. Engineered specifically for performance in wet, snowy, or icy conditions, it also provides enhanced stability in dry weather. Fuel economy is rated at 19 mpg city, 27 mpg highway, and 22 miles combined for FWD models; EPA numbers drop by 1 mpg for AWD.

The XT5 features 4G wireless access with standard integrated Wi-Fi hotspot. Cadillac's CUE touchscreen connectivity system provides a suite of information and entertainment offerings.

Cadillac's rear camera mirror increases the driver's rear vision by 300 percent, using a video display applied over the inside rearview mirror. Also onboard are Driver Awareness and Driver Assist packages to improve vision and collision avoidance.

We concentrated our drive on the Premium Luxury AWD model over a course of about 125 miles. Notable are the quietness of the cabin, great on-tap acceleration with crisp shifts, agile and responsive handling due to the body's increased stiffness, quick-ratio electric power steering, and the updated suspension.

The XT5 is 278 pounds lighter than the SRX it replaces and 100 pounds lighter than the Audi Q5, although it's 7 inches longer. It's also more than 650 pounds lighter than the Mercedes-Benz GLE-Class, which has similar exterior dimensions.

We also loved the top-flight Platinum trim level, with softer semi-aniline leather, tri-zone climate control, heated rear seats, a larger 8.0-inch central display on the instrument panel (versus the standard 5.7-inch), 360-degree cameras with a self-washing rear lens, a hands-free liftgate, and anti-theft inclination and interior motion sensors.



SPECIFICATIONS

2017 CADILLAC XT5 PREMIUM LUXURY AWD	
VEHICLE TYPE	5-passenger AWD midsize CUV
BASE PRICE	\$54,390 (as tested: \$55,385)
ENGINE TYPE	24-valve V-6
DISPLACEMENT	3.6-liter
HORSEPOWER (net)	310 at 6700 rpm
TORQUE (lb.-ft.)	271 at 5000 rpm
TRANSMISSION	8-speed automatic
OVERALL LENGTH	189.5 in.
TURNING CIRCLE (curb-to-curb)	38.7 ft.
CURB WEIGHT	4,257 lbs.
FUEL CAPACITY	22 gal.
EPA MILEAGE RATING	18 mpg city, 26 mpg highway

Preventing Death, Theft: Rear Seat Reminder

BY LYNN WALFORD



It's not safe to leave objects in the back seat of a car. However, often there are a million things on everyone's mind, and sometimes even the most organized car owners need a little help remembering stuff.

The 2017 GMC Acadia midsize sport utility vehicle is helping to address this issue with the Rear Seat Reminder, an industry-first feature designed to remind drivers to check the back seat when they exit their vehicle under certain circumstances.

Each year in the U.S., about half of the children under age 14 who die of in-vehicle heatstroke do so as a result of being forgotten, reports Jan Null, certified consulting meteorologist at the Department of Meteorology & Climate Science San Jose State University. Also, items left in the back seat are a target for theft. Nearly 23 percent of larceny in 2014 was from a motor vehicle, according to the FBI.

"The Rear Seat Reminder helps protect the things we care about most," said Tricia Morrow, General Motors global safety strategy engineer. "Whether it's your lunch, groceries, laptop, pet -- or most importantly, your child -- it's easier than it seems to forget what's in the back seat when moving between life's events.

With this new feature, we are leading the charge to address this ongoing problem."

The Rear Seat Reminder works by monitoring the Acadia's rear doors. The feature is intended to activate when either rear door is opened and closed within 10 minutes before the vehicle is started, or if they are opened and closed while the vehicle is running. Under these circumstances, the next time the vehicle is turned off after a door activation, the Acadia is designed to sound five audible chimes and display a message in the driver information center that reads, "Rear Seat Reminder/Look in Rear Seat."

"At GM we are passionate about safety, especially for children," said Morrow. "We're excited that the Rear Safety Reminder can potentially prevent some fatalities."

Some sensors may not work accurately in heat, and there are many variations in child seats with different manufacturers. But because General Motors wanted to address the issue quickly, engineers realized that a simple reminder based on the rear doors being opened was the best option.

Many people don't realize that a car can heat up to 123 degrees from 82 degrees in just 60 minutes. According

to Jan Null, two-thirds of the heating of a vehicle happens in the first 20 minutes. "Cracking" the windows has little effect on heating.

GM wants to educate drivers about how dangerous heatstroke can be. Research shows that, at first, parents think it's not going to happen to them. Then when they learn that heatstroke is something that can happen to anyone, they liked the idea of the Rear Seat Reminder feature, says Morrow.

"General Motors has developed a new technology for the Acadia, the Rear Seat Reminder, to give busy parents an important reminder to check the back seat before leaving the car," said Kate Carr, president and CEO of Safe Kids Worldwide. "Technology alone cannot solve the issue of heatstroke when it comes to young children, but this new Acadia reminder can help. We must always remember that the safest way to protect a child from heatstroke is to never leave a child unattended in a vehicle."

The feature cannot detect what kinds of items are in the backseat, only specific types of door activations, so remember that it is always important to check the rear seat prior to exiting the vehicle.

Morrow, a busy mother, noted



that without the feature, she herself left a cantaloupe in the back seat for a week. She also warned that since some reported heatstroke deaths occurred when children were playing in parked cars, that drivers -- especially parents -- should be sure to lock the car doors and keep the car keys in a safe place.

The industry-first feature is a standard feature on the new 2017 Acadia. GM plans to launch the feature in many more 2017 GM vehicles.



The Rear Seat Reminder works by monitoring the 2017 Acadia's rear doors. The feature is intended to activate when either rear door is opened and closed within 10 minutes before the vehicle is started, or if they are opened and closed while the vehicle is running. Under these circumstances, the next time the vehicle is turned off after a door activation, the Acadia is designed to sound five audible chimes and display a message in the driver information center that reads, "Rear Seat Reminder/Look in Rear Seat."



The new Acadia is 700 pounds lighter than the 2016 model and offers three rows of seating on most models. The premium Acadia Denali returns, along with a new All Terrain model offering enhanced off-road capability. It also offers an expanded range of active safety features, including front pedestrian braking, Safety Alert seats, and a surround vision camera system.

At \$29,070, the 2017 Acadia base price is \$1,905 lower than the 2016 base model and the new Acadia offers more standard equipment, including a new IntelliLink system with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto compatibility. Rear Seat Reminder is not available on the 2017 Acadia Limited.

Women Auto Know: Advancing Motoring History

In 2003, Jackie Birdsall did an internship with Daimler-Chrysler, leading to an obsession with hydrogen fuel cell technology. As an engineer at Toyota Technical Center, Birdsall brings fuel cell automotive technology to consumers.

BY KATE McLEOD



A 32-year-old woman, Jackie Birdsall, is one of two senior engineers in the U.S. who helped develop fuel cells for Toyota's Mirai, which is on sale in California and is soon coming to the northeast.

That got me thinking about how far women have come in the world of automobiles -- not just those who work for car companies, but those who drive, buy, and love cars.

The first woman ever to head a car company, Mary Barra, runs General Motors as its CEO, one of the largest corporations in the world. On the Fortune Global 500, it ranks 21st. The automotive industry continues to hire talented women who are designing trucks and cars, and are engineering the technologies that are transforming our transportation.

It is also true that women today play a leading role in 85 percent of auto purchasing decisions. Women bought 40 percent of the 16 million cars sold in 2014. How did that happen?

The desire of women to be behind the wheel was hinted at in a response given to a U.S. Department of Agriculture inspector by a farm woman in the 1920s. He asked why her family chose to buy a car instead of installing indoor plumbing. "You can't

go to town in a bathtub," she replied.

It took time for women to get into the driver's seat in significant numbers. We tend to think World War II was a turning point. And, in a way, it was. Men went to war; women took over work in the factories. Driving during the war was somewhat limited by rations on gasoline and rubber, by imposed speed limits, by unsafe road conditions, and the entire war effort. But women were left to take care of and drive the cars. The war gave way to a new era: one of independence for women.

It is interesting to note that even before this newfound independence, car companies had been advertising to women and featuring them in their ads. Ad copy in 1932 encouraged women to make sure to change their (Quaker) oil. In 1940, a General Motors ad read, "Can a woman buy the family car . . . Wisely?"

An economic boom lasted from 1948 to 1973. Affluence prompted families to purchase two cars, as the automobile became intricately woven into our ways of life. The auto industry was gaining sales. Styling and technology improvements to engines, steering, suspension, brakes, and tires made operating a car safer and more manageable. Women were on the road.

Suburbia expanded simultaneously as cars improved. That made driving not only easier, it became a necessity. Advertising featured women claiming what the particular brand offered them -- Here's What I Like in My '52 Dodge. It was the same then as it is now: safety, styling, and dependability.

In 1964, Woman's Day published a column written directly to women about their relationship to their automobiles -- tips on driving and taking care of a car. Woman's Day was hoping to attract auto advertising but it failed.

The ad agencies didn't understand that women were influencing car purchases.

Throughout the 1960s car ads predominantly featured men behind the wheel, they talked about horsepower and speed. Still today, car advertising leans on the male-behind-the-wheel motif. Advertisers are totally aware of the statistics. They know that women are smart, wealthy, and independent. And they want to appeal to women; so they put handsome actor Matthew McConaughey behind the wheel.

If you assert that women are gaining ground on all automotive fronts -- making cars, buying, selling cars, and driving cars -- the question remains, what ground needs to be gained? Women have had traction all along.



Pamphlets from the General Motors Heritage Reference Collection show women as a key consumer in the targeting of sales and marketing automotive products.

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USDA Invests More than \$9 Million to Support Small Businesses in 12 States

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced the investment of more than \$9 million in loans and grants to support job growth and economic development in 12 states. The funding is being provided through USDA's Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant (REDLG) program, through which USDA provides zero-interest loans and grants to utilities that lend funds to local businesses for projects to create and retain employment.

"Small businesses are the cornerstone of the rural economy," Vilsack said. "During the Obama Administration, USDA's investments have directly helped more than 100,000 small business get off the ground or expand, and the projects announced today will help 15 more rural communities see job growth and economic development."

One of the organizations selected for funding is the Crawford Electric Cooperative in Bourbon, Mo. It has been approved for a \$1 million loan to help East Central College create a workforce development training facility on its campus in Union, Mo. The facility will provide job training in manufacturing to support workers and businesses in an eight-county re-

gion served by the college. The project area includes counties where poverty is persistent as well as areas designated for targeted assistance through USDA's StrikeForce for Rural Growth and Opportunity Initiative. This project is expected to create 11 jobs.

Winnebago Cooperative Telecom Association in Lake Mills, Iowa, is being selected for a \$1 million loan to help All States Ag Parts relocate to a larger facility in Lake Mills. Funds will be used to purchase machinery, equipment and inventory. This project is expected to create 51 jobs.

Under today's announcement, USDA is investing in 15 projects to create jobs and expand economic opportunity in rural communities. Funding of each award announced today is contingent upon the recipient meeting the terms of the loan or grant agreement.

USDA Rural Development has a strong track record of strengthening rural businesses and economies through its Rural Business-Cooperative Service. For example, in 2015, Four County EMC used a \$2 million REDLG loan to help Acme Smoked Fish Corp. in Pender County, N.C., buy equipment to process and smoke salmon, herring and other fish. Pender County has struggled since the



Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack

economic downturn in the late 2000s. The REDLG loan has brought more than 120 full-time jobs to the region. Since 2009, USDA has invested more than \$330 million in loans and grants through the REDLG program.

Since 2009, USDA Rural Development (@USDARD) has invested \$11 billion to start or expand 103,000 rural businesses; helped 1.1 million rural residents buy homes; funded nearly 7,000 community facilities such as schools, public safety and health care facilities; financed 185,000 miles of electric transmission and distribution lines; and helped bring high-speed Internet access to nearly 6 million rural residents and businesses. For more information, visit www.usda.gov/results.



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U.S. Department of Transportation Partners with Continental Automotive for Smart City Challenge

Winning city to receive up to \$1 million in “smart intersection” vehicle-to-everything technology

Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx today announced that Continental Automotive has become a partner in the U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT) Smart City Challenge. The Smart City Challenge is a competition which will create a fully integrated, first-of-its-kind city that uses data, technology and creativity to shape how people and goods move in the future. Under the partnership, Continental will offer the winning city \$1 million worth of hardware and labor for the deployment of “smart intersection” systems. This revolutionary vehicle-to-everything (V2X) technology will help the winning city define what it means to be a “Smart City” and fully integrate innovative technologies.

As part of its commitment, Continental will provide advanced sensing, vehicle-to-vehicle and vehicle-to-infrastructure communication technology to increase traffic safety at intersections and provide a platform for intelligent transportation systems of the future. The Smart City Challenge winner will be the country’s first city to fully integrate innovative technologies such as self-driving cars, connected vehicles and smart sensors

into their transportation network. This partnership further demonstrates that connected vehicle technology and its safety, mobility, and environmental benefits are ready for deployment.

U.S. DOT has been working with each finalist city to connect them with private, public and non-profit partnerships that support their final proposals with technical assistance. In addition to Continental, other partners that have joined the Smart City Challenge include: launch partner Paul G. Allen’s Vulcan Inc., cloud partner Amazon Web Services, Mobileye, Autodesk, Alphabet’s Sidewalk Labs, NXP, AT&T and DC Solar.

“This competition has transformed major U.S. cities into critically needed laboratories of innovation with the potential to solve transportation challenges that prioritize safety, innovation and equity that exist nationwide,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Foxx. “By fostering creative collaboration, this announcement and the existing precedent-setting public-private partnerships will strengthen the winning city’s ability to bring their bold visions to life.”

“At Continental, safety is at the cornerstone of everything that we do. That is why we are proud to join the

U.S. DOT’s national Smart City Challenge as a key provider of active safety technology and secure connectivity to help advance the development of future mobility services such as automated driving infrastructure solutions, Intelligent Transportation Systems and V2X technology,” said Samir Salman, CEO of Continental North America. “The Smart City Challenge aligns with our company’s mission of Vision Zero, which is our goal to globally eliminate traffic and road fatalities, making mobility safer, more convenient and more efficient for everyone.”

The Smart City Challenge was launched by Secretary Foxx in December 2015 in response to the trends identified in the Beyond Traffic draft report. The report, issued last year, revealed that our nation’s aging infrastructure is not equipped to deal with a dramatically growing population in regions throughout the country. It also identified a need to increase mobility options in developing megaregions – specifically mid-sized cities.

To view the applications for all 78 cities that applied for the Smart City Challenge or explore Smart City Challenge partnership opportunities, visit www.transportation.gov/smartcity.



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U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx announced TIGER Award Nearly 500 Million in Grants to Projects Focused on Safety and Economic Opportunity

U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx announced nearly \$500 million will be made available for transportation projects across the country in the eighth round of the highly successful and competitive Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant program. Secretary Foxx was joined by Jeff Zients, Director of the National Economic Council at the White House, and Mayor William Peduto of Pittsburgh, PA on a national call with reporters to highlight how this funding will improve safety and economic opportunity in two U.S. territories, 32 states, and 40 communities across the country.

"For the eighth year running, TIGER will inject critical infrastructure dollars into communities across the country," said Secretary Foxx. "This unique program rewards innovative thinking and collaborative solutions to difficult and sometimes dangerous transportation problems. A great TIGER program

doesn't just improve transportation; it expands economic opportunity and transforms a community."

The highly competitive TIGER grant program supports innovative projects, including multi-modal and multi-jurisdictional projects, which are difficult to fund through traditional federal programs. This year's awards focus on capital projects that generate economic development and improve access to reliable, safe and affordable transportation for communities, both urban and rural.

Since 2009, the TIGER grant program has provided a combined \$5.1 billion to 421 projects in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, the Virgin Islands, and tribal communities. These federal funds leverage money from private sector partners, states, local governments, metropolitan planning organizations and transit agencies. The 2016 TIGER round alone is leveraging nearly \$500 million in federal investment to support \$1.74 billion in overall



transportation investments.

Demand for the 2016 TIGER grant program continued to far exceed available funds; the DOT received 585 eligible applications from all 50 States, and several U.S. territories, tribal communities, cities, and towns throughout the United States, collectively requesting over \$9.3 billion in funding. During the previous seven rounds, the Department received more than 7,300 applications requesting more than \$143 billion for transportation projects across the country.

A few examples of this year's TIGER awards include:

In Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the I-579 Cap Urban Connector Project will receive \$19 million to construct a cap over a below-grade portion of Interstate 579 in downtown Pittsburgh. The cap will reconnect the Hill District to downtown Pittsburgh, more than 60 years after highway and arena construction razed a middle income African American community. The project includes improvements to nearby streets, sidewalks, and



U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx

crosswalks, a new bus stop, bike-sharing station, and ADA-compliant walkways. It also will create open space for transportation and recreation.

The city of Brownsville, Texas will receive \$10 million to rehabilitate a regional bus maintenance facility which will also serve as a new passenger transfer station, purchase eight hybrid transit replacement buses, and renovate bus stops to include sidewalks, curb ramps, and benches. The grant will also fund an innovative 2.4-mile long causeway which will be one of the longest dedicated pedestrian/bike bridge facilities of its kind in the United States and the first of its kind in Texas.

Several TIGER 2016 grants also went to projects supporting the movement of freight to boost

economic competitiveness. These include \$6.2 million for an inland port in Little Rock, Arkansas, \$17.7 million for a highway freight interchange in Scott County, Minnesota, and \$9.8 million for a rural freight project that crosses the South Carolina/North Carolina border.

Notably, of the 40 grant recipients this year, nearly two-thirds are repeat applicants. The U.S. Department of Transportation has made a concerted effort to provide technical assistance to applicants to improve their

projects.

TIGER funding is provided in the FY 2016 Consolidated Appropriations Act, signed by President Obama on December 18, 2015. The Act does not provide dedicated funding for the planning, preparation, or design of capital projects; however, these activities may be eligible to the extent that they are part of an overall construction project. A minimum of 20 percent of funds will go to projects in rural areas.



Black History Heroes



Ruth Simmons (1945 -) From Grape-land, Texas, a descendant of slaves, she made history in 2001 when she became the first African-American president of an Ivy League university, Brown University. She was formerly the president of Smith College from 1995 until 2001. She earned a bachelor's degree from Dillard University in 1967 and earned a master's and doctorate from Harvard University in 1970 and 1973. She was appointed by President Barack Obama as a member of the Presidents Commission on White House Fellowships.



for black nurses in the United States.

He was chief of surgery at Freedmen's Hospital in Washington, D.C. in 1894. He co-founded the National Medical Association in 1895 for black medical professionals. He was a cardiologist and graduated from Chicago Medical College in 1880. He set the highest standard for doctors all over the world. He provided training for black interns and opened the first school



to become a lawyer. He played a pivotal role in dismantling Jim Crow laws. He received his law degree from Harvard University. He was a civil rights advocate and trained other attorneys who were civil rights activists.

Charles Houston (1895-1950) Born in Washington, D.C. he studied law and became the first African-American editor of *Harvard Law Reviews* and was Vice Dean of Howard University Law School in 1929. He headed the NAACP's legal fight against "separate but equal" schools, which led to *Brown v. Board of Education*. He graduated from Amherst College. Witnessing unfair treatment of blacks in the military during World War I, he decided



Frederick D. Gregory (1941 -) Born in Washington, D.C. he earned a bachelor of science degree from the United States Air Force Academy in 1964. He became an astronaut in 1978. He was Deputy Administrator of NASA from 2002-2005. He is a former pilot, military engineer and test pilot. He became the first African-American to pilot a space shuttle, Challenger in 1985. He served

on a medical and testing mission on Atlantis in 1991. He was a Colonel in the Air Force. He received NASA's Outstanding Leadership Award.



Hall of Fame in 2015. He owned an auto repair shop where his interest in stock car racing began. He owned Scotts Garage from 1949-1990. He was turned down several times because of his race trying to enter the National Association for Stock Car Racing. In the meantime, he raced in smaller races where he won. Eventually he got his license through a white racer by taking over the license and in 1963 he got in. He finished in the top 10 in 147 races.

Wendell Oliver Scott (1921-1990) From Danville, Virginia, he was an American stock car racer. He was the first African-American to drive in NASCAR and won the Grand National Series in 1963. He was inducted in the NASCAR



Marie Maynard Daly (1921-2003) From Queens, New York, she became a biochemist and the first African-American woman to earn a PH.D. in chemistry in the United States. She earned a B.S. and M.S. in chemistry at Queens College and New York University in 1942. She was an instructor and did research in causes of heart attacks, high cholesterol, clogged arteries, effects of cigarette smoke on the

lungs and sugar on the arteries. She earned a PH. D. from Columbia University in 1947. She taught at Howard University, Columbia University, Albert Einstein College of Medicine at Yeshiva University.



Augusta Savage (1892-1962) From Green Cove Springs, Florida, she was a part of the Harlem Renaissance in the 1930's. She studied abroad and served as Director of the Harlem Community Center. She began sculpting with clay as a child and later became a very influential portrait sculptor. She did busts of W.E.B. DuBois, Marcus Garvey and was commissioned

to create a sculpture for the 1939 New York World's Fair. The piece was called "The Harp", a sixteen foot tall sculpture. She was an activist for black artist and an arts educator. She established Savage Studio and Arts and Crafts in 1932.



to complete pericardial surgery successfully on a patient.

Dr. Daniel Hale Williams (1856-1931) Born free in Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania, he became a doctor and in 1893 opened Provident Hospital, the first medical facility with an interracial staff in Chicago. He was the first physician

Euphemia Lofton Haynes (1890-1980) Born in Washington, D.C. she was a mathematician and educator. She was the first African-American to earn a Ph.D. in mathematics from Catholic University of America in 1943. Her father was a prominent dentist who was famously known for his support of black businesses, her mother worked closely with the Catholic Church. She earned her master's degree in education from the University of Chicago in 1930. She later founded the math department at Miner Teachers College, today the University of the District of Columbia. She taught math at Armstrong High School; English at Minor Normal School; and math at Dunbar High School in D.C. where she also was chair of the math department. She was an advocate for poor students and later founded the Catholic Interracial Council of the District of Columbia.



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