

2025 Awardees

2025 Reggie L. Rolle Economic Development Champion

Dr. Melvin T. Stith



Melvin T. Stith has built a remarkable career as a distinguished academic leader, business executive, and community advocate. A native of Jarratt, Virginia, he began his journey at Norfolk State University, earning a bachelor's degree in sociology before serving as a U.S. Army Military Intelligence officer during the Vietnam War, where he rose to the rank of captain. After his military service, he pursued graduate studies at Syracuse University, earning both an MBA and a Ph.D. in marketing.

Stith went on to shape the future of business education as dean of the Martin J. Whitman School of Management at Syracuse University and the College of Business at Florida State University, later returning to his alma mater as interim president of Norfolk State University. Throughout his career, he has shared his expertise with corporations, academic institutions, and government agencies, while also serving on the boards of major companies such as Synovus Financial Corp., Aflac, Keebler Foods, and Flowers Foods. His leadership and impact have been recognized by Savoy Magazine, which named him one of the most influential Black corporate directors multiple times.

A passionate advocate for diversity in higher education, Stith is a founding member of the [PhD Project](#) and has been inducted into its Hall of Fame. He has received numerous honors, including Florida State University's Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Distinguished Service Award and induction into the FSU College of Business Hall of Fame. Deeply committed to service and philanthropy, he and his wife, Dr. Patricia Lynch Stith, have supported educational and community initiatives, earning the Syracuse University Orange Circle Award. Together, they take pride in their three children—Melvin Jr., Lori, and William—and their grandson, Drew.

Woman-Owned Business Enterprise (WBE) of the Year

Patricia Bates Trotta

Big Bend Rebar, Inc.



Patricia Bates Trotta is the President, Secretary, and Treasurer of [Big Bend Rebar, Inc.](#), a rebar manufacturing company she founded in 2002 in Quincy, Florida. After a successful career in education and a brief role with the Florida Department of Health, she shifted into entrepreneurship at the encouragement of her husband, drawing on his construction expertise and her own skills in management and finance. Starting with a home-based plan and SBA guidance, she built Big Bend Rebar into one of the few local manufacturing

plants, securing USDA and local support to establish a 14,000-square-foot facility that serves contractors across Florida, Georgia, and Alabama.

As President, she manages finances, compliance, and policy while guiding the company through challenges such as inflation, competition, and the pandemic. Trotta is a certified minority and woman-owned business leader in three states, a graduate of the Jim Moran Institute at Florida State University, and proud recipient of the 2025 Woman-Owned Business Enterprise of the Year award during Big Bend Minority Enterprise Development Week.

Minority-Owned Business Enterprise (MBE) of the Year

Vaughn Wilson

Mega Ace Media, LLC



Vaughn Wilson is the Founder and CEO of [Mega Ace Media, LLC](#), a leading media production company known for its work in video, audio, and live event production. With more than 25 years of experience in journalism, sports communications, and multimedia, he has built a reputation as both an innovator and community leader.

During the pandemic, Wilson successfully pivoted his company to specialize in online and hybrid events, earning the trust of key government agencies. In 2021, he launched the [Black Business Expo Tallahassee](#), which has awarded over \$56,000 in grants and fostered partnerships that strengthen minority-owned businesses across the region.

A Florida A&M University graduate, former All-American football player, and longtime media professional, Wilson has produced nationally recognized programming on ESPN and Fox Sports and even managed Billboard-topping artists. Beyond his career, he is a proud husband and father, dedicated to using media, mentorship, and partnerships as tools for empowerment and growth.

2025 Youth Entrepreneur

Edward Chapman

3rd's Drum Line, LLC



At just 14 years old, Edward Chapman III is already a seasoned entrepreneur and musician. He launched [3rd's Drum Line LLC](#) when he was only six, transforming his passion for music into a thriving business. Through his company, Edward offers beginner drum lessons, sells apparel, produces music, and books performances for live events.

A multi-talented artist, he plays bass, drums, and piano, in addition to singing and songwriting. Edward has produced original music, including "Praise the Lord" with The Chapman Family Band and "Dream Chaser" and "Turn-Up" with IMB SummerTracks2024. His work and determination have earned him awards, newspaper features, and the opportunity to inspire peers and adults alike.

More than personal recognition, Edward values the chance to give back. He frequently volunteers his musical talents at community events such as SoulFest, providing entertainment while uplifting families and youth. Looking ahead, his dream is to purchase a building where he can expand his lessons, host music clinics, and empower other young people to pursue their passions early. For Edward, success means being an example that young people don't have to wait until adulthood to start chasing their dreams—they can begin now.

2025 Youth Entrepreneur

Terriyhan Barber

Tipped by Terri



Born in Tallahassee to Brittany Condry and Terrance L. Barber, Terriyhan Barber is a high-achieving senior at Leon High School who embodies creativity and entrepreneurial spirit. She began her education at Symphony Seven Charter School before moving to Leon County Schools. Today, she maintains her status as an honor roll student at Leon High.

Terriyhan's business journey began at a young age with Anytime Treats. She later launched her own lip gloss brand, T So Balm, before finding her true passion in nail artistry. For the past two years, she has been the creative force behind [Tipped by Terri](#), independently managing every aspect of the business, from bookkeeping to marketing, while serving a growing clientele. She plans to continue pursuing entrepreneurship after graduation.

Beyond business and academics, Terriyhan is musically talented, playing the violin in the Leon High School orchestra. She loves creating, connecting with others, and exploring new ideas. With her drive and determination, Terriyhan is preparing to step confidently into adulthood, excited about future opportunities.

2025 Youth Entrepreneur

Emmanuella Olaitan

Ella's World, LLC



Emmanuella "Ella" Olaitan is a vibrant and exceptionally talented twelve-year-old singer, actor, and entrepreneur. Born in Chicago and raised in Florida, Ella has captured hearts across the country with her gifts in singing and theatre.

She is the owner of [Ella's World LLC](#), a multi-faceted business that includes EllaBella Musiq, EllaSpeaks, Ella's World Apparel, and G.L.O.W by Ella, an initiative empowering girls to own their worth.

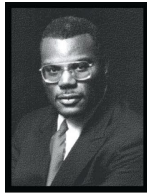
A musical powerhouse, Ella released her self-titled EP in September 2023, showcasing her abilities as a singer, songwriter, and composer. Her songs "Almighty God" and "God Made Me" have received critical acclaim and airplay.

Ella currently stars as Young Nala in Disney's The Lion King Rafiki North America Tour.

When not on the stage, the proud seventh-grade student at Maclay School excels academically (Dean's List, Spelling Bee champion) and is a lead vocalist and violinist in the Significant Youth Inc. Band. She has received multiple awards in gospel music and academic honors.

Living by the motto, "I have what it takes to be great!", Ella is committed to using her talents to glorify God and serve others.

Past Reggie L. Rolle Economic Development Champions



Rev. Dr. R.B. Holmes, Jr.
2000



Rev. Ernest Ferrell
2001



Gene Telfair
2002



Patricia McGowan
2003



Cheryl Seals Gonzalez
2004



Dr. Joseph L. Webster
2005



Darryl Jones
2006



Cory McFarlane
2007



Freddie Franklin
2008



Sean Pittman
2009



Kimberly Moore
2010



Claudette Cromartie
2011



Dr. Carolyn J. Ryals
2012



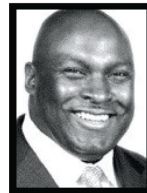
Karen Moore
2013



Angelo Crowell
2014



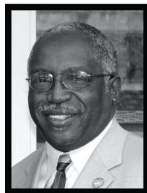
Kimberly Crowell
2014



Daryl Parks, Esq.
2015



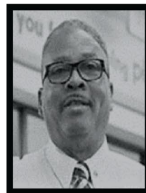
Benjamin Crump, Esq.
2015



Ben Harris
2016



Al Lawson
2017



Roy Moore
2018



Edward Acoff
2019



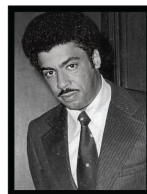
Keith Bowers
2020



Frank Williams
2021



Anita Neal Favors
2022



Steve Beasley
2023



Brenda Williams
2024