

CHICAGO DEFENDER

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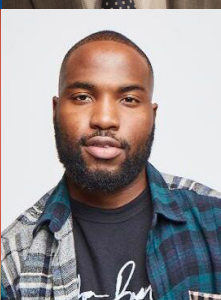
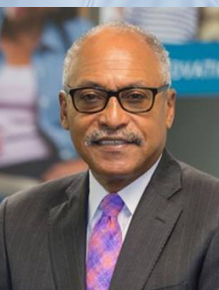
Men of Excellence

PRESENTED BY



comedSM

AN EXELON COMPANY



ex•cel•lence

1) *the fact or state of excelling; superiority; eminence:*

2) *an excellent quality or feature.*

In a time when honor, morale, and dignity have seemingly become lost virtues, there remains a remnant of men who stand as beacons of light in a sea of darkness. It is in honor of this sentiment that the Chicago Defender salutes Men of Excellence.

The African American male has always been looked upon to provide for his family, protect and serve his country, and lead in times of uncertainty. He is called upon to train boys to be men, while setting the bar for our young women as to where their standards should be.

The essence of a man is never defined by gender alone, but by the content of his character. Men of excellence are those who exemplify strength by standing firm in the face of adversity, leadership in periods of struggle, compassion in times of peril, and integrity in the midst of opposition. Through proven success and selfless dedication to the community, these exemplary men are lauded as role models for next generation of excellence.

They are our community and business leaders, husbands, fathers, and protectors. We invite you to join us in congratulating them for their accomplishments and in thanking them for all they give of themselves.

It is with great pleasure that the Chicago Defender presents to you, the 2022 Men of Excellence!

"The test of a man is the fight that he makes, the grit that he daily shows; the way that he stands on his feet and takes fate's numerous bumps and blows. A coward can smile when there's naught to fear and nothing his progress bars, but it takes a man to stand up and cheer when the other fellow stars. It isn't the victory after all, but the fight that a brother makes. The man who, driven against the wall, still stands erect and takes the blows of fate with his head held high, bleeding and bruised and pale. He's the man who'll win in the by and by, for he isn't afraid to fail. It's the bumps you get and the shocks you get and the jolts that your courage stands; the hours of sorrow and vain regrets, the prize that escapes your hand that tests your metal and proves your worth. It isn't the blows that you deal, it's the blows you take on this good old earth that show if your stuff is real!"

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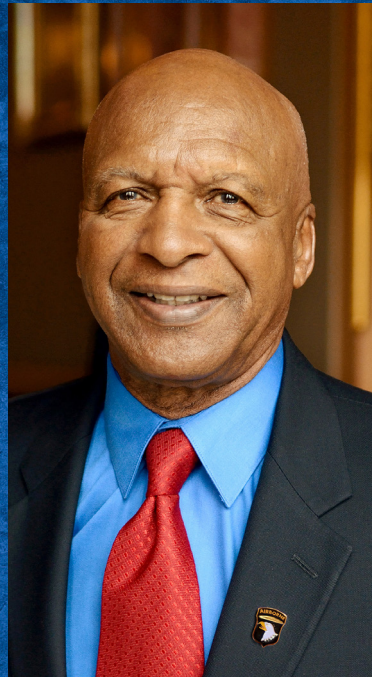
CHICAGO DEFENDER
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Special Award
RECIPIENTS



Man of the Year

Emanuel "Chris" Welch
Speaker of the House
Illinois House of Representatives



Lifetime Achievement Award

Jesse White Jr.
Secretary of State
State of Illinois



Vanguard Award

Lester Coney
Executive Vice President
Mesirrow Financial



Vanguard Award

Leon Walker.
Managing Principal
DL3 Realty, Inc.



CHICAGO DEFENDER
Men of Excellence



MOE Javon Coney and Vanguard Award recipient Les Coney



CHICAGO DEFENDER Men of Excellence



Jarrett M. Adams, Esq.

Attorney
The Law Offices of Jarrett Adams

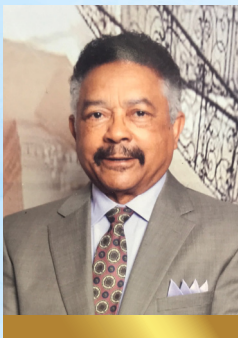
Jarrett M. Adams is a top defense and civil rights attorney, author of his memoir *Redeeming Justice: From Defendant to Defender, My Fight for Equity on Both Sides of a Broken System* (Penguin Random House), and co-founder of the nonprofit Life After Justice. In 2017, Adams launched the Law Offices of Jarrett Adams, PLLC. He practices in federal and state courts throughout the country. In his memoir, Adams talks about his fight toward exoneration after a wrongful conviction. The book follows the aftermath of reclaiming and rebuilding his life after Justice, and his drive to help other exonerees. Life After Justice is dedicated to preventing wrongful convictions and building an ecosystem of support and empowerment for exonerees rebuilding their lives after exoneration. Adams earned his Juris Doctorate from Loyola University Chicago School of Law. He was awarded the National Defender Investigator Association Investigator of the Year award for his work with the clemency petition of Reynolds Wintersmith, ultimately granted by President Obama. For more information, visit jarrettadamslaw.com.



Tarik Al-Amin

Vice President, Operations and Safety
Al-Amin Brothers Transportation, LLC

Tarik Al-Amin was born in Washington, DC. He was destined to be a staple in the trucking industry as his father was a truck driver and entrepreneur. Tarik is a partner of Al-Amin Brothers Transportation, LLC, a family owned, and operated business founded on principles of excellence, dedication, and superior service. With steady growth and a stellar reputation in the trucking industry, Al-Amin Brothers Transportation, LLC, has excelled with their commitment to service, innovation, and integrity. Tarik and his brothers support local communities with donations for events and funding for high school Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps programs. Al-Amin Brothers Transportation, LLC, has participated in the Special Olympics Truck Convoy, supports local food pantries, participates in back-to-school fundraisers, and assist with holiday programs for disadvantaged youth. He is a proud eighteen-year supporter of Matanya's Hope, a nonprofit organization with presence in Kenya East Africa and the United States. Their work is focused on eliminating poverty, educating youth, and providing food, clothing, housing, and clean water. With his wife, two sons, and daughter, he is building a legacy of giving and service.



Benford Ammons Jr.

Founder & CEO
Ammons Transportation

Mr. Ammons, arrived in Chicago in 1957. He was the 2nd oldest of 6 boys raised on a farm in Vaiden, Mississippi. His parents instilled the values of discipline and hard work to the boys. Not a fan of the tough farm life, he decided to leave home and headed north to start a life with his aunt and uncle in Chicago. Shortly after getting married in 1960 to Priscilla, they had 2 sons. With a bloodline rich in entrepreneurship, he co-owned A & J Bookstore, 1 of 3 African American bookstores on the southside of Chicago in the 70s. After 25 years of service, he retired from a locomotive division of General Motors. Realizing that he was still too young to retire, he started Ammons Transportation in 1993 with a 15 passenger van. Today, the company run over 50 school buses in the Chicago area and is managed by his daughter in law, Katrice and eldest son Ray. Mr. Ammons is a God fearing man, who is always looking for opportunities to learn and help others.



Ronald W.H. Banner

Director of External Affairs
ComEd

Ronald Banner serves as ComEd's Director of External Affairs for the Southern Region. In this role, Ronald oversees a team providing direct support to over 200 municipal stakeholders in ComEd's service territory - helping connect local cities and towns with assistance on coordinating capital projects in the area, informational sessions on new clean energy initiatives, and continuous engagement around ComEd investments being made to help power the community - including job training and hiring programs, STEM education, energy efficiency, solar, and much more.

Ronald brings more than 31 years of experience and knowledge from the regulated utility industry, including: nuclear generation, transmission and substation, operations management and distribution operations.

He is originally from Joliet, IL. When he's not working, Ronald enjoys boating and fishing, where he's always looking to find the next big catch.



CHICAGO DEFENDER Men of Excellence



George Barrett

Director of Food and Beverage
Sophy Hotel / Mesler Restaurant

George Barrett is the current Director of Food and Beverage at the SOPHY Hotel and Mesler Restaurant. As a Food and Beverage specialist and business owner of Helping Hands Hospitality LLC, he also consults with other hotels, restaurants, bars and nightlife venues on how to achieve their goals.

George has been affiliated with many companies and brands over his 25-year career. Most of which have achieved top 10 rankings on Tripadvisor, Conde' Nast, Forges and GQ Magazine during his tenor. Some of the most notable companies include Loews Hotels, Thompson Hotels, The Olympia Companies, Hyatt Hotels, One Off Hospitality Group, Commune Hotels and Resorts, Access Hotels and Resorts, and Hilton Hotels.

While George has managed over \$200 million of Food and Beverage operations during his professional career, he also plans to work with government officials at the local, state and federal levels to bring youth programs that teach professional development and dining etiquette to inner city youth.



Alan O. Belin

CEO/Owner
The Chicago Food Project/Apex Limo Services

Alan O. Belin was born and raised in Chicago's historic Bronzeville neighborhood. He is a product of the Chicago Public School system and also attended the university of Wisconsin. Alan worked as a law enforcement officer for 20 years. He is a family man and local business owner. Because of his faith and willingness to serve, he is now the founder and passionate CEO of The Chicago Food Project 501(c)3. It's sole purpose is to serve fresh and nutritious meals to local communities in need. Alan is also the owner of Apex Limo Service. This thriving transportation company services high profile clientele, corporate executives, and churches of all sizes. Alan believes that the purpose of life is to serve, show compassion, and be willing to help others. He works diligently each day to be a positive difference in the lives of others.



Robert Blackwell Jr.

CEO
EKI-Digital

Robert Blackwell Jr. is CEO of EKI-Digital, a leader in quantitative digital strategy and execution. The technology company finds financial and performance improvement opportunities by using quantitative models: mathematical, economic and statistical. This model has helped large public and private sector organizations identify and capture \$billions in savings.

As a passionate writer, Blackwell Jr. has crafted several papers and presentations related to digital modernization, innovation and efficiency in the public and private sectors. His strategic advice has guided governments and business leaders on ways to better leverage IT investments to improve revenue and service quality while reducing costs and risk from digital portfolios

Robert also makes a point to get involved and give back. He is on several boards including Illinois Tech School of Computing, US Bank, Business Leadership Council, and Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce. Blackwell has helped a number of young entrepreneurs start businesses and enjoys reading and writing about math, economics and history.



Troy Boyd Jr.

Chief Operating Officer
Urban Prep Academies

Troy is the Chief Operating Officer of Urban Prep Academies. He leads a staff responsible for Urban Prep's finances, fundraising, technology, facilities, external relations, community partnerships, communications, expansion and student recruitment. A Chicago native, Troy is intensely dedicated to serving, advancing, and engaging with his community. In addition to his work at Urban Prep, Troy serves as Chair of the African American Legacy Board (AAL). AAL is a philanthropic initiative of The Chicago Community Trust led by African American civic and community leaders who share the common goal of improving the quality of life of African Americans in Chicago. He also is a founding design team member of Revitalize Black Chicago—a regenerative nonprofit initiative led by African American community leaders and residents focused on restoring historically Black neighborhoods stifled by years of disinvestment, disenfranchisement and economic instability. He is a 16-year member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. Troy earned his Master's Degree in Public Policy from the Harris School at the University of Chicago and his Bachelor's Degree in Broadcast Journalism from the Medill School at Northwestern University.



CHICAGO DEFENDER Men of Excellence



Kerri D. Brown, Esq.

Chief Executive Officer
Community Counseling Centers of Chicago

Kerri Brown joined C4 in February of 2021 as Chief Operating Officer and became President and CEO shortly after in August of that year. Before coming to C4, he took on a number of roles at HRDI (Human Resources Development Institute) including Chief Administrative Officer, Director of Human Resources, and Associate Counsel before ultimately becoming Vice President of Operations. Kerri earned his Juris Doctorate from the Southern University Law Center in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and his Master of Laws (LLM) degree in Real Estate from the John Marshall Law School in Chicago. He is licensed and in good standing with the Illinois Bar Association, with certifications in an array of professional institutes and programs.



Rodney D. Brown

CEO
New Covenant CDC

Rodney Brown serves as Executive Director/CEO of New Covenant Community Development Corporation (NCCDC). NCCDC is a business development center where we offer classes and one on advising for startup and existing businesses. He is also a Co-Founder and serves as a member of the Executive Committee of North Lawndale Community Coordinating Council (NLCCC) and Chair of the Economic Development Committee. He is the Exec Director of the North Lawndale Chamber of Commerce.

Rodney has more than 30 years of experience in business and serves on the boards of non-profit organizations in many roles including the Board Chair of two organizations. Currently, he serves as the Board Chair for Kids Above All.

His background includes finance, commercial credit and collections, sales, management and procurement. He has extensive global experience, having worked and traveled in China, Korea, Japan, Mexico and Canada. His most recent corporate experience includes more than 20 years in procurement where his last position was Director of Global Procurement for a multi-billion-dollar company. Rodney is a strong proponent of collaborative effort and team building.



Jason Coleman

Executive Director
Project SYNCERE

Jason serves as Executive Director for Project SYNCERE, an educational not-for-profit organization creating pathways for underrepresented students to pursue careers in STEM.

In 2008, he co-founded Project SYNCERE in an effort to bring about a change within the STEM fields. As a product of the Chicago Public Schools, it was important for Jason to ensure access to quality programs was available to inner-city youth.

Project SYNCERE currently works with schools, CBOs, and universities to implement its engineering focused programs to supplement students' learning in the STEM fields. Since its inception, Project SYNCERE has served over 25,000 Chicago area students, helping to increase their interest in STEM and improve their overall understanding of engineering.

Jason started his career as a mechanical engineer for BAE SYSTEMS and later worked for Motorola Mobility, where he designed mobile phones.

Jason is a member of the 2019 class of the Eisenhower Fellows, a 2020 Leadership Greater Chicago Fellow and is currently pursuing his MBA from the University of Chicago Booth School of Business. He also serves as the Co-Chair of the Advisory Board for the Chicago Children's Museum.



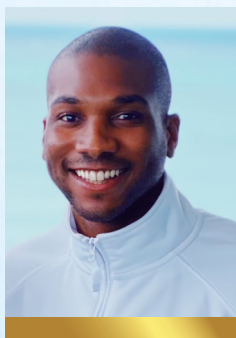
William J. Collins

Chief Advancement Officer
Surge Institute

William Collins is the Chief Advancement Officer for the Surge Institute, a national non-profit organization developed to educate and develop leaders of color who create transformative change in urban education. As CAO, William serves as a key leadership team member and owner of developing and leading strategies that build a large, diverse coalition to advance the cause of educational equity as well as engage a new generation of leaders to join the effort. William holds a Master of Education from DePaul University and a Bachelor of Science in economics from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. He also holds a non-profit executive management certification from Georgetown University. In 2021, he was named one of Chicago's Top African American Leaders by Crain's Chicago Business. William serves on the Board of Directors of Open Books in Chicago and he is a National Trustee of Democracy Prep Public Schools. William is an active member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc. and 100 Black Men of Chicago. He currently resides in the greater Chicago metropolitan area with his wife, Alicia.



CHICAGO DEFENDER Men of Excellence



Javon Coney

Director of Strategic Partnerships
FanDuel

Javon is Director of Strategic Partnerships for FanDuel Group, a preeminent gaming and sports technology company that offers sportsbook, daily fantasy sports, online casino, and online horse race betting products. In this role Javon is responsible for sourcing, implementing, and strengthening tactical policies executed in collaboration with external partnerships. Through these negotiations, Javon facilitates various opportunities to achieve short and long term FanDuel goals.

Prior to joining FanDuel Group, Javon served as Special Assistant to New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio. He planned, managed, and executed various projects at the service of the administration, including inter-departmental activities, key business issues and protocols, and processes to improve critical objectives. His tenure with the mayor culminated in being presented with a proclamation declaring September 10, 2020 "Javon Coney Day" in New York City. Before then, he was privileged to work at the White House in Scheduling and Advance under President Barack Obama. This opportunity required supporting the President, First Lady, and Vice-President to ensure the principals' needs as well as their domestic and international logistics.

Javon played Division 1, Big 12 basketball at the University of Colorado. He was voted captain during one of the most successful seasons in the team's history. At Colorado, he earned a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science.

A Chicago native, Javon is proud to maintain his cultural connections. He is a Luminary Member of the Art Institute of Chicago, and a steadfast supporter of his hometown sports teams.



Larry Daniels

CEO
Hoop Hard or Get Off The Court

Larry Daniels started his organization about 5 years ago. His passion for the youth have grown tremendously to giving scholarships to the. Putting basketball events together giving out trophies and medals to all players including the coaches.

He have partner with alot of positive role models including father Michael Pflieger cpd and cfd.



Carlos W. Cubia

SVP, Global Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer
Walgreens Boots Alliance

Carlos currently serves as SVP and Global Chief Diversity Officer for Walgreens Boots Alliance, the first global pharmacy-led, health and wellbeing enterprise in the world with over 350K team members. He oversees the company's global efforts to create and maintain a diverse and inclusive environment that reflects the culture, people, and perspectives of the many nations and communities in which they do business. Cubia is responsible for developing and implementing the enterprise-wide strategy to ensure that DE&I is fully imbedded into the daily business operations. Under his leadership the Company has been consistently recognized as a top company for Diversity practices by several well-known publications and associations across the globe. He has been recognized by Black Enterprise, Career Mastered magazine, Diversity Woman Media, the National Diversity Council and several other notable organizations as a top 50, top 100 and DEI influencer for his work and contribution in the field. Cubia is a highly sought-after speaker and subject matter expert and has been regularly honored as a champion for diversity, equity and Inclusion.



Derek R.B. Douglas

Vice President of Civic Engagement and External Affairs
University of Chicago

As Vice President for Civic Engagement and External Affairs, Derek Douglas serves as a University of Chicago Officer and leads the University's local, regional, national and global efforts with respect to civic engagement, corporate partnerships and urban development. Douglas guides the University's efforts to engage with, and have a direct impact on, the lives of people living in Chicago, across the country and around the world.

Douglas served on the White House Domestic Policy Council (DPC) as Special Assistant to President Barack Obama for Urban Affairs and led the White House's work on urban and metropolitan policy issues. Before that, Douglas worked as Washington Counsel to New York Governor David A. Paterson and Director of New York's D.C. Office. Earlier, Douglas was Associate Director of Economic Policy at the Center for American Progress (CAP) where he founded and served as Director of the Economic Mobility Program.

Douglas serves on the Boards of Argonne National Laboratory; Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE); University of Chicago Laboratory Schools; the Skadden Fellowship Foundation; Evans Scholarship Foundation and Western Golf Association (WGA).

He is a graduate of the University of Michigan with Highest Honors in Economics and the Yale Law School.



CHICAGO DEFENDER Men of Excellence



Norman P. Fleming

Author, Founder & President
The Sphinx Club, Fleming Consulting LLC

Mr. Fleming has over thirty years of professional business experience that represent some of the Most Admired Companies in the world. He is an Author, Founder, and President of The Sphinx Club, Make America Hope Again, and Fleming Consulting LLC. He is a Diversity-Equity-Inclusion trailblazer in corporate America with deep executive experience.

Mr. Fleming ascended to Vice President of Global Business Transformation at McCormick & Co., Senior Director of IT Project & Portfolio Management at Aon Service Corporation, Senior Director of IT Enterprise Business Solutions at Molson Coors-MillerCoors USA, Senior Director of IT Client Relationship Management at Astellas Pharma, Program Integration & Management lead at Deloitte Consulting, Global IT Manager at Merck & Co., Director of Client Services at The New York Times Company, Business Systems Manager at Kraft Heinz Foods Company, and held various leadership positions at the Chicago Tribune Company.

He is a recipient of the 2014 Outstanding MBA of the Year for the National Black MBA Association, 2014 DiversityMBA Magazine's Top 100 Executives Under 50 Achievement Award, and 2014 DeVry University's Distinguished MBA Alumni Achievement Award.



Durant T. Freeman

Director, Adult Education
Safer Foundation/PACE Institute

Durant Freeman was born to the union of Beric and Edna as the 2nd son amongst 5 siblings. Living on the southside of Chicago in the Englewood neighborhood, his richness of traditions, trails, and tribulations were experienced as a child and teenager of the seventies and eighties.

In the nineties Durant was recruited by Safer Foundation to serve the Chicagoland as an Adult Educator within Cook County Jail. Enthused and determined for 30+ years, his life's works has serviced 10,000+ learners with over 2,500 recipients of (HSE/GED) credentials.

Congruent with works in education is his passion for physical development of youth in athletics. Serving as a high school varsity basketball coach for 20+ years, he's been assistive to others in their pursuit of accomplishment in competitive sports. Resulting in a multiplicity of post-secondary scholarships being awarded to a multitude of student athletes.

Durant states; being awarded as one of many Men of Excellence; he can only accept on behalf of his wife, Dominique and 6 kids, being thankful to his nominator and The Defender, and his parents for the opportunity.



Brinton W. Flowers

Director of Marketing and Business Development
Flowers Communications Group

Brinton Flowers is the Director of Marketing and Business Development at Flowers Communications Group (FCG) in Chicago. FCG is an award-winning, Black-owned integrated marketing firm that has been connecting multicultural consumers with the world's most renowned brands for more than 30 years. Brinton is responsible for driving new business goals and opportunities; building relationships with industry leaders; and managing the iconic FCG brand.

Hailing from Ft. Lauderdale, Brinton was a top on-air talent with Cumulus Broadcasting in Tallahassee, serving as a personality for WWLD Blazin' 102.3. His experience in broadcast media, influencer engagement, promotions, and entertainment energizes his leadership role at FCG. During his nearly ten years with FCG, he has excelled as an integrated marketing communications strategist on the agency's blue-chip client portfolio – having led communications initiatives for McDonald's; Jack Daniel's; Nike; NBA; Illinois Department of Transportation, iHeart Media; Stellar Gospel Music Awards and other brands.

Brinton, who has received numerous industry awards for excellence in communications, marketing, and advertising, is a member of the Chicago chapters of National Association of Black Journalists and the Publicity Club of Chicago.



Richard Gallion

CEO
Richard Gallion Entertainment

As a writer, director, and actor, I stumbled upon these hidden talents after obtaining a basketball injury in college. Suffering a broken wrist and unable to fulfill my dream of being a professional athlete. I've toured the world as an Ebony and JET Fashion Fair model and while on tour, I developed a passion for writing. Shortly after I began my own Production company Richard Gallion Entertainment and acting career. As one who understands discipline and consistency, I was fortunate to garner roles on FOX's Proven Innocent, Chicago PD, Chicago Med, Showtime's The Chi, USA's Sirens, and FOX's Empire directed by Lee Daniels, featuring Taraji P. Henson and Terrence Howard has opened up massive doors. I've also starred in movies like Transformers 4, Black Coffee, Nothing Like Thanksgiving, and more. My greatest weapon is being able to write, Produce, and direct my own content. Not only do I create jobs for myself, but also 40 plus families every time I do a production. To date I've 13 shows and now averaging 10 shows a year. As of current my most successful show that's been able to attract eyes and capture hearts world wide is my show 1800vs2020. It's been covered by WGN, CBS, NBC, Heart of Hollywood Magazine, Broadway world and many more. 1800vs2020 will be playing live June 18th at 2pm&7pm. For more info go to www.richardgallion.com



CHICAGO DEFENDER Men of Excellence



Dr. Tony Hampton

Regional Medical Director Trinity Service Area
Advocate Aurora Healthcare

Dr. Hampton is a board-certified family and obesity specialist with additional training in nutrition and functional medicine who is passionate about removing barriers to health and equipping patients and his colleagues with the education and resources they need for success. As the medical director of the Advocate Operating System, he collaborated with clinicians and staff on programs to address social determinants of health among at-risk patient populations. Programs like the Healthy Living program, educating patients about lifestyle helping them set realistic and attainable goals, the Food Farmacy at Advocate Trinity, and South Suburban Hospitals to increase access to fresh, healthy food for patients in partnership with the Chicago Food Depository. He also works with patients in small groups enrolled in the diabetes prevention program (D.P.P.) and COPD programs and is currently a Regional Medical Director for the South Region in Chicago. He's authored the book: *Fix Your Diet, Fix Your Diabetes*, is an active blogger on social media, creates educational videos on YouTube, and has a podcast ranked in the top 1% entitled: *Protecting Your N.E.S.T.* with Dr. Tony Hampton.



Kanu Iheukumere

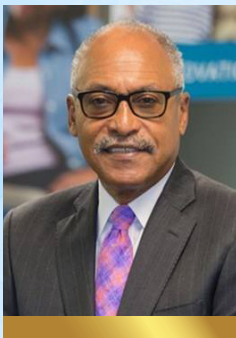
Director of Operations
Metropolitan Family Services

Kanu Iheukumere has more than 25 years of community development leadership in the public and private sectors, related to program development, capacity building, public speaking, policy and research, speech-writing, and legislative advocacy.

He is currently Director of Program Operations for Metropolitan Family Services. Mr. Iheukumere provides leadership to participating agencies and program partners to ensure successful violence prevention program implementation, sustainability, structure, and development of program metrics and performance. He facilitates and manages relationships with a broad array of stakeholders, including community-based organizations, gang intervention leaders, law enforcement, academics, and other subject matter experts.

Previously, Mr. Iheukumere was Chief Policy and Research Officer at Bethel New Life, Inc., a not-for-profit organization located on Chicago's west side. He was responsible for providing strategic leadership and outreach to government, corporate, philanthropy and the general public on issues related to education, economic and workforce development.

He has worked with numerous not-for-profit and government bodies including but not limited to: the U.S Department of State; various political campaigns, the State of Illinois, and the City of Chicago.



Louis E. James

President & CEO
MCL Jasco

Louis E. James is a titan of industry who owns and operates MCL Jasco, a diverse range of supply chain companies that service the automotive, energy and government industries. His company has been ranked on Black Enterprise's 100 Top Businesses for the past 8 years. MCL Jasco is a conglomeration of five sister companies Jasco, Int'l, QIC, and Motor City Int'l (MCI) and SEEL (Solutions for Energy Efficient Logistics), his flagship company that promotes positive environmental change by administering energy management programs, on behalf of its utility clients. For the past five years, the company has been named Supplier of the Year by the National Minority Supplier Diversity Council.

A committed community leader and civic servant, James serves on many boards and committees that advance diversity and inclusion and embrace our youth. A veteran of the United States Army, James attended Mississippi Valley State University, graduating with a BS in Business Administration. He is married to Dr. Pamela James, and together they share the love of two daughters and two grandchildren.



Lovise Jiles

Owner
MNK Realty Professionals LLC

Lovise was born and raised on the south side of Chicago, where he attended a small private grade school - Howalton Day School. He graduated from Hyde Park Career Academy High School and went on to earn a Bachelor's of Science in Industrial Technology from Illinois State University and an MBA from Keller Graduate School. Lovise has worked in the Information Technology field since college and during that time he co-founded and ran a successful IT consulting firm. Lovise is now the owner of a real estate brokerage and development company and a co-owner of a Martini bar in the south suburbs of Chicago. Lovise's goals include sharing his wealth with others by supporting a number of charities and developing and mentoring youth, specifically young black men. Lovise was fortunate to learn at an early age from his Father Lovise Jiles Sr., the mindset of entrepreneurship and as such continually looks for avenues to share that expertise with others, while he continues his search for new ventures. Lovise resides in the southern suburbs of Chicago with his wife and 3 daughters.



CHICAGO DEFENDER Men of Excellence



Marco Johnson

President Chicago Police Athletic League
Attorney General

Marco was raised in the Chicago Housing Authority, Dearborn Homes. At the age of 16, he joined the US Army, where he learned that he could play baseball at an extremely high level. He later parlayed his skill set into a college scholarship at Chicago State University. In 1985, Marco signed up to fight crime in the City of Chicago as a Chicago Police Officer. On duty as well as off, Marco used sports as a hook; to gain the trust of young children some of whom were gang affiliated or had little guidance. Marco and his wife founded Stomping Out Drugs and Gangs, a not-for-profit organization. He later founded the first chapter of the Police Athletic League where sports and mentoring by Chicago Police Officers became a regular occurrence in the most violent area of Chicago.

Marco has implemented numerous youth programs citywide. He has always been an advocate for those without a voice. Marco retired from CPD after 29 years of service. He currently works on the Executive Protection team for the Illinois Attorney General. Marco is married to Dania Johnson and together they have five children.



Will Jones

Race & Culture Reporter
ABC 7 Chicago

Will Jones takes pride in uplifting and amplifying diverse voices in Chicagoland as the race and culture reporter for ABC 7 Eyewitness News.

He was promoted to this new role in January 2021 after serving 5 years as a general assignment reporter at the station.

Jones is the only television reporter in the market solely focused on issues of race, gender, sexual orientation, social justice and culture.

Outside the newsroom, Jones is an active member of the National Association of Black Journalists-Chicago Chapter. He co-hosts a monthly podcast for chapter members.

Jones served several years on the executive board of the local NABJ chapter. As chair of the scholarship committee, he awarded thousands of dollars to Black college students pursuing careers in journalism.

In addition to Chicago, Jones has also worked as a reporter at television stations in Detroit, Michigan, Greenville, South Carolina and Charleston, West Virginia.

While in Detroit, he was honored with a regional Emmy for his report on asylum-seekers. Jones is a graduate of the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University.



Commissioner Bill Lowry, Esq.

Cook County Commissioner
Cook County Government

Commissioner Bill Lowry is a lifelong Chicago south-sider, husband of 31 years to Dr. Cheryl Watson-Lowry, proud father of three children, Bill, Jr., Evan, & Clarke, and Cook County's Commissioner of the 3rd District.

An attorney and president of the law firm Nyhan, Bambrick, Kinzie & Lowry, Commissioner Lowry has practiced law for over 30 years. Commissioner Lowry also serves on numerous boards including the Boards of Lake Forest College and Loyola University School of Law, where he helped start scholarship funds for students of color. Commissioner Lowry's commitment to gun violence prevention grew in 2013, after fifteen-year-old Hadiya Pendleton became a victim of senseless gun violence mere steps from the Commissioner's backyard. This horrific event led him to start The It's Time Organization, or TITO, a non-violence organization which provided after school programming and summer internships for high school students.

In his role as Cook County Commissioner, he works to foster economic development throughout the 3rd District. His premier piece of legislation, the Good Faith Effort Transparency Report, provides governmental transparency and promotes participation for M/W/PBEs (minority, women, and people with disability business enterprises).



Jamal Malone

Chief Executive Officer
Ada S. McKinley Community Services, Inc.

Jamal Malone is the CEO of Ada S. McKinley Community Services, Inc., a comprehensive human services agency serving 7,000 people annually at over 70 program sites throughout Chicago, Wisconsin and Indiana. Previously, Jamal served as CEO and CFO for the National Children's Center, a human services agency based in Washington DC. He began his career as a Management Consultant with Ernst & Young and has held supervisory roles at OfficeMax and CVS/Caremark. Jamal also founded J&M Professional Services to provide strategic and financial consulting services for small businesses, nonprofits and civic organizations.

Jamal has served on several boards and advocacy groups including as a current member of the Executive Committee of the National Council of SourceAmerica Employers, and member of the boards for Illinois Collaboration on Youth, and Illinois Partners for Human Services where he is the immediate past Chair. Jamal has a BA in Accounting from Michigan State University, and MBA cum laude from the University of Notre Dame. He is an avid swimmer, chess player and enjoys time with his wife and three sons.



CHICAGO DEFENDER Men of Excellence



Rod Martin

CEO

Agile Technologies Group

Rod founded Agile Technologies in response to COVID19 in March 2020 following 20+ years' delivering IT solutions in infrastructure, cybersecurity, management consulting, pharmaceutical research, and educational systems. He's deployed artificial intelligence globally for ABBVIE Pharmaceutical after implementing the Affordable Healthcare Act for the State of Georgia. Rod led global IT programs at McKesson, Vyair Medical, Takeda Pharmaceutical and AbbVie developing oncology treatments, diagnostic testing, and medical devices.

Rod managed global teams from Deloitte, Wipro, Cognizant, Orange Business Services and InfoSys deploying artificial intelligence, enterprise SAP, leading mergers and designing technology programs for school districts.

Rod attended Chicago's Mt. Carmel, completed degrees in IT Sciences and Journalism from Illinois State University and served in the Illinois Army National Guard as a Nuclear, Biological & Chemical Trainer. He's humbly been distinguished battalion graduate, a national power lifting runner-up, Illinois state champion wrestler, Illinois state champion long jumper and placed 3rd in national junior track long jump.

Agile Technologies' mission is saving lives and improving quality of life with accurate COVID testing, air purification and safety planning for schools, government entities, businesses, movies/TV and special events.



Dr. Jonathan McKenzie

Chief Executive Officer

Family Centered Educational Agency

Dr. Jonathan McKenzie has developed, directed, monitored, and evaluated educational programs for non-profit organizations, colleges, and universities since 1988. He is not a selfish man. He has used his knowledge and expertise in grant writing to help numerous secondary schools, universities, and organizations to obtain millions of dollars grant aid. He is a nationally recognized trainer of TRIO personnel for the United States Department of Education-sponsored training grants (University of Las Vegas Nevada, SAEOPP, and the Council for Opportunity in Education). During the past three years he has served as a keynote speaker at Yale, Cornell, and Princeton University.

In 1997, he co-founded and became the Chief Executive Officer of the Family Centered Educational Agency, Inc. (FCEA), a community-based organization that serves over 2500 low-income individuals annually. He is one of the premier college placement and financial aid experts in the state. He was invited to the Whitehouse in 2016 to participate in a dialogue with the US Surgeon General and the Cabinet Secretary concerning healthcare and men's health.

He has served as Board Chair for the COE, President of the Education Opportunity Association (EOA) and the State TRIO Association (ILAEOPP), Lead Consultant for Virtuous Business Services, Inc., HEAT Committee Member and trainer for Chicago Public Schools, a member of the NIU College of Education Advisory Committee, and a Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses Alumni.



Ray McElroy

Founder/CEO

A Ray of Hope on Earth

Through his 20-year motivational speaking initiative, Life Beyond the Game, Ray McElroy has managed to capture the hearts and minds of youth, organizations and companies nationwide! As an emerging leader in the marketplace, Ray's amazing and uncanny ability to entertain while delivering a profound message of desire, discipline and dedication has impacted the lives of thousands regardless of gender, age, or profession. Ray's fire for seeing individuals, companies, and organizations take their prospective businesses to the next level comes from his athletic background spending six seasons in the NFL from 1995-2001 with the Indianapolis Colts, Detroit Lions, and the Chicago Bears. A native of Chicago and graduate of Eastern Illinois University, Ray also served as Team Chaplain for the Chicago Bears Organization from 2008-2012.

In addition to his speaking profession, Ray is devoting his post football career to empowering youth, transforming lives, and making a difference one life and community at a time through his non-profit organization, A Ray of Hope on Earth. Ray puts on youth football camps for at risk, underserved youth, runs a mentoring program in Chicago, and does all-school assembly programs encouraging youth about the consequences of their choices. Ray and his wife Michelle use their 26 years of marital experience to coach couples in business, churches, and those in professional athletics; equipping them with the tools necessary to take their game to the next level relationally.



Christopher A. Nolen

Director/Producer

Nferno Media Entertainment and Black and Gold Films

Christopher Nolen is a film director that has generated a proven brand in urban entertainment, production and distribution, by creating positive and entertaining content for minorities and global audiences as a whole.</p>

Before Christopher became a prominent film director, he spent twenty plus years as an educator, administrator, and a football and basketball coach. After leaving a successful fulltime education career, Christopher is now an educational consultant and he continues to direct and produce films for his growing worldwide audience.

Christopher is highly intelligent as he has bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering, a master's in Mathematics, and a master's in Educational Administration.

Christopher is a member of the Producer's Guild of America, Director's Guild of America, Screen Actors Guild and American Federation of Television and Radio Artists.

Christopher is now continuing to grow his audience as a film and television director/producer along with his audience as an educational consultant.



CHICAGO DEFENDER Men of Excellence



Al Orendorff

Chief Communications Officer
Zurich North America

Al Orendorff is chief communications officer at Zurich North America, where he leads a team of 20 communications professionals and is a member of Chief Executive Officer Kristof Terryn's senior leadership team.

For the past three decades, Orendorff has cultivated a career as a senior level global public relations strategist, c-suite counselor and writer, having held communications leadership positions at Allstate Insurance, Aon Corp., Genworth Financial in Richmond, Virginia, Choose Chicago and now Zurich North America.

Orendorff began his communications career as a journalist, working in local television and radio news, primarily covering state and local government and urban affairs and education. His journalism career included stints at NBC-TV in Peoria, Black Entertainment Television and WBEZ and WGN radio in Chicago, winning several awards for news reporting, writing and production.

A native of Lincoln, Illinois, Orendorff received his B.S. in Mass Communications from Illinois State University. He is a member of Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity and a former member of 100 Black Men in Richmond, Virginia. He is also on the Choose Chicago Foundation board.



Steven Perkins

Director of Field Instruction
Metropolitan Family Services

Born and raised on Chicago's South Side and a graduate of National-Louis University with a BA in Applied Behavioral Sciences, Steven understands the effect and plight growing up in Chicago's most dangerous communities. His close encounters with gang-activity, gun violence and witnessing many close friends going to the penitentiary or the grave led him to become a change agent and advocate for community justice and equity. Steven has over 20 years working in the field of public safety mainly in the areas of reentry and violence prevention. He was the Director of Reentry of CSAC (Community Support Advisory Council), a state-funded Illinois Department of Corrections re-entry program. He was also part of the Cook County State's Attorney Steering Committee, a role that ties neatly with his involvement with the Chicago Police Department and the John Jay Violence Prevention Strategy (VPS). Steven is currently the Director of Field Instruction for CP4P (Communities Partnering 4 Peace) with Metropolitan Family Services. Steven is also the founder and senior pastor of New Direction Grace Church Chicago.



Honorable LaDon A. Reynolds

United States Marshal
Northern District of Illinois

LaDon Reynolds serves as the United States Marshal for the Northern District of Illinois. He was appointed by President Biden in May of 2022 after serving more than 27 years with the Oak Park Police Department and retiring as Chief of Police in April of 2022.

Mr. Reynolds served as an Adjunct Professor in the Criminal Justice Administration program at Triton College, teaching Community Relations and Police Administration.

In 2020 Governor J. B. Pritzker appointed, then, Chief Reynolds to the Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board, where he served as the chair of the sub-committee on Curriculum and School Standards. Additionally, Governor Pritzker appointed him to the State of Illinois Commission on Discrimination and Hate Crimes where he served as a commissioner.

Mr. Reynolds is a certified Executive in Public Leadership through the Harvard Kennedy School Executive Education Program and a graduate of the FBI National Academy. He holds a Master of Science degree in Workforce Education and Development and a Bachelor of Science degree in Administration of Justice from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.



Darryl E. Robinson, Esq.

Owner
Darryl E. Robinson & Associates, LLC

Darryl E. Robinson holds a Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering and Masters of Business Administration from the University of Detroit-Mercy and a Juris Doctorate from Loyola University of Chicago. His practice is focused on Section 1983 Civil Rights, Personal Injury, Criminal Defense and Business Litigation. Darryl E. Robinson is admitted to practice in the State of Illinois, Federal Court of the Northern District of Illinois, Federal Court of the Eastern District of Michigan and Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals.

Prior to founding Darryl E. Robinson and Associates, he was a partner in the Law Firm, Robinson, London and Best. Mr. Robinson also worked in several professional positions as a product engineer at both Ford Motor Company and Chrysler Corporation.

Mr. Robinson is active in various organizations including the National Bar Association, Illinois State Bar Association, and Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.

His mission as an attorney is to protect the rights of those who are unable to do so. In addition, he mentors and encourages younger attorneys to take up the plight of those who liberties have been infringed upon.



CHICAGO DEFENDER Men of Excellence



Dr. Derek J. Robinson, MBA

Vice President and Chief Medical Officer
Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois

Dr. Derek J. Robinson serves as vice president and chief medical officer at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois (BCBSIL), where he is responsible for clinical leadership, care management operations, and the Institute for Physician Diversity®. Previously, Dr. Robinson was vice president at Health Care Service Corporation (HCSC) where he established the Enterprise Quality and Accreditation department.

Dr. Robinson is an active member of the community and serves on the Medicaid Advisory Committee for the State of Illinois. He is a member of the board of directors at the Cook County Health Foundation and vice-chairman of the Board of Trustees at Xavier University of Louisiana. Dr. Robinson is a member of the Economic Club of Chicago where he is the chairman of the Young Leaders Committee. He also volunteers as an official with Illinois Swimming and is a nationally certified judge with USA Swimming.

An active emergency medicine physician, Dr. Robinson is board certified by the American Board of Emergency Medicine and holds degrees from Xavier University of Louisiana, Howard University College of Medicine, and the University of Chicago Booth School of Business.



Devon Robinson

Special Event Manager
Chicago Park District

Devon Robinson was born and raised on the south side of Chicago, where he lived with his mother and six siblings growing up. He learned at a young age that grit and determination was the secret in to success. Losing his mother to cancer taught him to persevere, leading him to join the Chicago Park District family in 2012, where he is currently the Manager of Special Events.

In his role, Devon gets to meet so many diverse people who are entrusting him to make their event magical and memorable. Devon knows that he can't deliver on any of these events without the dream team that works alongside him daily.

In his off time, Devon volunteers as a varsity football coach at Lindblom Park District which is a place that he knows so well and is near and dear to his heart as he gives back to the community that embraced him. Devon is also raising his younger siblings and enjoys being a mentor when he is not working on special events.



John Scott

Vice -President of Business Development and
Government Relations
ChanceLight Education

John Scott works with key stakeholders including city, state and federal officials across the country to enhance and grow business opportunities for ChanceLight Education. He is also responsible for providing strategic oversight on community and corporate engagement strategies to ensure the company continues to meet its goal of developing more district partnerships and helping more students succeed.

John joined ChanceLight from the Chicago Board of Education and Chicago Public Schools, the nation's third-largest district, where for four years he was responsible for government affairs and community organizing and outreach. John currently serves as a Board Trustee of East/West University of Chicago. He attended Loyola University and Richard J. Daley College, both located in Chicago, and he is a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity.



Andrew M. Stroth

Managing Partner
Action Injury Law Group LLC

Andrew M. Stroth is a dedicated civil rights attorney who passionately protects the constitutional rights of individuals unjustifiably injured by the police or wrongfully convicted. Stroth is also an experienced sports attorney and trusted advisor who protects and defends the rights and reputations of high profile professional athletes, celebrities, news personalities, business executives and political leaders.

Stroth is a graduate and former adjunct professor at Northwestern Pritzker School of Law and currently serves on the Northwestern Law Board. As a sports and media agent, Stroth represented Dwyane Wade, Donovan McNabb, Michael Vick, Brandon Marshall, Lovie Smith, Cheryl Scott, Robin Robinson and many others.

Stroth is also the Founder of The Truth, Hope and Justice Initiative, a non-profit organization committed to sharing the stories and human truths of mothers impacted by unjustified police brutality in America.



CHICAGO DEFENDER Men of Excellence



Corey Taliaferro

Executive Director, IL Medicare-Medicaid Plan
Aetna

Corey Taliaferro is a results-driven health services professional with 20+ years of experience. He has proven executive leadership with a strong ability to influence and motivate others to achieve objectives and seek out innovative solutions to business issues. Corey has a reputation as an effective communicator with the necessary skills to deliver results in strategic projects including successful department/service center merges, plan implementations, process improvement and identifying cost savings. He has demonstrated his ability as a leader in successfully developing teams of up to 120 to improve business performance.

In his current role as Executive Director, IL Medicare-Medicaid Plan, Corey is responsible for overall health plan P&L for the Illinois dual-eligible product. Corey also oversees Community Engagement in support of driving membership growth and retention performance for the regional Medicare-Medicaid markets with combined annual revenues of \$1.6B. He leads management of stakeholder relationships including community partnerships to drive Social Determinants of Health outcomes for market membership.



Cory L. Thames

Chief Engagement Officer
Business Leadership Council

Currently, Cory serves as Chief Engagement Officer for the Business Leadership Council (BLC) - Chicago's premier association of African American entrepreneurs and senior executives. Most recently, Cory served as Deputy Commissioner for the Chicago Department of Aviation (CDA) where he led the Intergovernmental Affairs Chicago's airports. Prior to CDA, Cory served as Deputy Director of Community Engagement for the Obama Foundation helping to lead efforts to bring the Obama Presidential Center to the south side of Chicago. Before that, he held multiple roles across the government and nonprofit sectors.

Cory has long been an active advocate in his community. Cory currently serves as Chairman of the South Shore Chamber of Commerce's Board of Directors. Cory also serves on the Board of Trustees for Chicago State University and as a board member for Emerald South. Cory is a proud member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated.

Cory earned a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from Southern Illinois University Carbondale and a Master of Public Affairs (MPA) degree from Indiana University. Thames, 34, is a proud resident of the South Shore community.



Rev. Jasper Paul Taylor I

Executive Director
The Calahan Foundation, NFP

Rev. Jasper Paul Taylor I is a minister, visionary, gifted singer, songwriter, and lifelong student.

He is Executive Pastor of St. Paul and Greater Mt. Pleasant MBC of Chicago, IL. He is Executive Director of the Calahan Foundation NFP, which provides college scholarships, college mentoring, and community outreach. Since 2018, under his leadership, nearly \$100,000 in college scholarships has been awarded.

He earned a Bachelor of Arts in Music and Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership degree from Olivet Nazarene University and a Master of Divinity degree from Northern Theological Seminary. Jasper is slated to earn a Degree in Mortuary Science from Worsham College in September 2022.

Jasper serves as Third Vice-Moderator for the Christian Unity Baptist District Association and the Youth and Children's Director for the Illinois National Baptist State Convention. He is a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Incorporated.

Jasper is married to Valerie Calahan-Taylor. They have a brilliant son, Jasper Paul Taylor II. The couple is committed to inspiring hope and changing lives through their service to God and the community.



Bryant F. Thompson

CEO
Red Level Entertainment

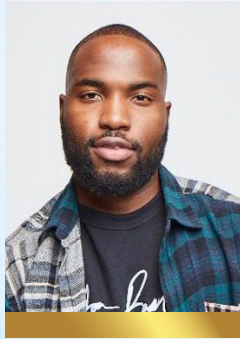
Bryant Thompson is the founder and CEO of Red Level Entertainment. Bryant was born and raised on the south side of Chicago and was raised with the entrepreneurial spirit of his late father Charlie F. Thompson. In high school, he would buy candy in bulk, packaged it, and sold it for a profit to students as well as teachers. While in college, he created and marketed African American History t-shirts. And in his early twenties, Bryant began promoting parties and events, which marked the beginning and foundation of his current business.

In 2001, Bryant founded Red Level Entertainment, an entertainment and marketing company that specializes in email marketing, branding, and special events.

With the growing demand and usage of the internet in 2005, Bryant began marketing online using his database to send email blasts to more than 5000 subscribers. Bryant has grown Red Level Entertainment from a list of close friends and family to a list of more than 17,000 subscribers nationally.



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Uduimoh Umolu

Co Founder
Jon Basil Tequila

Uduimoh Umolu is a first-generation West African American. He carries an interestingly colorful background having lived crucial years of his life in both America and West Africa. Born and raised on the Northside of Chicago, Uduimoh graduated from the University of Illinois, but not before starting a business in the spirits industry. He is the Co Founder of Jon Basil Tequila one of the first minority millennial owned and operated spirits companies in Chicago. He founded the brand in 2018 with his business partner Belall Taher setting out to become some of the youngest creators of a premium liquor brand. Launching in December 2018-named after Umolu's grandfather- following an inspirational visit to Jalisco, Mexico. While their brand amassed a loyal customer base of 15,000 in Illinois, the pair shortly started distributing in other states after securing deals with Walmart, Binny's, and Mariano's. Over the years Jon Basil has been placed in 350 locations statewide and sold through its first shipment in less than one year. Additionally is found in over 130 on and off-premise accounts.



Dr. Harry E. Wilkins III, MD, MHCM

CEO
Gift of Hope

Harry E. Wilkins, III, MD was named President/CEO of Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network in October 2020. Dr. Wilkins is a Chicago native raised on Chicago's South Side where he lived with his parents and 5 brothers. He attended high school at then Mendel Catholic High School in the Roseland Community before attending Northwestern and completing his Doctor of Medicine Degree in 1986. Upon completion of his surgical residency, he completed a fellowship program in trauma and surgical critical care at the R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center at the University of Maryland in Baltimore, Maryland. Following completion of his fellowship in 1994, his career took him to Tyler, Texas, Overland Park, Kansas, Kansas City, Missouri where he served as attending trauma surgeon and Medical Director of trauma centers and regional advisor to two statewide trauma systems (Texas and Missouri). In 2010 he joined Quincy Medical Group and the staff of Blessing Hospital where he practiced for 19 years before retiring from the clinical practice of surgery. In 2009, Dr. Wilkins received his Master of Science degree in Healthcare Management (MHCM) From T H Chan Harvard School of Public Health.



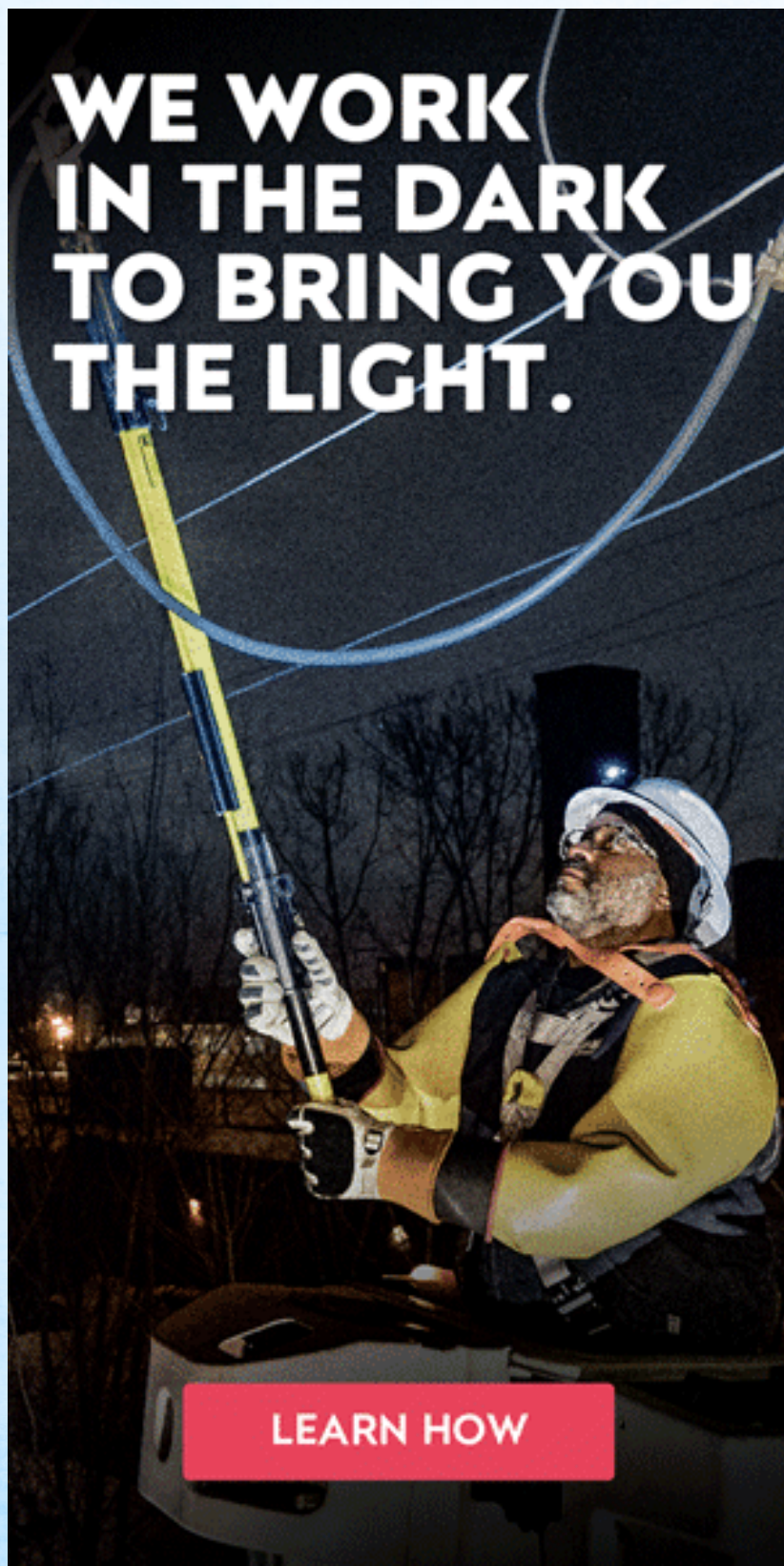
Vincent R. Williams

President
VRW & Associates

Mr. Vincent Robert Williams has served as lawyer, lobbyist, government official and community leader for more than 30 years. He has maintained a governmental relations practice (Vincent R. Williams & Associates P.C.) that reflects his work and vast experience in Illinois state and local government. Mr. Williams has been recognized by his peers in the Illinois legal community. His sharp, analytical approach, and shrewd political instincts rank him among the major players in business, healthcare, and politics. Vincent has worked with entities in various sectors, including The City of Chicago, Cook County, Chicago Transit Authority, The Chicago Public Schools and City Colleges of Chicago, with local governmental entities educational institutions, health care institutions, and private sector organizations throughout the State of Illinois. Vincent currently serves as Board Chairman of the Mount Sinai Hospital Board of Directors, Vice Chairman of the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus Foundation Board of Directors, the Loretto Hospital Foundation Board of Directors and the American Hospital Association's Committee on Governance. Mr. Williams is a member of the Cook County Bar Association, and the Chicago Bar Association.



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Wynona Redmond, President
Wyn-Win Communications

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The University of Chicago Office of Civic Engagement thanks **Derek R.B. Douglas, Vice President for Civic Engagement and External Affairs**, for his leadership over the past decade and his steadfast commitment to strengthening the connection between the University and neighboring communities on the South Side. Congratulations, Derek, on being named a Chicago Defender Man of Excellence!

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