



PRESS RELEASE

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Thirteen Teen Entrepreneurs Become Firsts to Graduate Unique Seven-Month Youth Entrepreneurship Academy® Program

HOUSTON (August 31, 2010) – Texas Business Alliance will graduate the first class of its Youth Entrepreneurship Academy® (YEA) seven-month small business start-up incubator program for teens on Tuesday, September 28, 2010, at the Hotel Derek, 2525 West Loop South, Houston, TX 77027, beginning at 11 a.m. with a reception and mini-expo showcasing the teens' businesses. A graduation ceremony will follow from noon to 1 p.m. It features commencement remarks by Dr. Farrah Gray, celebrity entrepreneur, philanthropist and author of the bestselling book, "Reallionaire." The public is invited to attend to support the 13 graduates and learn more about the YEA program.

Dr. Farrah Gray was named as one of the most influential Black men in America by the National Urban League's Urban Influence Magazine. At 21 years old, he was recognized by *Ebony Magazine* as an entrepreneurial icon, business mogul and best-selling author. Raised in the impoverished south side of Chicago, Dr. Gray defied the odds and became a self-made millionaire by the age of 14. At the age of 21, he became Dr. Farrah Gray, receiving an honorary doctorate degree of Humane Letters from Allen University. This was in recognition of his ingenious economic mind and distinguished commitment to the development of values such as leadership, integrity and scholarship. In his rise from poverty to national and international prominence as an entrepreneurial icon and pre-eminent power speaker, Dr. Gray has inspired millions around the world, now 24.

YEA Class I was partly funded by an American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) grant awarded by the Gulf Coast Community Services Association (GCCSA) to strengthen its Youth Entrepreneurship Academy® ("YEA") program. Additional supporters included: Capital One Bank, LaneStaffing, Inc., Comerica Bank, MWH Public Relations, Pretty Quick Delivery Services, Nightlight Pediatric Urgent Care, BoneFide Development and Investment Group, A-Rocket Moving & Storage, HP and Texas Southern University.

"We are honored to have had a role in helping to shape the futures of the Youth Entrepreneurship Academy® participants" said Dr. Jonita Reynolds, GCCSA CEO. "We believe in the YEA goal of equipping our youth, while growing the number of new, qualified small businesses in the area and ensuring their growth, self-sufficiency and sustainability. We know that the funds awarded and investment made to the Texas Business Alliance for the YEA program were clearly put to excellent use, as evidenced by Houston's newest entrepreneurs."

YEA launched February 2010. From among nearly 100 applicants, 15 youths were selected to participate and 13 have diligently completed the program. The program was housed at the Jesse H. Jones School of Business at Texas Southern University. The Texas Southern University Entrepreneur Club played a significant role in helping shape the curriculum for the program.

The 13 new business owners have all started businesses, developed logos and business cards, enhanced their communication skills through developing a :30 second elevator pitch, opened business accounts, obtained DBAs and completed business plans.

Beyond the program, YEA participants will be assigned mentors for one year and periodically have meetings to discuss progress, challenges and opportunities for business development and growth. YEA participants have also chosen to

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develop a TBA youth organization, keeping them connected and reaching out to other youth to get them involved with TBA, the YEA program and to educate other young people on small business matters.

"We are so very proud of the 13 graduates" said Texas Business Alliance Founder and CEO Jeffrey L. Boney. "My heart is full of joy, having met such determined young leaders and knowing that we helped them realize their dream of business ownership. In addition to teaching small business fundamentals, YEA instills the principles of self-determination, self-reliance, self-respect and individual initiative. TBA believes these characteristics are essential to the development of all entrepreneurs and their pursuit of self-employment."

YEA® is free to youth who qualify for the program. YEA® equips high school and college students with the tools and resources to pursue an entrepreneurial alternative. YEA program modules include: life skills and volunteerism, credit management, financial literacy, economic role of entrepreneurs, technology, learning how to spot opportunities, idea generation, marketing, business plan development, funding and social skills development.

Additionally, YEA seeks to expose low- to moderate-income youth to community leaders, successful businessmen and woman, and Houston movers and shakers. During the course of the seven-month program, students have met leaders from the Greater Houston Partnership, United Way, Fortune 500 companies, and successful small business owners.

Graduating YEA Class I are:

- Ashura Bayyan, Aesthetic Liberty (Aldine High School)
- Xavier Boatwright, FAM Promotions (Texas Southern University)
- Keith J. Davis Jr., 2010 Opportunity is Now Tour (University of Houston)
- Patrick Fagan, Tropical Paradise Villas (Lutheran South Academy)
- KeShawn George, Eanej (George Bush High School)
- Phillip E. Lopez, PEL ContempArts
- Lydia Martinez, Dream Styles by Lydia (Deer Park High School)
- Faith Miller, Faithful Graphic Design & Photography (Victory Early College)
- Jacob Ollison, Hi-Rise (High School for the Performing and Visual Arts)
- Alexis Taylor, Crafted by Lexy (Carnegie Vanguard High School)
- Keris Williams, Asher Aurielle (Carver High School)
- Kerry Willrich, Willrich Real Estate Group (Carl Wunsche Senior High School)
- Jalen Wiseman, Wiseman Catering & Personal Chef (Carl Wunsche Senior High School)

For information, individual graduation luncheon entry, sponsorship, donations or congratulatory program ads, please contact event planner Margo E. Williams, MWH Public Relations at 281.213.9554 or margo@mwhpublicrelations.com.

Candidates interested in YEA Class II must complete an application by December 31, 2010. The qualifying application and official application are accessible from the TBA Web site: www.texasbusinessalliance.org ("YEA" page).

About Texas Business Alliance

A member-driven, solutions oriented, 501(c)(6) nonprofit organization, with a mission to equip minority- and women-owned businesses to be qualified suppliers, ready to compete for public, private and international opportunities through progressive development, and specialized training. Its vision is to strengthen the Texas economy and spur job creation by expanding minority- and women-owned businesses, and encouraging youth entrepreneurship. Chapter organizations are being pursued in Dallas/Ft. Worth, San Antonio, Austin and El Paso. Visit www.texasbusinessalliance.org for more details or call 281.213.9554.