

# GMEN Entrepreneur Summit Speakers History

**2002**

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Vickie Clarke  
Kids R Travelin  
MDO: Goodwill or North Georgia/BusinessNow

Debra Collins  
Virtual Juice  
MDO: The EDGE Connection

Martha Epps  
IT Home Solutions  
MDO: Women's Employment Opportunity Project

Angela Jefferson  
On Point Cleaning Service  
MDO: Center for Black Women's Wellness/WESSP

Tracie (Kiwi) McDowell  
Kiwi Collectibles  
MDO: Center for Black Women's Wellness/WESSP

Bill & Caroll Scales  
Scales Precision Sheet Metal  
MDO: The EDGE Connection

Leslie Sperry  
L. L. Beads  
MDO: The EDGE Connection

**2003**

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Dione Atkins  
Keda's Tender Care  
MDO: Albany Community Together

Karen Beggs  
Dollar Spot  
MDO: Access to Capital for Entrepreneurs

Nyasha Bonner  
Wholistic Women's Care-A Woman's Way  
MDO: Center for Black Women's Wellness/WESSP

April Bryant  
The Potter's Hand Beauty Salon Ministry  
MDO: Goodwill Industries of Coastal Georgia

Theresa Harris & A'anna Gaylord  
Jes Us Electronic Medical Billing, Inc.  
MDO: The EDGE Connection

Evelyn Tucker  
Sister Nina's Kitchen  
MDO: Goodwill of North Georgia/BusinessNow

Kim Yokely  
Kimochi Body and Soul  
MDO: Women's Employment Opportunity Project

## **2004**

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Cathy Beecher  
Cathy's Sweets, Inc.  
MDO: Small Business Assistance Corporation

Martha Brantley  
Little Mommas Precious Kids  
MDO: Goodwill Industries of Coastal Empire

Charles Coleman  
Charles' Accessories  
MDO: Small Business Assistance Corporation

LaTarsha Williams  
LDW Energy Control and Contracting Services, Inc.  
MDO: Goodwill of North Georgia/BusinessNow

Sandra Yee  
Hang-On Healing Arts  
MDO: The EDGE Connection

## **2005**

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Tijuana Ellis  
The Salon at the Villas  
MDO: Goodwill of North Georgia/BusinessNow

Tijuana Ellis, a single mother of two and TANF recipient has always dreamed of starting her own hair salon. Tijuana has overcome many obstacles including an emotional setback, minimal support and negative family comments, and an abusive relationship, which almost resulted in her demise. Tijuana was forced to seek public assistance to support her and her children. She sought BusinessNOW for help and was enrolled into the IDA program and then the BusinessNOW training program to write her business plan. Today she boasts a two-seat salon and has hired 2 operators and a masseuse.

Ev Grimes  
Evolve Services Unlimited  
MDO: The EDGE Connection

Ev Grimes is the owner of a professional organizing business, Evolve Services Unlimited. She graduated from the Cobb Microenterprise Center (now EDGE) training program in August, 2002. She has been actively working in her business full-time for the last 3 years. She has organized offices for corporate clients, as well as reorganized closets for residential clients. She has offered to volunteer her organizing services to the staff of CMC.

Kenneth Shelley  
Dream Home Inspections  
MDO: The EDGE Connection

Ken Shelley has Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease with about 27% lung capacity. With 30 years construction experience behind him, his working days were over. At first he did not accept the fact that he was terminally ill and could not work any more. After being on disability for 3 years, he was determined that he could do some kind of work. He contacted the Georgia State Rehabilitation Department and became a certified home inspector. He knew his sickness would not allow him to go to work for someone else as there would be days he couldn't work. The only way to become self-sufficient was to start his own business. He took a 12-week course offered by the Cobb Microenterprise Center (now EDGE) at Kennesaw State University and graduated in November 2003 and started his own business.

Ellie Trinowski  
Moonshine Soap Company  
MDO: Access to Capital for Entrepreneurs

Although Moonshine Soap is currently a small family business, Ellie plans to provide local jobs as the company grows. This economic stimulus already has a far-flung effect. For example, unlike many other handmade soap companies, she buys unrefined and wild crafted shea butter directly from a supplier who is personally and financially involved in the well being of the tribes in West Ghana, Africa that harvest this butter. Ellie explains, "We want to ensure that the support stays in these villages. The lives of the women who harvest this butter have better jobs and living conditions because of this support."

**2006**

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Cathy Beecher  
Cathy's Sweets, Inc.  
MDO: Small Business Assistance Corporation

Cathy Beecher, a single mother living in rural Hazlehurst, GA, has been making "Lit'l Buddy" peanut butter candy for about 13 years. After graduating from SBAC's Micro Enterprise Training Program in 2003, Cathy advanced her business by adding three new products to her line and increasing her distribution by 12%. In addition to "Lit'l Buddy" she produces: "Lite Buddy" – peanut butter candy with less sugar; "Mud Buddy" - Lit'l Buddy dipped in chocolate; and "Lit'l Sweetie" - divinity. Her products can be found in Appling, Bibb, Jeff Davis, Montgomery, Telfair, Toombs and Wheeler counties.

Lisa Davies  
Happy Home Cleaning Service  
MDO: Access to Capital for Entrepreneurs

Lisa Davies exemplifies the transforming power of microenterprise development support. When Lisa first applied for a \$5,000 loan, she had been on public assistance and was still among the working poor. However, Lisa took advantage of every educational opportunity that ACE offers as well as establishing herself as a leader in peer support networks. That determination to succeed - plus a lot of hard work - resulted in not just a job, but a successful micro business. Today, Lisa is proud to say, "My parents don't support me. The government doesn't support me. I support myself and five other women."

Mechel Glass  
Beat Debt, Inc.  
MDO: The EDGE Connection

Mechel Glass, a single mother and veteran of the US Army, launched two games she invented - *Beat Debt* and *Paid Off* – after completing the EDGE Connection's business program. The games are designed to teach debt elimination and management of finances. Mechel came into the program unsure of how to structure her company or how to develop her concept into a true business. Since being featured in the Marietta Journal, she has held seminars for middle school teens on money management, and has been accepted to provide consulting services to the CCCS of Atlanta.

Adrienne Simpson  
Smooth Mooove Senior Relocation Services  
MDO: Women's Economic Development Agency

After 20+ years as an insurance services executive, Adrienne Simpson established Smooth Mooove Senior Relocation Services. To gain additional knowledge to "really get [her] business going," Simpson sought help from WEDA and SBA's SCORE. Three years later, she has annual revenues approaching \$500,000; has created four full-time and four part-time jobs; and has received nationwide acclaim as a success story for SBA's new *My Biz for Women* web portal and a grand prize winner of the American Express/Count-Me-In "Make Mine a Million Dollar Business" contest for women entrepreneurs.

**2007**

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Nada Bunnell  
Gentle Presence Photography  
MDO: Access to Capital for Entrepreneurs

Nada sees the world in pictures, color, and composition. More than anything else, she wanted to help others see that way too and thought of her camera as a memory-maker. But for twenty years, photography was only a passionate hobby — until she was laid off at 60 years old. "I knew I had little chance of finding employment. But with the help of ACE, I have made the change from sitting behind a desk in someone else's business to standing behind a camera in my own. I have been able to follow my dream," she says.

Bernadette Frazier  
Total Billing Management  
MDO: Goodwill of North Georgia/BusinessNow

When Bernadette started planning her business in 2005, she had her husband's cautious support and a \$250 a month unemployment check. With training from BusinessNOW, Bernadette got organized and focused, directing her attention to the most viable opportunity in front of her, home-based medical billing. Since 2005, Bernadette has grown her business into commercial space with 3 employees and 3 contractors. She's branched into consulting and inspiring other entrepreneurs, referring them to BusinessNOW and helping them through her own medical billing association. Bernadette recently launched a second business, People of Promise, a behavior health clinic with 5 contracted counselors.

Melissa Garcia  
La Chiquita  
MDO: Access to Capital for Entrepreneurs

Melissa and her husband Gerado have discovered a niche market – serving the Hispanic community in Villa Rica – by being a grocery store and more. "We sell insurance; we translate, fill out forms, and ship packages. We are here to making a living, yes, but we're helping people too," she says. One of Melissa's greatest joys is to see someone leave her store "a little more empowered in their new country." Melissa participated in the MIT forum, "Doing Well by Doing Good" and was also selected as winner of ACE's Best Business Plan for 2006.

Dionna Littlejohn  
Zelkova  
MDO: Goodwill of North Georgia/BusinessNow

Dionna entered the BusinessNow program in 2004, after being laid off several times. BusinessNOW helped Dionna to write a business plan around a concept she and her husband Harold had been structuring. They had developed a fitness walking program called Step By Step, with original music and voice over with fitness tips provided by a personal trainer (Dionna). Dionna won the *GMEN Business Plan competition in 2005* and used those funds to rename and repackage their product. Zelkova, new name, is now available for download on Walmart.com!!! Dionna and Harold are still in negotiation with major distributors interested in their product. (Z-trainer or Zelkova)

## 2008

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Fran Jackson  
FranTastic Cakes, LLC  
MDO: Center for Black Women's Wellness/WESSP

Micro enterprise development has made a positive difference in Fran Jackson's life by equipping her with the needed tools to become a more educated entrepreneur. Fran, a single mother depends a lot on business revenues to support her and her family. Since graduating and participating in WESSP activities business revenues has increased. Fran participated as a spokesperson for United Way's kickoff campaign, her story featured on its web site. In addition, her cake was presented on Fox 5 Good Day Atlanta Show. Additionally, Fran participated on the Entrepreneur panel before the Tocqueville Society. Fran is also sharing her craft as a Baking Instructor at Fran Jackson Atlanta Area Technical College. [www.frantasticcakes.com](http://www.frantasticcakes.com)

Tracey Johnson  
Genesis Ktisis  
MDO: Goodwill of North Georgia/BusinessNow

Tracey Johnson was a participant in one of BusinessNOW's first classes. While her business has always focused on marketing, it has evolved over the years with Tracey experiencing many ups and downs. A couple of years ago, Tracey recognized that she needed to rethink her business model and operations plan. So, she returned to BusinessNOW for help. However, Tracey did not just seek help from BusinessNOW; she also gave help to current participants by serving as a volunteer for the Program. On August 8th of this year, Tracey celebrated the release of her latest publication specifically for entrepreneurs, "Faith in Business." [www.genesisktisisinc.com](http://www.genesisktisisinc.com)

Vickley Raeford  
Raeford Land Clearing  
MDO: The EDGE Connection

Vickley Raeford, President/CEO of Raeford Land Clearing, positioned her company at the forefront in the light construction and vegetation management industries. Her strategic plan advanced her company to win contracts with Georgia Power, Lockheed Martin Aeronautics, Columbus Municipal Airport, and the Department of Agriculture-U.S. Forestry and National Park Services. Her company is noted for top results in grading, demolition, herbicide application, fence-line and detention pond clearing, landscaping, bush hogging and hauling. The Georgia Power Company Professional in Development Program selected her as one of the first trainees to become a future leader within their company. Upon completion of the program, she chose the forestry and right-of-way department. [www.raefordlandclearing.org](http://www.raefordlandclearing.org)

Dhana Blissett  
Blissful Living LLC  
MDO: Center for Black Women's Wellness/WESSP

Dhana Blissett, nutritionist and founder of Blissful Living has more than 20 years experience working with individuals in both medical and wellness settings. Dhana is a recent graduate from the Women's Economic Self Sufficiency Program (WESSP), and as a result of her dedication, passion and perseverance in pursuit of her dream to become an entrepreneur, Dhana launched Blissful Living, LLC. Blissful Living is a service based business born out of Dhana's passion to teach healthy eating and lifestyles. Her mission is to provide nutritional education and wellness coaching to individuals to enhance their quality of life. Her outstanding business plan is now in use at WESSP as a teaching tool. In addition, she has returned to WESSP as a wellness speaker.

Bernadette Frazier  
Total Billing Management LLC  
MDO: Goodwill of North Georgia/BusinessNow

Bernadette Frazier started Total Billing Management LLC in 2004. She came to BusinessNOW in 2004 to work on her business plan for medical billing. She started to see growth in 2005 with gross sales of \$2,000/month. Since 2004, total Billing Management LLC has grown to ten employees and the company grossed \$1.2 million in sales in 2008. Currently the company has 450 contracts serving 8 states and provides classes for people interested in starting their own medical billing companies. Bernadette's intense entrepreneurial expertise led her to start a 2nd company in 2007 called People of Promise Behavioral Health Service. They provide a one-stop shop for Behavioral health clients (serving metro Atlanta). They have 9 contractors which include LPC, LMFT, LCSW. As a result of this success she has been able to employ her husband and daughter making this a family business. Bernadette has the perseverance and the will to help others in the community. She has mentored 13 other small business owners who have started their own medical billing companies. She has shown that if you put your mind to it, starting and maintaining a business can be an achievable goal. The Latin community awarded her for providing services in their community. She has the largest Spanish speaking practitioners of Behavioral Health center in Rockdale County.  
[www.totalbillingmanagement.com](http://www.totalbillingmanagement.com)

Maria Greene  
The Mill / American Installation Corporation  
MDO: Access to Capital for Entrepreneurs

Maria Greene was unemployed. She needed to find a job she could depend on. An entrepreneur at heart, Maria came to ACE. She received her first microloan in 2006 to start American Installation Corporation, an energy-efficient door manufacturer in Cleveland, GA, that uses recycled material. In 2009, AIC received a second microloan and was the first recipient of Georgia Green Loan funds. Maria's son, Israel, is the COO and handles the operations at AIC. Maria operates her second business, The Mill, an organic coffee shop and café. Maria is a 30-year herbalist who also offers classes and herbal walks to teach the ancient art. At The Mill, Maria says she is able to fulfill a ministry, allowing people a place to worship, fellowship, study and play music. She has since received a third and fourth microloan from Georgia Green Loans to help with both businesses.  
[www.americaninstall.com](http://www.americaninstall.com)

Regina Woodard  
Our Vision: Healthy Lifestyle Change LLC  
MDO: Cornerstone Association

Regina Woodard is not only living her dream, but she is also helping others by sharing her success story. After being diagnosed with type 2 diabetes in 2003, she educated herself on how to improve her health and manage her medical conditions. She applied small healthy changes to her lifestyle, which produced phenomenal results. To date she has lost over 180lbs, eliminated the diabetic medications, and significantly reduced all other prescription medications. A graduate from Cornerstone Association, in 2009 Regina launched her consulting firm, "*Our Vision: Healthy Lifestyle Change, LLC*", whose mission is to motivate, educate, and inspire individuals on how to choose and maintain a healthy lifestyle; and its vision is to empower individuals with the knowledge and tools needed to live a productive life through healthy lifestyle choices.  
[www.ourvisionhealthylifestylechange.com](http://www.ourvisionhealthylifestylechange.com)

**2010**

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Myra Abdul-Saboor  
Teach the Children Early Learning Center  
MDO: Center for Black Women's Wellness/WESSP

Myra Abdul-Saboor demonstrates the positive influence of microenterprise development through *Teach the Children Early Learning Center*. She has been in the childcare industry since July 2007 and has become nationally accredited through the National Association for Family Child Care. Ms. Adul-Saboor is currently pursuing a Child Development Associate (CDA) certification through the National Council for Child Development. Myra actively participates with a local childcare providers association and considers her business as a vital part of the community.

Charles Hall  
Charles Hall Photography  
MDO: Cornerstone Association

Charles Hall is an Atlanta based wedding, sports and special events photographer. He is a contributing photographer for the Atlanta Daily World newspaper and the annual GMEN Conferences. Charles began his photography career while attending college in Boston, where he took a course in photography. It started as just a hobby that turned into a business with support from MDO Cornerstone Association, Inc. Charles has a wide range of experience which allows him to feel comfortable and professional in any situation. He especially enjoys working with people, and loves being part of their special occasions. One of his favorite specialties is musical slideshows, where he gets to showcase his creative skills and tell a story of the event through picture and song.  
[www.charleshall.printroom.com](http://www.charleshall.printroom.com)

Angela Hoskins  
CROSS + WORDS Special Tees and Designs  
MDO: Greater Rome Area Community Enterprises

Angela (Bohles) Hoskins was enlisted in the Army where she served 5 1/2 years. After being discharged, Angela suddenly found herself a widow. During these difficult times, Angela reverted to her first love of writing as a form of therapy. One of the jobs she held during this time was at a local prison. In an effort to reach out and share positive words with the prisoners, she began writing Hip Hop songs with a positive message for Hip Hop was and is the popular music of choice for young people. During the course of performing, Angela always had a visual of the poems that she performed. Those visuals have become designs, and ultimately designs for T-shirts. This time around, she has enough faith to bring it to fruition and get the word out via *CROSS + WORDS Special Tees and Designs*. She has also volunteered with Writers' Academy, Rome Alternative School and the Boys and Girls club doing poetry workshops.

Dwain Perkins  
Mr. Perkins Healthy Baked Goods  
MDO: Center for Black Women's Wellness/WESSP

Dwain Perkins has always had a passion for baking, “getting the right consistency when mixing flour, eggs and milk just came naturally” and decided to relocate to Atlanta and enroll in the culinary arts school, Le Cordon Bleu. The training he received from Le Cordon Bleu allowed him to obtain baking positions with MGR Food Services. Dwain was raised in a family of business owners and because of this passion his own entrepreneurial spirit was awakened. He realized that although he had the formal culinary skills to be successful, he had no formal business training. He then sought out the BusinessNOW program at Goodwill of North Georgia to assist him in developing a business plan and, shortly thereafter, enrolled in the MicroMAX program. It was while in MicroMAX training, Dwain began to look at his products to determine how he could recapture and expand his market without causing him to change the quality of his product. *Mr. Perkins Healthy Baked Goods* sales have doubled and he is now being courted by Whole Foods Stores to carry his Sweet Potato Tart. Dwain is also in contact with several nursing homes which will be added as the dessert to their menus.