



U. of Akron's Bliss Institute of Applied Politics awards

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THE REAL DEAL PRESS

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Business

Secretary of State looking to grow Minority Businesses

In contrast to predecessor, LaRose making strong, early effort to connect to black and brown communities

By R. T. Andrews
EDITOR

Ohio Secretary of State Frank LaRose has been in office only about 100 days, but he seems to have paid more attention to black business owners in that time than his predecessor, now Lt. Gov. Jon Husted, did in eight years.

LaRose hosted a business roundtable last Monday at the MLK branch of the Cleveland Public Library in University Circle. He used the two-hour event to introduce himself to minority and small business owners and advocates and to share some ideas about voting, registration and how to cut red tape for entrepreneurs.

The main job of the Secretary of State is to ensure fair elections as Ohio's chief elections officer. A secondary core responsibility is to serve as

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Local church leads collaborative training with Google

Program equips youth and adult learners with in-demand skills, certification



Left: Family and friends gather to support graduates of GOOGLE program. Center: Jamella Ballard and Lisa R. Bernard. Right: Dr. Daisy Alford-Smith, executive director, and Rev. Jawanza Karriem Colvin, chair, Olivet Housing and Community Development Corp.

By R. T. Andrews
EDITOR

It's a marvelous thing when a village not only raises children, but collaboratively finds ways to train and certify those children as and even after they mature.

An initiative developed by the Olivet Housing and Community Development Corp., a nonprofit CDC under the aegis of Olivet Institutional Baptist Church, has launched a successful training program, supported by several area private and public sector institutions, that mega corporation Google may replicate across the globe.

Twenty-seven serious, ded-

icated, hard-working Greater Clevelanders are the first fruits of what — since it worked — can now be called a pilot project to train and certify adults of all stripes and backgrounds for careers in information technology [IT] and tech support. Exact initial enrollment figures could not be confirmed at press time, but about 80% of the initial students successfully completed the demanding course.

These adult learners have spent the last eight months in twice-weekly classes and in-home study mastering knowledge and gaining a credential that makes them eligible for such high-demand jobs in systems support and systems

security and administration operations. In addition to occupational skill and professional skills training covering such topics as basic digital literacy and coding, critical thinking and problem solving, and workplace and business communication, the curriculum also included a Grow with Google program covering tech support fundamentals, computer networking, system administration and IT automation and security.

The initiative is called the Neighborhood Collaboration for Competitive Employment Status, or NeCESS [pronounced "nexus"]. Its aim is to provide a community access point for

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This Week in Politics

Lynn Powell receives high honor

By R. T. Andrews
EDITOR

“One of the feistiest people I’ve ever known, but politically brilliant,” is how the late Congressman Lou Stokes described Lynn Powell in his 2016 memoir, *The Gentleman from Ohio*.

“She was,” he wrote, “simply a great organizer with a sure feel for election priorities.”

That assessment needed no ratification, but it did receive a resounding echo when the Bliss Institute of Applied Politics at the University of Akron presented Powell with an honorary certificate at its annual reception in Columbus on May 22.

Election officials do not find favor at the polls simply based on their looks, promises, or financial support. Political winners tend to hire the best people to organize their campaigns, and Powell has been a quietly sought-after presence for nearly half a century.

She was an advisor to U.S. Rep. Louis Stokes, his brother and former Cleveland mayor Carl, Cleveland City Council president George Forbes, and countless others. She served as a regional political director for

Barack Obama in both 2008 and 2012. She is also the former executive director for the Black Elected Democrats of Cleveland and has strong labor ties that include service as vice president of AFSCME Ohio Council 8 Local 100, the largest union representing Cleveland public employees. She has been the Regional Political Director for the Ohio Democratic Party since 2004 and served as Deputy Director for the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections for 13 years.

In her short acceptance speech, Powell talked about how she always wanted to be in the room where the decisions were made.

The nonpartisan Bliss Institute typically selects a member of each major party to honor annually. This year’s Republican awardee is Jane Timken of Canton, chair of the Ohio Republican Party since January 2017. She previously served as Vice-Chairman of the Stark County Republican Party.

- The bad news continues to accumulate for County Executive Armond Budish. Following news earlier this month of yet another inmate suicide



at the county jail, Budish was sued by Gary Brack, who claims in a lawsuit that Budish demanded that MetroHealth fire him after Brack talked about the deplorable conditions at the jail. Brack’s lawsuit also claims that County Sheriff Clifford Pinkney, the first black man to hold the position, was marginalized by Budish’s people. Pinkney submitted his resignation yesterday, effective Aug. 2, citing personal


reasons.


- The Supreme Court has stayed enforcement of the order from Ohio’s Southern District federal court requiring the Ohio General Assembly to redraw the state’s unconstitutional congressional districts by June 14. The Supreme Court is expected to rule by the end of next month on two gerrymandering cases that may profoundly affect election results all around the country as soon as next year.



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Secretary of State looking to grow Minority Businesses

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Top Photo: L-R: Panelists for Roundtable discussion, from left: Erica Penick, The Presidents Council; Cordell Stokes, CLC Consulting; Renee Ligon, Small Business Center; Frank LaRose, Secretary of State; Jenice Contreras, Hispanic Business Center; Andrew Jackson, MAC Installations; Terrell Knight, Ohio Minority Supplier Development Council; and Kevin Schmotzer, City of Cleveland. Bottom Photo: About 60 business owners and advocates attended May 20 business roundtable organized by staff at Ohio Secretary of State Frank LaRose's office.

custodian of official corporate and business records for all Ohio companies.

LaRose quipped in his opening remarks that the job is about “free elections and free markets”. On the business tip, LaRose discussed measures his office was taking to defend against business identity theft. He also said he wants to streamline the process by which minority business owners can register as minority business enterprises and expressed concern that many state agencies fail to meet their MBE spending targets.

While he had less to say about voting issues, he did indicate an openness to making it easier for voters to register and reducing practices typically favored by Republicans nationwide to as ways to strike voters from the rolls.

Joining Rose at the front of the room was a panel assembled by his office that included business owners Cordell Stokes and Andrew Jackson, organizations that provided advocacy and technical assistance, including The Presidents Council, Small Business Action Centers, and the Ohio Minority Supplier Development Council, and a representative from the City of Cleveland's Economic Development Department.

Each panelist had a few minutes to describe their service offerings and to encourage business owners to avail

themselves of help from a variety of sources. A variety of questions and suggestions came from business owners during the Q&A portion of the session relating to issues of state contracts, access to information, etc.

Several of the panelists did make plain their agencies had funding available for various purposes. Renee Ligon, a former banker who runs the SBAC housed at the Urban League, said her office had made 26 loans that averaged \$250,000. Similarly, Kevin Schmotzer of Cleveland's economic development department, touted a list of programs the city has available to assist business owners.

Perhaps the most cogent advice came early on from businessman Andrew Jackson, a former high-powered business consultant and corporate exec who now operates multiple businesses that range from low tech [cardboard boxes] to high tech [sophisticated communications equipment]. He encouraged business owners to obtain MBE certification but not to be comforted by it. It was essential to success, he said, to “get in the big pond. Grow your practice. Get some employees.”

Jackson's three step process: Think Big, Start Slow, Ramp Up.

Could that be a formula the Secretary of State himself is following in his initial forays into black and brown communities?

THE REAL DEAL PRESS

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QUOTE of the Week
“Success is the sum of small efforts, repeated day in and day out.”

- Robert Collier

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Every Sunday

Local church leads collaborative training with Google

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Jubilation in the house for graduates of Google IT Tech Support Certification Training Program at yesterday's ceremony at Olivet Institutional Baptist Church.

digital based education and skilled work training in both current and emerging IT fields.

The students ran the gamut in terms of background. Several were looking or needing to make a career transition in mid- or late career as former jobs had disappeared. Another, Edmond Burton, was already working in IT for Cuyahoga County and looking to advance. He had his eye on a job he was equipped to do but was barred from even applying unless he gained certification.

Perhaps most remarkably, two students from CMHA's

King-Kennedy estates, entered the program three months late but managed to catch up and graduate with their cohort. Their hard-won success was supported by what Rev. Jawanza Colvin, Olivet's pastor and chairman of the OHCDC board, described as cohort learning in which students reinforce and support each other for learning.

The students received their certificates yesterday at a mid-morning ceremony at Olivet. One graduate, Lisa R. Ballard, a mother of five, was recognized with the maiden Cohort Award

for exemplifying the cohort principles. Having completed her requirements well in advance of many in her cohort, she returned regularly to assist her colleagues in getting to the finish line.

Also recognized for his special performance was Brandon Malone. He received the inaugural Commitment Award, for battling through a host of issues. Starting late, he finished on time by attending all remaining sessions of both cohorts.

Olivet's CDC had several community partners in this inaugural effort, including PNC Bank, Cuyahoga Community College and University Hospitals. PNC gave each graduate a most useful celebratory gift. We didn't see any student open her or his present but informed sources indicated the gifts were brand new Chrome laptops.

While enrollment details for the next cohort are not yet finalized, Colvin announced that University Hospitals has committed to a \$2.5 million renovation of the Otis Moss Medical Center across the street from the church. The renova-

tion will utilize 4,000 SF of the building to create a workforce development space in the heart of the Fairfax community. The Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority is also an active community partner.

Integral to the success of this program launch were Rev. Edmund Wilson III of Olivet's ministerial staff, OHCDC president Stephanie Turner, and Dr. Daisy Alford-Smith, executive director of the CDC.

Cohort 1 graduates are Dina Lavonne Black, Sabrina R. Hammond, Krisnia Devon Hope, Kim C. Larkins, Alayna Lorraine Littlejohn, Shonda Lovelace, Janis L. Lyles, Brandon Jamel Malone, Cheryl J. Shorter and Linda L. Washington. Cohort 2 graduates are Ciani S. Albert, Jennifer R. Allison, Brian Vernon Baber, Jamella Y. Ballard, Lisa R. Bernard, Robert Wardell Bradley III, Edmond A. Burton, Samona Yvette Johnson, Vonnette Lovelace, Dominic Pearson, Stephan A. Phelps, Alison Register-Smith, Vonda Rae Ardena Warren, Monica Williams-Collier and Regina D. Williams.

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Community Calendar



Monday, May 27. MEMORIAL DAY

Tuesday, May 28 at 7:30a. Catch *The Real Deal Press* live on WOVU-FM/95.9 [livestream [here](#)] for a quick take on what's happening.

Thursday, May 30 at 7p • GRAND OPENING! Graffiti HeArt Gallery, 4829 Superior Ave. [44103]

Saturday, June 1. • HESSLER STREET FAIR, University Circle.

Saturday, June 1 at 10a-Noon • Come out for a lively discussion of Michelle Obama's best-selling memoir, *Becoming*. Special guest will be Shontel Brown, county councilwoman and chair of County Democratic Party. Hosted by the County Library in collaboration with the Great Lakes African American Writers Conference. 4415 Northfield Rd.

This program will repeat at the same location and time with Maple Heights mayor Annette Blackwell on June 8 and with State Senator and Minority Whip Sandra Williams on June 15. Discussion moderators are Rev. Leah Lewis and Shelley Shockley, both of the Great Lakes African American Writers Conference.

Saturday, Jun 1 at 9:30a • The League of Women Voters of Greater Cleveland is holding its **5th Annual Meeting at the Parma-Snow Branch, Cuyahoga County Public Library, 2121 Snow Rd, Parma [44134].** The business meeting starts at 9:30a, catered lunch begins at 11:45a, and speakers take the rostrum at noon. Henry Curtis of the Board of Elections and Nada Marti-novic, U.S. Bureau of Census, will speak.

Lunch is \$12. There is no charge to hear the speakers or attend the meeting.

For more info, email / call michaeldavidbaron@gmail.com / 216.375.2079. [Click here for online registration.](#)

LifeCycles



HIRED:

George Sample to HR Business Partner Manager, Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland.



HIRED:

Michael Houser to Policy and Labor Liaison, Cleveland Metro School District.



HIRED:

Kevin Clayton, to Vice President of Diversity, Inclusion and Engagement, Cleveland Cavaliers.



PROMOTED:

Corey James, to Senior Manager of Community Engagement and Foundation Development, Cleveland Cavaliers.



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