



“Not so Hidden Talent”

38126 TECHNOLOGY HUB

HISTORY

For more than 20 years the South Memphis Renewal Community Development Corporation (SMRCDC) has been working tirelessly in the Soulsville USA Community in Memphis, home to America's Soul Music roots, and home of such Legendary Artists as Aretha Franklin, Maurice White Founder of Earth, Wind and Fire, Elvis Presley, B. B King, Three 6 Mafia, Justin Timberlake, Al Green, Alberta Hunter, Al Green, and Yo Gotti, just to name a few.

Out of this strong musical heritage is also a history steeped in Civil Rights, Educational Excellence and Active Community Engagement. It's also home to the Church of God In Christ (COGIC), Bar-B-Que Legends, and resilient people who have made great strides over the past 50 years in civic and community growth.

In 1989, LeMoyne-Owen College Community Development Corporation was founded and ten years later our founder Jeffrey T. Higgs was its first Executive Director. In 2002 he saw a need to expand that community development growth, and started SMRCDC. Since that time, this economic group has been at the forefront of Urban Community Economic Development (UCED), leading efforts with a talented staff, committed partners, and active community engagement protocols to create positive economic and social change in the Memphis Mid-South Region.

Workforce Development has always been an important part of community development. Mr. Higgs notably says "Show me a working resident and thriving community I'll show you a community that is empowered and progressive...".

SMRCDC has trained over 600 residents, and student/participants statewide in active workforce development opportunities. In 2015 SMRCDC led a statewide effort with TDOT Civil Rights Office to get underrepresented persons into the Highway Construction Industry, with a success rate of 75% placement and 90% graduation rates. They know how to get folks trained and placed.

In 2019 Youth Build America chose SMRCDC to train over 61 "[Opportunity Youth](#)" in Construction Job Training. Using nationally recognized credentials from [HBI](#) (Home Builders Institute) a national industry certification course, with a 90% graduate rate and a 85% placement rate for these Opportunity Youth.

In 2023 [CISA](#) and the Department of Homeland Security selected SMRCDC to provide workforce development training, upskill training, state-of-the-art in demand training, providing wraparound services, engaging Cybersecurity Industry clusters to ensure we can work to erase historical inequities in the marginal communities and communities of color.

Using the [NICE Framework](#), we will give people inside the Mississippi Delta Region-8 state region an opportunity to gain this key Cyber Security Training.

Community Development by Kasie Collins



Kasie Ann Collins

- ▶ Kasie attained a Bachelor of Science (Computer Science/IT Management) degree from the University of Mississippi and holds a Scrum Master, Agile, Cybersecurity and Salesforce certification.
- ▶ Kasie held diverse roles at several large and mid-size organizations. In her recent experience at Amgen, she focused on delivery Global Medical's objectives and goals relating to Global Medical Publications and Evidence Generation Capabilities. She provided Digital Innovation Technology support and expertise to Global Medical delivery key initiatives to business partners.
- ▶ She led several strategic initiatives that improved the business processes and enhanced the customer experiences for Amgen's Delivery Manager capabilities. In her prior roles at ALSAC/St. Jude Children's Research Hospital and FedEx World Tech Center, she was part of various product teams that built salesforce/CRM and MDM solutions in a regulated environment as a Product Analyst and Program Manager.
- ▶ Additionally, she holds the position of Director/CO-PI for 38126 Technology HUB.
- ▶ She also operates a Nonprofit, "Reformation" reentry program that focuses on mental health and recidivism.
- ▶ Outside of work, Kasie can be seen volunteering at animal shelters and community centers, reading and kickboxing. She is also a Prince and Nicki Minaj fan and a loving Cat mom of 5.



The Focus Group by Felecia

Felecia Higgs Walker BIO

Founder and CEO of The Focus Group by Felecia LLC,
Financial Consultant with Primerica Financial Services,
Executive Career & Business Coach



Author/Financial Consultant/ Coach/ Career Course Creator/
Motivational Speaker/ Podcast Host.

Felecia, the driving force behind the real-world career coaching company highlighted in her BRAND NEW BOOK "Paid On Friday, Broke By Tuesday," is a dynamic individual with a wealth of experience and a passion for empowering others. She has twice been featured on the #2 Syndicated Morning Show in the country, Good Day Atlanta, and has become a Money Matters Expert for Fox 13 Memphis, Fox 5 Atlanta, and The Portia Show. Felecia has appeared in numerous magazines and has been a guest on several life-changing podcasts.

Through her story and achievements, we can gain valuable insights into her character and the transformative guidance she offers.

Felecia is a mother, counselor, and friend to her three sons aged 23, 21, and 16. She has over 12 years of Pharmaceutical Sales experience, 2.5 years of transportation sales experience, and over 10 years of social work experience. After being laid off in 2017 and taking a 60% pay cut to work for another company, Felecia began to intentionally navigate her workspace and later tripled her salary within three years.

With over 25 years of diverse experiences, Felecia has honed her skills and expertise in career coaching, personal development, and professional growth. She is dedicated to helping individuals at various stages of their careers, from job seekers to mid to high-level employees, as well as high school and college students. Felecia's broad spectrum of expertise allows her to offer comprehensive support to those striving to achieve their goals.

A key aspect of Felecia's approach is her unwavering belief in God, the power of praising God, and the understanding that God has given her many gifts, which she plans to use to their fullest extent.

Through inspirational and empowering conversations, Felecia is on track to prove to others that "they too, can have the life they desire."



Dr. Be'Daun Smith

► Dr. Be'Daun Smith, hailing from Omaha, NE, commenced his academic journey at the University of Nebraska at Omaha before relocating to Memphis, Tennessee, to pursue studies at LeMoyne-Owen College. He successfully obtained a degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Finance, an MBA, and a Doctorate in family counseling from Post University. With a career spanning over two decades in the finance industry, Dr. Smith has held various roles including financial sales trainer, auditor, branch manager, director of operations, and business banker. Presently, he oversees a financial bureau where he underwrites loans for the USDA, serves as an insurance agent, and provides bookkeeping services for non-profits. Dr. Smith is distinguished as a NAACP NexGen Leader '21 and has been honored with the Lifetime Achievement award from President Joseph Biden Jr. for his commendable community contributions. Furthermore, he is an esteemed member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity and serves as the CEO of Refuge Center Memphis CDC, as well as workshop facilitator and training for the OT JONES Institute COGIC as well as Pastor of the Greater Beth-El Temple. Additionally, he holds the position of Director of Education for Youth Build Memphis and 38126 Technology HUB.



What was the inspiration behind the establishment of your non-profit?*

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The inspiration behind our non-profit's establishment was the recognition of the substantial untapped potential within underserved communities. We were driven to bridge the opportunity gap and provide equitable access to cybersecurity education and career opportunities for all.

****What are the core cybersecurity education programs that your organization offers?***

Our core programs encompass foundational cybersecurity courses, certification training (e.g., CompTIA Security+, CISSP), hands-on workshops, internships with industry partners, mentorship programs, career readiness workshops, and specialized training in emerging areas like cloud security and AI-driven cybersecurity.

****What makes your programs stand out from other cybersecurity education and career development programs?***

- ▶ Our programs stand out due to our tailored approach to individual needs, strong community partnerships, and comprehensive support services that extend beyond technical training. Emphasizing real-world experience through practical labs and internships, we provide continuous support through mentorship and career counseling.

Who do you feel is your target audience?

- ▶ Our target audience includes minorities, women, LGBTQ individuals, and low-income communities. We aim to bridge the gap and provide equal opportunities for all.

****What are some of the marketing tactics that have been successful to reach audiences that traditionally lack resources?***

- ▶ Successful marketing tactics include community outreach through local organizations, demographic-specific social media campaigns, collaboration with schools and community centers, and hosting free introductory workshops and seminars to raise awareness and interest.

****How do you retain participants that engage with your non-profit?****

- ▶ We retain participants by offering continuous support, personalized mentorship, clear career pathways, and by fostering a strong sense of community. Our alumni network and regular follow-up sessions help keep participants engaged and motivated.

****How do you track the progress of alumni from your program?***

- ▶ We track alumni progress through regular surveys, follow-up meetings, and by maintaining an active alumni network. We also track employment outcomes and career advancements to measure the long-term impact of our programs.

****What would you say are some of your biggest challenges marketing your programs to your target audiences?***

- ▶ One of the biggest challenges is overcoming the initial lack of awareness and trust within underserved communities. Additionally, limited access to technology and resources can make it difficult for some potential participants to engage with our marketing efforts.

****How are you planning on using CISA funding to further your cybersecurity education and career development efforts?***

- ▶ We plan to use CISA funding to expand our outreach efforts, enhance our training facilities, offer scholarships, and develop new programs addressing emerging cybersecurity threats and technologies.

****Do you have any plans for new programs being added or changes being made to your organization in 2024?***

- ▶ Yes, we plan to introduce a new program focused on cloud security and AI-driven cybersecurity. We are also looking to expand our mentorship program and develop more partnerships with industry leaders.

****What is one of your biggest goals for the future of your organization as a whole?***

- ▶ One of our biggest goals is to establish a nationwide network of cybersecurity training hubs that can serve as a model for similar initiatives globally. We aim to create sustainable, impactful programs that can continuously adapt to the evolving cybersecurity landscape

****Why should organizations partner with you? Or What value does an organization gain by being a partner?***

- ▶ Organizations should partner with us because we offer access to a diverse and skilled talent pool, opportunities for corporate social responsibility, and the chance to be at the forefront of developing the next generation of cybersecurity professionals. Our partnerships are built on mutual growth and benefit, ensuring our participants and partners thrive.

****How has CISA funding changed and helped your program?***

- ▶ CISA funding has been instrumental in scaling our operations, enhancing our curriculum, and reaching more individuals in underserved communities. It has allowed us to invest in state-of-the-art technology and provide high-quality training to our participants.

Conclusion

Thank you for considering our responses. Please do not hesitate to reach out if further information is required. I would also like to include some statistics that I believe will help with the panel discussion. We can discuss more after your review.



Thank You