



**Sesame Flyers**  
INTERNATIONAL, INC.

# CARIBBEAN ESSENCE

**AWARDS AND SHOWCASE  
SUNDAY JUNE 29TH**

**EL CARIBE 5945 STRICKLAND AVENUE . BROOKLYN . NEW YORK**

# Caribbean Essence Awards and Showcase



## **EVENING PROGRAM**

Cocktail Hour Black Love Steel Pan Performance  
Introduction of the Host

Host Welcome

Board Chairman Address, Executive Director Address

Bildersee Beacon Youth Dance Ensemble

Greetings from Jamaica Consul General Alsion Wilson, OD

### **YOUTH SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS**

Campbell-Nelson Scholarship: Meagan Vanzie  
Melissa Hunte Scholarship: Angelo Robles  
Elenora Bernard Scholarship: Jade Sinclair  
The Creative Chaos Scholarship: Kyra Bennett  
The Creative Chaos Scholarship: Kaylah Wright

Bildersee Beacon Youth Dance Ensemble

### **STAFF & VOLUNTEER AWARDS**

Staff of the Year: Danielle McBride  
Volunteer of the Year: Brenda Hutchinson

### **COMMUNITY AWARDS**

Community Bridge Builder Award: Lamona Knight  
Community Bridge Builder Award: Jennifer A. Joseph  
Community Pillar Award: Atiba Edwards  
Renaissance Impact Award: Anthony Cole  
Educational Pillar Award: Celeste Terry  
Community Pillar Award: Rodrick Daley  
Community Pillar Award: Dr. Dexter McKenzie

Fundraising Appeal  
Mingling

## **END OF PROGRAM - END OF CARIBBEAN ESSENCE AWARDS AND SHOWCASE**

Transition to Band Launch | Costume Showcase  
Dancing and Mingling

## **END OF BAND LAUNCH**

# Caribbean Essence Awards and Showcase



**Sesame Flyers**  
INTERNATIONAL, INC.

## OUR MISSION

To provide a range of youth development, cultural, social welfare and supportive services to individuals and families residing in New York.

## OUR MOTTO

Love a Kid Today & Every Day

## OUR VISION

Sesame Flyers International will define itself as a leader among its peers, its community and its stakeholders for programs that cultivate emerging youth leaders, authentic cultural experiences and innovative economic vitality.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mr. Raymond Luke: Board Chairman

Dr. Pearl Elie: Vice Chairman

Winston Bushell: Director

Janet Cummings: Director

Nelcol Philip: Treasurer

## DIRECTORS & ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Curtis Nelson: Executive Director

Ms. Judith Faison: Deputy Executive Director

Michelle Mathison: Director of Development

Aisha Carr: Senior Director of Programs

Destiny Destra: Clarkson Compass Director

Simone Warner: Winthrop Beacon Director

Danielle McBride: Bildersee Beacon Director

Kesha Shortt: SYEP Program Director

Keisha Sydney: Outreach Coordinator

Pascal Ikeji: Director of Human Resources

William Jones: Senior Accountant

Dayna Capron: Assistant Director Winthrop

Kenya Alleyne: Assistant Director Bildersee

Ike Jurawan: Helpdesk Support

# JOSEPH CHARLES

## *The Founder's Message*

### *How the Seed was planted*

*By Joe Charles*



During my many trips to Trinidad more than 31 years ago I would get together with my friends including two famous cooks 'Speck' and 'Crix' who would dishup my specialty, saltfish stew with provision, lots of dumplings, blue dasheen, young green figs etc., prepared on a wood fire in the yard of an old abandoned house at the corner of Sesame Street Place and Irving Street. I even invited some of my New York 'posse' to enjoy the food and the 'ole talk' all day until the sun went down. Sesame Street was our 'hangout' that invigorated our friendships and a togetherness that we looked forward to every year.

In 1983 I got permission from my mother-in-law, Mrs. Violet Munroe, to have the lime in her famous backyard, so we left the abandoned house on Sesame Street, but we did not abandon the idea of Sesame Street. That year we formalize the lime with t'shirts from my job in New York. Everybody wearing the same t'shirt having fun. It was a big party, a day to remember.

On my return to New York we were at the Munroe's house in Long Island, reminiscing about the wonderful experience we had in Trinidad at my mother-in-law's house. We knew then that it must not die. The Sesame idea lived on. We had our first Sesame Flyers' meeting in my kitchen.



# Caribbean Essence Awards and Showcase



**Sesame Flyers**  
INTERNATIONAL, INC.



## **RAYMOND LUKE**

**CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD SESAME FLYERS INTERNATIONAL, INC.**

Dear Sesame Family,

The Caribbean Essence Awards and Showcase has truly become one of my favorite times of the year. There's something about gathering with our community, dressed to the nines, with the music playing and the energy in the room overflowing. Our Showcase is a full-on celebration of who we are, where we come from, and where we're headed.

The dancing, the laughter, the joy, nights like this remind me of the strength and beauty of our culture. We come together to honor achievements, to feel alive together, to sing a little louder, dance a little harder, and love a little deeper.

I want to take a moment to give special thanks to someone who means the world to me, my wife, Ula Luke. Having her by my side, and in all things, grounds me as Chairman of Sesame Flyers in ways words can't fully explain. Her support, her wisdom, and her steady presence keep me moving forward.

To everyone who made this evening what it is, from the honorees to the performers to the people behind the scenes, thank you. You've helped create a space where Caribbean excellence shines, and where community feels like family.

With gratitude and joy,

Raymond Luke  
Chairman of the Board  
Sesame Flyers International.

# Caribbean Essence Awards and Showcase



**CURTIS NELSON**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SESAME FLYERS INTERNATIONAL, INC.**

Dear friends and supporters,

As we gather once again for the Caribbean Essence Awards and Showcase, I am honored to reflect on the continued legacy of Sesame Flyers. Leading this extraordinary organization remains one of the greatest privileges of my life. For over four decades, Sesame Flyers has stood as a beacon for community empowerment, cultural preservation, and youth development.

What began as a vision to serve has blossomed into a movement, one where Caribbean culture not only thrives but takes its rightful place in shaping the community and beyond. I am constantly inspired by the way our traditions, and values have created space for joy, identity, and collective pride. At Sesame Flyers, we are teaching history, we are making it.

Each year, this event allows us to pause and recognize the pillars of our community, leaders, artists, and young people who embody the spirit of excellence and service. It is in their stories and contributions that we find both fuel and direction for our work ahead. We do not take this responsibility lightly, and we are grateful to stand alongside all of you in ensuring this legacy continues to grow.

As we look to the future, I am filled with hope. With your continued support, Sesame Flyers will remain a place where Caribbean culture flourishes, where our youth soar, and where the strength of our community continues to shine brightly.

Thank you for walking this journey with us.

Curtis Nelson  
Executive Director  
Sesame Flyers International



## **SESAME FLYERS INTERNATIONAL MEMBERSHIP**

Ginette Rousseau Peterson: ***President***  
Nyanibah Anokye: ***First Vice President***  
Surenete Foster: ***Second Vice President***

Antoinette Innocent Joseph  
Brenda Hutchinson  
Candace Skeete  
Catherina Francis Grey- Treasurer  
Cheryl Celestine  
Clynette Jordan  
Gerard Alexander  
Gloria Owens  
Gloria Thomas Thompson  
Janet Cummings  
Jay Alexander  
Makayla Pererson  
Maleyah Peterson  
Matthew Griffith  
Nigel Goodluck  
Neal Diamond  
Pearl Elie  
Ria Moya  
Ron Mentore  
Renee Skeete- Secretary  
Raymond Luke  
Reginald Marques  
Winston Bushell

# Caribbean Essence Awards and Showcase



## Sesame Flyers International, Inc. Caribbean Essence and Awards Showcase 29<sup>th</sup> June 2025



On behalf of the Government of Jamaica and the Jamaican diaspora, it is my distinct honour to extend warmest greetings and heartfelt congratulations to Sesame Flyers International, Inc. on the occasion of your Caribbean Essence & Awards Showcase. As you close out Caribbean Heritage Month with the vibrant and bold theme of *“Black Renaissance,”* your gathering is not only a celebration of legacy and culture but also a powerful testament to the unity, resilience, and brilliance that define our community.

For more than four decades, Sesame Flyers International, Inc. has been much more than a community-based organization; you are a family dedicated to empowering Brooklyn’s youth and families. Your unwavering commitment to *“Love a Kid Today and Everyday”* is not just a motto—it is a way of life that radiates through every scholarship awarded, every program offered, and every life touched. Whether through youth development initiatives, cultural showcases, educational support, or vital social services, your tireless service continues to inspire hope,

ignite ambition, and foster belonging.

The breadth and depth of your impact—serving over 7,000 residents annually—stand as a beacon for community empowerment and transformation. With programs such as the Parent and Youth Council, Summer Youth Employment, Clarkson COMPASS, and the Bildersee Beacon, you provide critical opportunities for young people to learn, grow, and thrive. Through your scholarship offerings, you open doors to academic achievement and lifelong success, embodying the very essence of your mission: to prepare our youth and families for the challenges ahead, equipped with knowledge, skills, and confidence. It is this steadfast devotion to youth empowerment, economic development, and love that has defined your past and promises an even brighter future.

As you honour trailblazers whose leadership uplifts and transforms our community, I salute each honoree for their dedication, vision, and service. Your achievements illuminate the path forward and remind us all of what is possible when we stand together. To each awardee, know that your commitment inspires a new generation to lead, serve, and thrive.

To the members, supporters, and volunteers of Sesame Flyers International, Inc., your faithfulness to the mission, vision, and values of the organization is the heartbeat of your success. Continue to *“Love a Kid Today and Everyday”*—for in doing so, you are shaping leaders, strengthening families, and building a legacy of unity and hope.

I remain steadfast in my commitment, both personally and on behalf of the Consulate General of Jamaica, to support the outstanding work of Sesame Flyers International, Inc. in youth development, cultural celebration, social welfare, and community empowerment in Brooklyn. With so many members of the Caribbean and Jamaican diaspora calling this borough home, we recognize and deeply value your impact. The Consulate stands ready to assist and partner with you as you continue your vital mission.

May Sesame Flyers International, Inc. continue to inspire and uplift as you *“Love a Kid Today and Everyday.”* You have our enduring support and gratitude as you shape a brighter future for all.

One Love,  
Alston Wilson, O.D.  
Consul General of Jamaica, New York

CHAIR  
ENERGY AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

COMMITTEES  
BANKS  
BUDGET AND REVENUE  
FINANCE  
INTERNET AND TECHNOLOGY  
RULES



SENATOR  
**KEVIN S. PARKER**  
21<sup>ST</sup> SENATORIAL DISTRICT  
STATE OF NEW YORK  
MAJORITY WHIP

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FAX: 718-629-6420

e-mail:  
parker@nysenate.gov

Dear Friends:

I am humbled to bring greetings to you at the Sesame Flyers International Annual Caribbean Essence Awards and Showcase on **June 29, 2025**. It is a privilege to join Curtis Nelson and Raymond Luke in honoring the recipients of this year's award: Atiba Edwards, Anthony Cole, Brenda Hutchinson, Celeste Terry, David Thomas, Dr. Dexter McKenzie, Hilton Samuel, Jennifer Joseph, Lamona Knight, Rodrick Daley, and Danielle McBride.

Tonight's theme is *Black Renaissance*, in honor of individuals who exemplify the collective brilliance inherent to the Caribbean community. Rooted in the principle of deep commitment to family, Caribbean culture underscores the kind of strong, connected communities we see today. These recipients have implemented these values in their everyday work across establishments like the children's museum, academic institutions, the city council, and beyond.

The ability to carry out this legacy developed by pillars of the Caribbean community is not an easy feat but has been achieved by these award recipients who have each been able to leave footprints in their respective fields. Their contributions have been essential to the success of our shared community.

Again, it is truly an honor to partner with the decorated and widely recognized Sesame Flyers International. Their work continues to inspire vibrant community engagement by celebrating the brilliance of others.

Yours in Partnership,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin Parker".

KEVIN PARKER

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Fax: 518-455-5043  
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**NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY**  
ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAIME WILLIAMS  
59<sup>th</sup> District

CHAIR  
Committee on  
Real Property Taxation  
COMMITTEES  
Agriculture  
Environmental Conservation  
Governmental Operations  
Transportation

June 29, 2025

Dear Friends,

It brings me immense joy to extend my heartfelt congratulations to Sesame Flyers International as they commemorate their illustrious Caribbean Essence Awards and Showcase on June 29, 2025.

This remarkable milestone marks their 42nd year of unwavering commitment to providing transformative education, vibrant cultural experiences, and enriching recreational programs that not only celebrate but also honor the profound heritage of the Caribbean people and diaspora.

As we gather to recognize the outstanding contributions of the notable honorees, let us express our deepest gratitude for their steadfast support in uplifting our community.

On behalf of my constituents in the 59th Assembly District, I wholeheartedly celebrate the achievements of Sesame Flyers International and wish them boundless success in their future endeavors. Together, let us continue to inspire and empower one another in the pursuit of excellence and unity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jaime Will' followed by a long, horizontal flourish.

Jaime Williams  
Member of the Assembly  
59<sup>th</sup> Assembly District



**Monique Chandler-  
Waterman**  
Member of Assembly  
58<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

THE ASSEMBLY  
STATE OF NEW YORK  
ALBANY



June 29, 2025  
Curtis Nelson, President  
Sesame Flyers International Inc  
3510 Church Avenue  
Brooklyn, NY 11203

Dear Friends:

We are privileged to have this wonderful opportunity to revel in yet another year of stellar achievements of Sesame Flyers International, Inc. For over 40 years, your contributions and support to the elevation of Caribbean Culture is remarkable and with your theme “Black Renaissance” you are positioned to boldly lead the way as we celebrate Caribbean American Heritage Month.

On behalf of the Assembly District 58 residents, I particularly want to acknowledge the leadership of President Curtis Nelson and all the dedicated members and staff of Sesame Flyers International, Inc. Thanks for all you do with your programs to keep our kids engaged and focused on providing the leadership for tomorrow. The Caribbean Diaspora is in good hands and no doubt your selected honorees are positioned to make significant contributions to our great city and state.

Congratulations, and may we have a joyous, memorable, and successful time as we continue to serve our communities together.

Sincerely,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. Chandler-Waterman".

Monique Chandler-Waterman  
NYS Assemblywoman, Assembly District 58



**JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS**

## **The Public Advocate For the City of New York**

To Sesame Flyers International Inc.,

On behalf of the City of New York, I would like to offer you my congratulations and well-wishes as you celebrate 42 years of exceptional, significant programming at the Caribbean Essence Awards and Showcase today. Your dedication has been absolute, recognized, and appreciated. Throughout your time serving the Brooklyn community, you have demonstrated resolve toward ensuring that every child has a nurturing, safe, and joyful environment in which to grow, and I commend your efforts.

Sesame Flyers has dedicated years to supporting our city and assisting others, prioritizing youth empowerment, cultural celebration, and economic development. Throughout these 42 years, you have tirelessly served your community by providing educational, recreational, and cultural programs to families and young people of Brooklyn. You consistently meet the needs of the community and the surrounding diaspora. I thank you for your tireless effort and commitment to positively impacting Brooklyn. I know that the work you do helps to provide New Yorkers with hope and encouragement for the future by improving and enriching the lives of its residents.

I have always been grateful for the partnership of Sesame Flyers in advancing Caribbean culture and supporting our youth. During my time in the City Council, I had the privilege of frequently working closely with you on a wide range of initiatives. As Public Advocate, I know the importance of hard work, resilience and dedication that produces results and brings people and communities together. Thank you for your commitment to your work in the city we share and love. Congratulations on today's celebration, 42 years of community service, and on the legacy you have built on behalf of Brooklyn and the city as a whole.

Sincerely,

**Jumaane D. Williams**  
Public Advocate

# Caribbean Essence Awards and Showcase



**Sesame Flyers**  
INTERNATIONAL, INC.



**MEAGAN VANZIE**

**CAMPBELL-NELSON SCHOLARSHIP**

***"A heart for healing, a hand for her community."***

Meagan Elizaebth Vanzie is a rising college senior attending Howard University in Washington D.C., majoring in Health Science on the Pre-Physical Therapy Track. Born and raised in Brooklyn, New York to a family stemming from Belize and Trinidad and Tobago. Meagan's passion for service has led her to serve the community through several practices, including leadership, volunteering, giving, and companionship! She is the former Co-President of the National Honors Society Ujima Chapter, an alumna of the Arthur Ashe Institute of Urban Health's Health Science Academy, and a health disparities clinical researcher. Through her experiences she found a passion for limiting health disparities within underrepresented communities and plans on attending Physical Therapy school to fulfill my goals of becoming a pediatric physical therapist and a healthcare advocate!

# Caribbean Essence Awards and Showcase



**Sesame Flyers**  
INTERNATIONAL, INC.



## **ANGELO ROBLES**

**MELISSA HUNTE SCHOLARSHIP**

***"Discipline today, legacy tomorrow"***

Angelo Robles Taylor, 19, is an American national of Caribbean descent, with family ties to Jamaica and Barbados. As a Business Management major at SUNY Old Westbury, Angelo is building a strong foundation for his entrepreneurial aspirations. A dedicated practitioner of mixed martial arts since age seven, he holds a Brown Belt and actively teaches children, teens, and adults at Mormando Martial Arts. Angelo views martial arts as a holistic discipline that cultivates confidence, focus, and personal growth. His long-term objective is to establish and operate his own martial arts school, leveraging his business administration skills to facilitate the spiritual, physical, and personal development of his students.

# Caribbean Essence Awards and Showcase



## **JADE SINCLAIR**

**ELENORA P. BERNARD SCHOLARSHIP**

***"A global mind with a heart for service"***

Born and raised in East New York, Brooklyn, Jade is the proud product of a Jamaican father and a Brooklyn-native mother. Growing up in a culturally rich and diverse community, and spending five years at boarding school, helped shape their resilience, independence, and natural leadership. A passionate traveler, she has visited over eight countries across Europe and Japan, gaining a broad global perspective and a deep appreciation for cultural connection.

This fall, Jade will attend LSU to study Sports Medicine and International Relations, aiming to lead both in the classroom and beyond. Grounded by a strong faith in God, she embraces every opportunity with gratitude and purpose. Their interests include reading science fiction and mystery novels, dancing, watching sports, and attending Broadway shows. With a dream to visit all seven continents, Jade is committed to building bridges across cultures and making a meaningful impact in both healthcare and global affairs.

# Caribbean Essence Awards and Showcase



## **KYRA BENNETT**

**THE CREATIVE CHAOS SCHOLARSHIP**

***"Not just making art, making meaning"***

Since childhood, Kyra Bennet has used art as a powerful means of self-expression. Inspired by the creativity of those around them, they began exploring various artistic mediums including charcoal, graphite, and digital art. Believing that artists should never confine themselves to one form, she has embraced a multidisciplinary approach, allowing them to expand their skill set and connect with diverse audiences. Known for being an influencer rather than a follower, Kyra infuses their work with deeper messages meant to inspire thought and emotion.

While visual art laid the foundation, she is now pursuing a career in film. A lifelong admirer of cinema, they have always appreciated how film weaves together different art forms to evoke powerful emotions and tell compelling stories. From a young age, films shaped her values and sparked a desire to create work that resonates just as deeply. Today, she is committed to using the medium of film to inspire, uplift, and impact the next generation, crafting stories that leave a lasting imprint on the heart and mind.

# Caribbean Essence Awards and Showcase



**Sesame Flyers**  
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## **KAYLAH WRIGHT**

**THE CREATIVE CHAOS SCHOLARSHIP**

***"Creativity is her language and connection is her mission"***

Kaylah Wright is a passionate creative from Brooklyn, NYC, and a graduating senior in the IB Diploma Programme at Bela High School. Whether it's poetry, photography, video editing, or even cooking, she always used storytelling as a way to express myself and connect with others. This fall, Kaylah will be attending the illustrious Howard University. Beyond academics, A student leader, brand ambassador, and someone who believes that creativity isn't just a talent it's a way of making meaning out of chaos. Kaylah believes that every challenge is a chance to create something powerful.



# Sesame Flyers

INTERNATIONAL, INC.



QUALITY PROGRAMS IN THE COMMUNITY

## CLARKSON COMPASS



### QUALIFIED INSTRUCTORS

strive to empower individuals and build a stronger community



### AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM

giving students opportunities to learn skills, explore their interests, and discover new things.



### SUMMER CAMP PROGRAMS

is all about creating fun memories that will last a lifetime. JOIN US TODAY!



### QUALITY PROGRAMS

provide a comprehensive range of services that meet the diverse needs of the community each age group

## Our Benefits:

We provide safe and supportive environments for children, youth, and families to learn and grow outside of school hours.



Cultural Dance



Basketball Program



Arts & Craft



Aerobics



Physical Education



Engineering



Martial Arts



Cheerleading

1060 Clarkson Avenue  
Brooklyn, New York 11212



info@sesameflyers.org  
(347) 382-6781



# Sesame Flyers

INTERNATIONAL, INC.

SESAME FLYERS INTERNATIONAL, INC.

## WINTHROP BEACON

Sesame Flyers' Beacon Programs provide safe and supportive environments for children, youth, and families to learn and grow outside of school hours. Beacon programs are after-school programs that operate in public schools and provide a wide range of services to the community.

- ✓ Dance
- ✓ Marching Band
- ✓ Cooking
- ✓ Chess
- ✓ Physical Education
- ✓ STEAM
- ✓ Martial Arts
- ✓ Basketball
- ✓ Soccer
- ✓ Volleyball
- ✓ Table Tennis
- ✓ Netball



### AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM

After-school programs give students opportunities to learn skills, explore their interests, and discover new things.



### SUMMER PROGRAM

The Winthrop Beacon Summer Program is all about creating fun memories that will last a lifetime.  
**JOIN US TODAY!**



### EVENING PROGRAMS

This program offers educational, recreational & cultural activities on weekday evenings and weekends.



PHONE NUMBER

**+718 221 8880**



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BROOKLYN . NY 11203**



**WINTHROPBEACON@  
SESAMEFLYERS.ORG**



**Sesame Flyers**  
INTERNATIONAL, INC.



# BILDERSEE BEACON

Sesame Flyers' Beacon Programs provide safe and supportive environments for children, youth, and families to learn and grow outside of school hours. Beacon programs are after-school programs that operate in public schools and provide a wide range of services to the community. With over 20 years of experience, our programs offer a wide range of activities, from sports and recreation to academic support and family engagement opportunities. By operating in public schools, we are able to use the full facilities to provide a comprehensive range of services that meet the diverse needs of the community. Children can receive homework help, participate in sports activities, and enjoy a nutritious meal, while parents can take part in fitness classes or attend workshops. Our Beacon Programs strive to empower individuals and build a stronger community through education, personal development, and social interaction.

Dance | Cooking | Chess | Physical Education  
STEAM | Martial Arts | Arts and Craft | Basketball  
and much more - **REGISTER TODAY**

✉ [info@bilderseebeacon.org](mailto:info@bilderseebeacon.org)

## WHY BILDERSEE BEACON?

- ✓ After-school programs give students opportunities to learn skills, explore their interests, and discover new things.
- ✓ The Bildersee Beacon Summer Program is all about creating fun memories that will last a lifetime. **JOIN US TODAY!**
- ✓ This program offers educational, recreational & cultural activities on weekday evenings and weekends.

📍 956 E 82nd Street,  
Brooklyn, New York 11203



**GET IN TOUCH**  
**+718-693-0500**

# Caribbean Essence Awards and Showcase



**Sesame Flyers**  
INTERNATIONAL, INC.



## **DANIELLE McBRIDE**

**EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR | DIRECTOR OF BILDERSEE BEACON**

***"One Team Member, Countless Contributions"***

Danielle McBride is a proud Brooklyn native with Caribbean roots from St. Maarten and Aruba. As the mother of 17-year-old author Skylar McBride whose children's book is currently a #1 bestseller on Amazon Danielle is committed to nurturing creativity, education, and empowerment within her family and community. Visit [McBrideStories.com](http://McBrideStories.com) to support their growing literary legacy.

Raised in Maryland as a military brat, Danielle graduated from Smithsburg Senior High School before earning her degree in Business Management from Virginia State University. In 2006, she returned to New York to build a beautiful life and career centered around youth development and advocacy.

With over 20 years of experience as an educator, Danielle has worn many hats: cheer and track coach, DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) Lead, and High School Placement Coordinator supporting middle school students in their academic transitions since 2016. She is also the founder of Dannie's Divas, a mentorship and empowerment program designed to uplift and inspire young girls.

In 2016, Danielle published her first children's book, *Respect My Boundaries*, reflecting her deep passion for social-emotional development and child advocacy. She has organized and led youth-led protests advocating for gun violence awareness and community safety in Brooklyn.

Whether in the classroom, on the track, or in the community, Danielle's passion lies in helping children and young adults grow, thrive, and navigate life with strength and purpose. She is committed to continuing her mission of creating positive change, one child and one story at a time.

Danielle continues to create milestones for herself and others, always striving to uplift those around her and build spaces of empowerment, education, and hope.

# Caribbean Essence Awards and Showcase



## **BRENDA HUTCHINSON**

**VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR | DEDICATED MEMBER OS SESAME FLYERS INT'L**

***"Driven by Passion, Defined by Dedication"***

Brenda Hutchinson, a retired Vice President from Chase Manhattan Bank and a respected community leader, has dedicated over 30 years to the Caribbean organization Sesame Flyers International Inc., leaving a significant legacy in Crown Heights.

During her distinguished banking career, Brenda excelled in leadership, driving business growth and prioritizing client service. Notably, she innovatively bridged the gap between the financial sector and the Caribbean community in Brooklyn by building trust and accessibility through collaborative outreach with Sesame Flyers. This initial partnership evolved into a profound and enduring volunteer relationship.

For more than three decades, Brenda has been deeply involved in nearly every facet of Sesame Flyers' operations, serving as treasurer, overseeing membership, and spearheading numerous fundraising initiatives. Her financial acumen has been invaluable in optimizing the organization's resources and ensuring sound banking practices.

Beyond her financial contributions, Brenda has generously volunteered her time and talents at countless Sesame Flyers events, from cultural celebrations to youth programs. Her ability to connect with people has made her a cornerstone of their fundraising efforts.

Brenda Hutchinson embodies service, leadership, and compassion, leaving an indelible mark on both the financial world and the Caribbean community she passionately serves. Her tireless dedication continues to inspire those around her.

# Caribbean Essence Awards and Showcase



## LAMONA KNIGHT

**ASST. COMMISSIONER & SENIOR COMMUNITY ADVISOR NYC MAYOR'S OFFICE**

**COMMUNITY BRIDGE BUILDER AWARD**

***"Bridging the Present to a Promising Tomorrow"***

Lamona Knight is the Assistant Commissioner & Senior Community Advisor in the NYC Mayor's Office and our 2025 Community Bridge Builder Award recipient. Born in Barbados and a Brooklyn resident, she holds dual roles within the NYPD Intelligence Bureau and the Mayor's Community Affairs Unit, where she also serves as the Caribbean Liaison. In this capacity, Lamona established the Caribbean Advisory Council to enhance the Caribbean community's engagement with city government.

A retired 20-year NYPD veteran, Lamona held various positions, including Statistics Officer and Career Development and Training Officer. She also trained executives and union members at the Thomas Shortman Training Fund. From 2007 to 2010, she coordinated parent empowerment seminars for then-NYS Senator Eric Adams and served as a Regional Director for Health Services Assessment, providing workshops on topics like gang awareness and conflict resolution in schools and churches.

Lamona holds a Bachelor's in Criminal Justice from John Jay College and a Master's in Public Administration from Marist College, where her thesis explored the application of NYPD's CompStat model to Caribbean police forces. She has also acquired a wide array of training and certifications, further highlighting her well-roundedness as an individual.

Her affiliations include the Manhattan Chamber of Commerce, the Caribbean American Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and she is a founding member of 100 Blacks in Law Enforcement Who Care. Lamona has received several awards and recognitions for her service from various officials and organizations.

# Caribbean Essence Awards and Showcase



## **ATIBA EDWARDS**

**PRESIDENT & CEO, BROOKLYN CHILDREN'S MUSEUM**

**COMMUNITY PILLAR AWARD**

***"The Go-To for a Greater Community"***

Atiba T. Edwards was born on the island of St. Vincent & The Grenadines, grew up in Brownsville, Brooklyn and still lives in Brooklyn. He graduated from the University of Michigan with degrees in Industrial Operations & Engineering and Liberal Arts, with a focus on poetry and musicology.

He is President & CEO of Brooklyn Children's Museum (BCM). Prior to his role as President, he spent four years serving as Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer at BCM, overseeing visitor experience, finance and human resources, building operations, and marketing.

Atiba was Director of Operations at a middle school, Brooklyn East Collegiate. He began his professional career as a Fixed Income Research Analyst at JPMorgan's Investment Bank, where he covered the automotive sector and was ranked #1 each year by Institutional Investors. Following JPMorgan, he joined Nomura Securities to assist with the build out of the firm's high grade and high-yield fixed income research divisions. Atiba also co-founded FOKUS, a non-profit organization that connects and builds community through arts.

# Caribbean Essence Awards and Showcase



**Sesame Flyers**  
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## **ANTHONY COLE**

**CUSTOMER SUCCESS LEADER, AMAZON**

**RENAISSANCE IMPACT AWARD**

***"A Catalyst for Positive Evolution"***

Anthony Cole, a Customer Success Leader at Amazon, drives initiatives to empower small and diverse businesses across Amazon's marketplace. His previous roles at Amazon include Senior Program Manager for Amazon Music and Business Developer at Amazon Business, where he launched CSR storefronts for minority-owned businesses.

A strong advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion, Anthony served as President of Amazon's Global Black Employee Network and continues as an advisor. His professional background also includes over a decade in private banking, sales, and B2B account management with J.P. Morgan and Wealth-X, where he led a Client Success team.

Beyond his corporate achievements, Anthony is a celebrated singer-songwriter and cultural ambassador, drawing inspiration from his Trinidadian heritage. He recently toured with the Afro-Pop group Sauti Sol and has performed on many stages. His creative talents extend to commissioned musical projects for Amazon and Lucozade, showcasing his multifaceted abilities.

Anthony is deeply committed to community engagement, particularly with Sesame Flyers, where he has been a Youth Council member, scholarship recipient, and donor. His ongoing support for arts, culture, and community initiatives shows his dedication to uplifting others, and he is honored to be recognized by Sesame Flyers for his contributions.

# Caribbean Essence Awards and Showcase



## **CELESTE TERRY**

**SUPERINTENDENT, DISTRICT 18**

**EDUCATIONAL PILLAR AWARD**

***"Building Minds, Shaping Futures"***

Celeste Terry, Superintendent of District 18, is a highly accomplished educator with 24 years of experience within the New York City Department of Education, having served as a Teacher, Principal, Model Principal, and Deputy Superintendent. Throughout her career, Superintendent Terry has been deeply committed to enhancing student outcomes and cultivating positive learning environments..

In her role as Superintendent, she has been instrumental in shaping district-wide educational policies, supporting school leaders with data-driven strategies, and securing crucial resources. Her key initiatives include pioneering the first city-wide district assessment program and introducing Weekly Data Meetings within her school communities.

Superintendent Terry's influence extends to her service on Mayor DeBlasio's Leadership Team for School Culture and Discipline, where she contributed to revising the discipline code and securing funding for mental health support. Her transformative leadership has resulted in significant double-digit gains in student math and literacy proficiency through strategic interventions and strong community partnerships. Her impactful work has been recognized by the Robin Hood Foundation, Senator Roxanne J. Persaud, Council Member Farah Louis, and most recently by the Middle School Principal Association as their 2025 Distinguished Superintendent.

# Caribbean Essence Awards and Showcase



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## **DR. DEXTER McKENZIE**

**DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS & SENIOR STAFF PHYSICIAN AT LaSANTÉ**

**HEALTH CENTER & ASST. PROFESSOR OF MEDICINE AT SUNY DOWNSTATE**

**COMMUNITY PILLAR AWARD**

***"Bridging medicine & mission to impact Brooklyn & beyond"***

Dr. Dexter A. McKenzie is the Director of Governmental Affairs and Senior Staff Physician at LaSante Health Center in Brooklyn and an Assistant Professor of Medicine at SUNY Downstate. A double board-certified physician in internal medicine and pediatrics, he has spent his career advancing healthcare access and equity in underserved communities.

Born in Kingston, Jamaica, and raised in Brooklyn, Dr. McKenzie became the first in his family to graduate high school, later earning degrees in chemistry, pharmaceutical sciences, and medicine all with honors. A proud Meharry Medical College alumnus, he remains deeply committed to the school's mission of serving the underserved.

Throughout his career, Dr. McKenzie has held several leadership roles, including Chief of Medicine at the Brownsville Multi-Service Health Center, President of the Provident Clinical Society of Brooklyn, and President of the Empire State Medical Association. He developed one of Brooklyn's first comprehensive HIV treatment programs and led health initiatives addressing hypertension, diabetes, and obesity in Caribbean and low-income communities.

His civic engagement includes chairing health committees for both the Brooklyn NAACP and the New York Black Leadership Commission on AIDS. Appointed by Governor David Paterson to the New York State Health Research Science Board, he helped oversee statewide breast cancer research efforts.

Dr. McKenzie is also the founder of the Global Alliance Teen Mentoring Program, which has guided youth toward elite universities including Harvard and Yale. He has been recognized for his work in job training for single mothers and his tireless advocacy for both youth empowerment and elder care.

Dedicated to both local and global health equity, Dr. McKenzie continues to champion quality care, education, and opportunity for all.

# Caribbean Essence Awards and Showcase



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## **JENNIFER A. JOSEPH**

**SENIOR POLITICAL STRATEGIST & ADVISOR**

**BRIDGE BUILDER AWARD**

Jennifer A. Joseph is a seasoned political advisor and cultural advocate whose career spans decades of dedicated service to New York City and the Caribbean diaspora. Born in Trinidad and Tobago, she attended Bishop Anstey High School before migrating to the United States, where she earned her degree from City College of New York.

Jennifer's professional journey began in broadcasting, but her true passion led her into politics. She made history as the first Chief of Staff to Reverend Al Sharpton and later served on Capitol Hill as an aide to Congressman Edolphus Towns. Upon returning to New York, she continued her public service in the New York State Senate and briefly worked in healthcare administration at the Marcus Garvey Nursing Home in Crown Heights.

Her commitment to equity and representation is evident in her tireless work to support and elect strong Black women to the judiciary and public office. In 2018, she joined the New York City Council as Chief of Staff to Councilmember Alicka Ampry-Samuel and has served since 2021 as Senior Advisor to City Council Speaker Adrienne Adams.

Jennifer also consulted internationally, serving as Senior Advisor to Prime Minister Keith Rowley of Trinidad and Tobago's People's National Movement (PNM) between 2015 and 2020. She remains deeply rooted in Caribbean cultural life, having worked with various carnival associations, contributed to public mural projects, and served as a member of the Brooklyn branch of the NAACP.

Outside of her political work, Jennifer is an avid reader and traveler. She especially enjoys reading literature by Caribbean authors, with recent favorites including *The Book of Night Women* by Marlon James and *The Prophets* by Robert Jones Jr. Her passion for storytelling and culture continues to influence her advocacy.

A proud "Trini to the bone," Jennifer is committed to progressive policy reform—especially around affordable housing—and believes in the power of culture, public service, and shared history to shape a better future. Her guiding mantra: "I want to leave this place better than I made it."

# Caribbean Essence Awards and Showcase



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## **RODRICK F. DALEY**

**CHAIRPERSON, COMMUNITY BOARD 17**

**COMMUNITY PILLAR AWARD**

***"Person of Purpose, Pillar of Progress"***

Rodrick F. Daley, widely known as Ruddie, is the Chairperson of Community Board 17 and a retired Assistant Principal from the NYC Department of Education with over 25 years of service. Born in Jamaica and immigrating to Brooklyn in 1982, he is a proud graduate of local schools and holds degrees from Haverford College, College of Mount Saint Vincent, Cornell University, and The College of Saint Rose.

As an educator, he was deeply committed to public education and student growth. He created innovative programs like The Study Abroad Program at Meyer Levin, the Adolescent Mentorship Program (My Brothers Keeper), and the student government at Prospect Heights. He also actively worked to bridge the gap between schools and the wider community.

Currently, as Chairperson of Community Board 17, Ruddie represents over 180,000 residents and businesses, overseeing services and addressing community needs. His dedication to community engagement extends to his role as the host and CEO of "The Village Radio Talk Show" on YouTube and 92.1 GD FM, where he and his co-hosts discuss relevant topics.

Married to his childhood sweetheart, Garcia, and a father of six, Rodrick's lifelong commitment to community advancement is evident in his professional and personal endeavors. His extensive service has been recognized with numerous awards and proclamations from various city and state officials and organizations, culminating in The Yard naming a conference room in his honor: The Rodrick F. Daley Conference Room.



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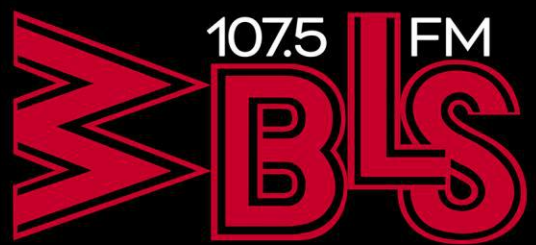
**RODRICK DALEY**

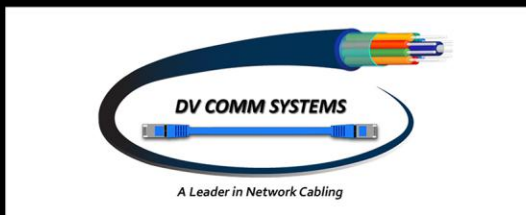


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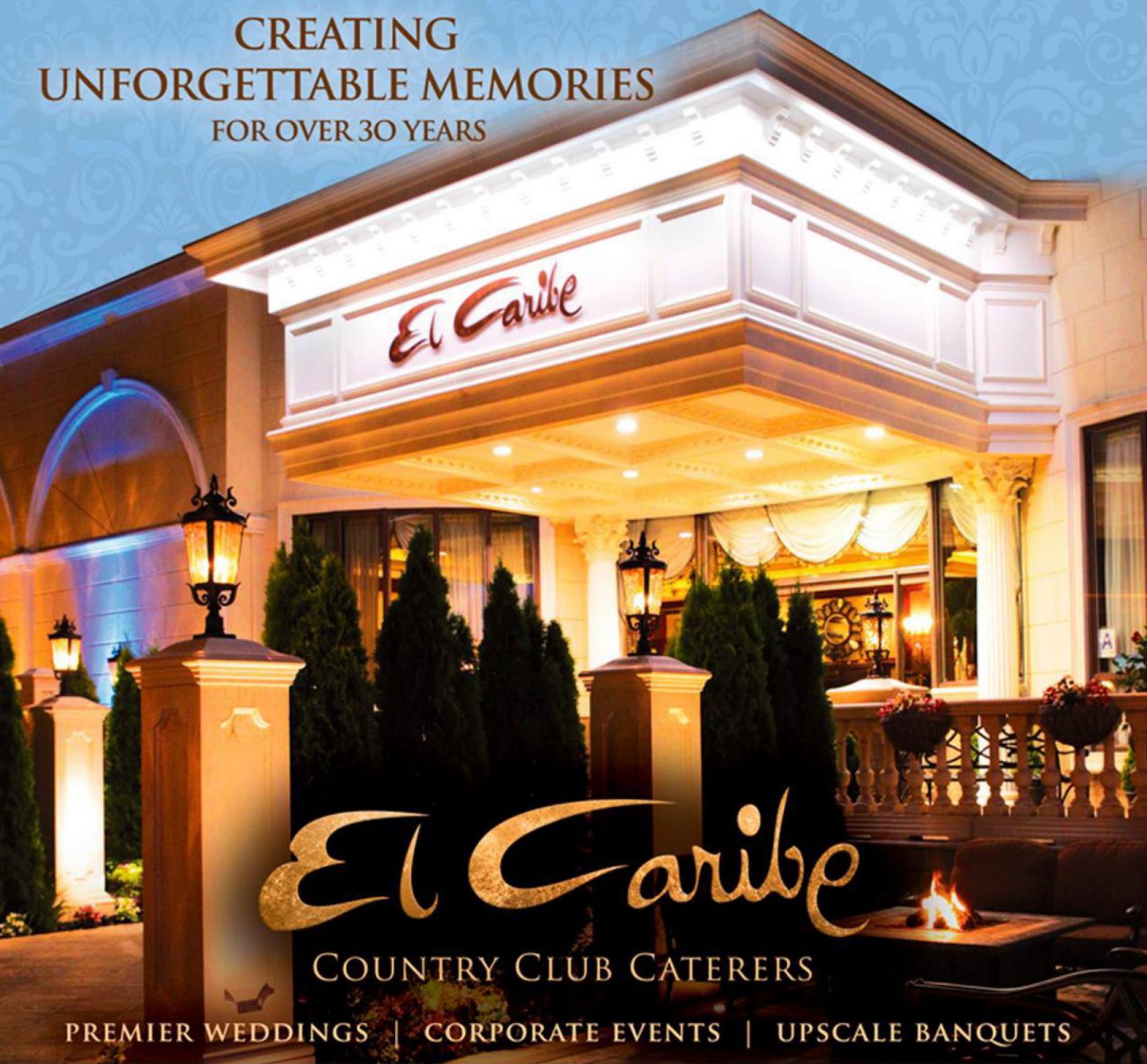


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