



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**For additional information, please contact:**

Lori Anne Oliwa, [lorianne@weareifel.org](mailto:lorianne@weareifel.org)  
(973) 353-0611x125

**INSTITUTE FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERSHIP CELEBRATES ACHIEVEMENTS OF  
BLACK BUSINESSES DURING BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

*Now Is The Time To Acknowledge Trailblazing Entrepreneurs Of Color Who Are Making History &  
Changing The Way Business Is Done*

NEWARK, NJ, February 18, 2022 — Black History Month is celebrated annually during the month of February and is the perfect time to acknowledge the many achievements and accomplishments of Black entrepreneurs. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 10% of all businesses and about 30% of all minority-owned businesses are Black-owned, translating to nearly 2 million companies. While the statistics are impressive, Black business owners have been disproportionately hurt by the lack of access to capital. Despite this challenge and a pandemic which adversely affected communities of color, many Black-owned businesses are growing, succeeding and making their mark on history. More importantly, their success is a springboard helping the next generation of Black achievers to write their own histories, create their own legacies and to be the continuation of change.

Entrepreneurs Alisha Collins and Rhona Vega have created art, mentoring, advocacy and educational resource programs for children which promote personal success and well-being. They embody the 2022 theme of Black History Month, which is Black Health & Wellness. Collins is the founder of nonprofit organization [Creatively Releasing Of NY LLC](#). She started the organization in 2019 to find a solution for children struggling with mental health issues, creating a safe space offering art and mindful dance programs. "School age children suffer from mental health issues and low self-esteem which have worsened due to the pandemic. Many standard treatments are failing to help our youth who struggle to communicate. I've always felt that if we save the arts, they can save us as they did for me," Collins stated. Through exercises in self-expression, she is helping her students set the stage for success through emotional stability. "We have to start somewhere. It's critical we give children the same amount of space and respect that we give an adult."

Rhona Vega is also committed to the success of children, especially teenagers in the area of career development and college preparation. The founder of [Parent Matterz](#), an educational and mentoring company, Vega explained that many parents do not have a plan for their own children's success and were lacking such a plan when they were young. "No education plan, no instruction, no guidance counselors...it's hit or miss. Most parents never experienced career exploration in high school or had a clue on how to navigate this process, graduate or find a successful career that they love or are passionate about," she said. Parent Matterz has changed that and was started after Vega's own 15-year old son came home from a summer business leadership program for students of color and asked why his friends were not doing the same thing. "That was the moment Parent Matterz was born," Vega added, noting that the company, started in 2018, provides one-on-one mentoring and enrichment programs, internships, study abroad, networking opportunities, information on scholarships, and access to a network of mentors who can open doors for children of color. Parent Matterz also empowers parents to be informed advocates for their children by providing access to resources and information. "Parents need to see themselves as agents of their own rising stars," stated Vega, who added that the company is a tribute to her mother, "who kept us engaged, connected, and enriched as a way to keep us off the streets of New York City."

Both entrepreneurs recognized the role of IFEL in helping them define their vision & meet business goals. Collins stated, "IFEL helped me refine my business plan, so I could move forward, add services and expand. I think the future is bright!"

IFEL CEO Jill Johnson stated, "Black History Month is the time to acknowledge Black entrepreneurs and the businesses they are building which are critical to communities and to the economy. IFEL is committed to the removal of barriers that prevent success for Black entrepreneurs."

### **About The Institute For Entrepreneurial Leadership**

Founded in 2002, the [Institute for Entrepreneurial Leadership](#) is an independent, not-for-profit organization that supports economic development through entrepreneurship. IFEL specializes in creating and implementing small business programming in support of inclusion, supplier diversity, and economic development objectives. IFEL envisions a future with inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystems in which people from historically marginalized populations have equal opportunity for success. In pursuit of this vision, the mission is to eradicate the systemic barriers that prevent people from historically excluded populations from being able to access the knowledge, networks, and capital required for entrepreneurial success and wealth creation. Learn more at <https://www.weareifel.org>