

# THE ACUMEN

July 2024

## THE CRITICAL ROLE OF MENTORSHIP

A Conversation With  
Elycia Cook

BY DR. ANGELIC COLE

A NEW APPROACH TO  
EDUCATION  
BY JAMIKA MCNALLY

EMPOWERING  
THROUGH CLEANING  
BY DR. YOLANDA TAYLOR

FINANCIAL IMPACT ON  
AND OFF THE COURT  
BY DJ STELLY

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ST. ELIZABETH'S SCHOOL

## Seeking Submissions

for Article Features



Would you like to share your story with a broader audience? Submit a 2,000-5,000 word article about your business or industry to be included in a future issue of The Acumen, a CBCC monthly e-magazine publication.

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details?  
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[TheAcumen@cbcc.biz](mailto:TheAcumen@cbcc.biz)

# President's Corner

## Connect the Spirit of Independence Day for Entrepreneurial Success

Dear Reader:

As we approach Independence Day, when we celebrate the birth of a nation, it's important to reflect on the commonalities between this significant event and the journey of being an entrepreneur or small business owner. While the contexts may differ, there are valuable lessons and inspirations we can draw from the spirit of independence. We will explore the parallels between Independence Day and entrepreneurship, reminding us of the qualities that define our pursuits.

Just as a nation seeks independence from external forces, entrepreneurs and small business owners embark on their ventures to create something unique, independent, and autonomous. The drive to be one's own boss, make independent decisions, and create a distinct identity are powerful motivations that fuel the entrepreneurial spirit.

Independence Day commemorates the courage and determination of individuals who challenged the status quo and fought for change. Similarly, as entrepreneurs, we question existing norms and conventional wisdom, seeking innovative solutions and disruptive ideas. We embrace risks and embrace the unknown, driven by a desire to make a difference.

Independence Day celebrations often bring people together, fostering a sense of community and shared identity. Entrepreneurs and small business owners recognize the importance of collaboration and community building. We establish networks, forge partnerships, and create spaces where like-minded individuals can connect, learn, and grow together. By nurturing supportive communities, we strengthen our collective impact and inspire others to pursue their entrepreneurial aspirations.

Independence provides the freedom to experiment and innovate. Similarly, entrepreneurship encourages the pursuit of novel ideas and approaches. As entrepreneurs and small business owners, we can challenge conventional thinking, embrace creativity, and push the boundaries of what is possible. This freedom enables us to explore new markets, develop groundbreaking products, and find unique ways to meet the needs of our customers.



Independence Day celebrations are filled with joy and a sense of achievement. Similarly, entrepreneurs and small business owners celebrate their milestones and successes along the journey. However, both endeavors also entail learning from failure. Just as a nation learns from its past mistakes, entrepreneurs understand that failure is an inevitable part of the journey. It is through these failures that we learn, adapt, and grow stronger.

As we gather with family and friends to celebrate Independence Day, let us also celebrate the entrepreneurial spirit that drives us forward. Reflect on the commonalities between this historic event and your own journey as an entrepreneur or small business owner. Embrace the qualities that define both endeavors and let them inspire you to continue pursuing your dreams and positively impacting the world.

I am here to support you with your independence and business growth.

**Happy Independence Day!**

**Dr. Angelic Cole**  
**President & CEO**  
Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce

*"America was built on courage, on imagination and an unbeatable determination to do the job at hand.."*  
**Harry S. Truman**

# Bulletin Board

*We invite you to learn more about the dynamic CBCC board members.*



*Market Provider Engagement Manager  
HealthONE Continental Division*

## Meet Lanyé Banks

### Board Member

Growing up in a family of small business Lanyé Banks has been with HCA HealthONE for 21 years and currently serves as the Market Provider Relations Manager for Practice Health, an Independent Practice Association serving the Colorado Front Range. In this role, Lanyé excels in cultivating and nurturing strong relationships with a network of over 800 members. Her commitment to empowering physicians enables them to deliver exceptional care to their patients. Lanyé helps bridge the gap between Independent Providers and the HCA HealthONE network, streamlining patient care and facilitating seamless referral pathways to the network's nine hospitals and eighteen Surgical Centers.

With over two decades in the healthcare

industry, Lanyé has consistently pursued her vision of catalyzing positive transformation within her community of providers, patients, and colleagues. Her experience spans multiple departments, including a supervisory role for HCA's Continental Division Ambulatory Surgical Centers and supporting Executive Leadership at HealthONE Colorado Care Partners value-based care network. Her primary focus there was managing board of director operations and compliance. She now excels in independent practice contracting and support.

Recognized for her leadership qualities, Lanyé serves as the Co-Chair of HCA's Continental Division Black Colleague Network, supporting initiatives to enhance diversity, inclusion, and engagement. As an Executive Board Member of the National Association of Health Service Executives Colorado Chapter, Lanyé contributes to the organization's mission of promoting the advancement and development of Black healthcare leaders and elevating the quality of healthcare services rendered to minority and underserved communities. She is also a board member of the Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce, where she advocates for Black-owned businesses and their economic growth within the community.

Lanyé is deeply committed to volunteer work. She is actively engaged with the Black Colleague Network and regularly hosts quarterly BINGO events at a senior living residence in Montbello with the Volunteers of America (VOA). Additionally, she participates in serving lunch to the underserved at the annual MLK lunch with the VOA and volunteers with the Food Bank of the Rockies.

Beyond her professional endeavors, Lanyé enjoys spending time with her two adult children, Desiree and Bishop. She hikes every weekend with a group of friends and loves to cook.

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# Discover a New Approach to Education at St. Elizabeth's School

By JAMIKA MCNALLY

*Image: St. Elizabeth's School.*



For families seeking alternatives to traditional public education in Denver, [St. Elizabeth's School](#) offers a unique and enriching educational experience that goes beyond the conventional classroom. As an independent K-8 Episcopal school in the Park Hill neighborhood, St. Elizabeth's prioritizes academic excellence, inclusive communities, and the holistic development of each student through a [sliding-scale tuition model](#). The nurturing environment at St. Elizabeth's School fosters social-emotional well-being, ensuring that every child feels valued and supported.

St. Elizabeth's School values curiosity, compassion, courage, and connection. They build a dynamic culture by weaving together people from all backgrounds, including economic status, race, ethnicity, religious beliefs, political affiliations, family composition, sexual orientation, and gender identity. Connection is fostered through a united investment in students, the school, and the work of creating a more equitable and just world. St. Elizabeth's School embodies compassion, acting with grace, generosity, and humility. Every member is known, seen, accepted,

and belongs. Embracing curiosity fosters a culture of wonder and inquiry, encouraging learning from others' perspectives and experiences. Courage is developed in students, enabling them to advocate for themselves and others, think critically, self-reflect, and make thoughtful decisions.

St. Elizabeth's School believes that a diverse and inclusive community enriches the learning experience for all. As an intentionally inclusive Episcopal school in Denver, St. Elizabeth's is dedicated to creating an environment where all students feel welcome and respected. The school's [inclusive approach](#) fosters a sense of belonging and encourages students to appreciate and celebrate differences. With opportunities like a social justice class, students engage with one another, learn different ways to express and advocate for themselves, and develop a deep understanding of different cultures and perspectives, preparing them to thrive in a global society.

From the first classes that met at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in the Curtis Park



Photo: St. Elizabeth's School.

neighborhood to the years on the Clayton Early Learning Center Campus, St. Elizabeth's School has enjoyed a rich historical legacy that has continued with their recent move to the Mosaic Community Campus. Originally Colorado's Women's College from 1909 until its merger with the University of Denver in 1982, the historic building currently housing St. Elizabeth's School has long been a place of learning. With a historic designation, the building underwent a remodel in 2015 by Johnson and Wales University. Now part of the Mosaic Community Campus, owned by Urban Land Conservancy, St. Elizabeth's is proud to be part of this vibrant community, holding its school in such a significant historical structure.

St. Elizabeth's was established to provide quality, values-based education for all children regardless of economic status, race, color, religious beliefs or affiliation, sexual orientation, or gender identity. As an Episcopal school, St. Elizabeth's benefits from a strong intellectual tradition rooted in faith-filled values, characterized by questioning and probing into the ideals and beliefs that ground us. Academic excellence is paramount. This private Episcopal school in the Park Hill neighborhood provides a [rigorous curriculum](#) designed to challenge students and encourage a love of learning. Offering a broad range of subjects, including Spanish, discovery, and financial literacy, the school caters to various interests and talents, ensuring that each student can explore their passions and develop their skills. Experienced and dedicated teachers provide personalized instruction grounded in high standards and attention to individual and community responsibility, helping each child achieve their full potential.

The school's brand of education goes beyond academics. St. Elizabeth's School is committed to the holistic growth of its students, focusing on their intellectual, emotional, social, and physical development. Programs at this K-8 school in Denver help students develop critical thinking skills, emotional intelligence, curiosity, and a strong sense of self. A range of co-curricular activities, including arts, music, and theater, provides students with opportunities to explore new interests and develop their talents. This



Photo: St. Elizabeth's School.



Photo: St. Elizabeth's School.



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Photo: St. Elizabeth's School.



Photo: St. Elizabeth's School.

holistic approach ensures that students are well-rounded individuals prepared to be [trailblazers](#) in the future.

One of the key advantages of St. Elizabeth's School is its small class sizes. Small class sizes allow for individualized attention, ensuring each student feels heard and supported. Educators can provide support to each and every student in their classroom. This fosters more meaningful interactions between teachers and students, and enables teachers to truly know and understand each child, along with how they learn. Small class sizes also create a [close-knit community](#) where students feel comfortable and connected.

St. Elizabeth's School understands the importance of social-emotional well-being in the development of happy and successful students. The nurturing environment and small class sizes are designed to support the emotional and mental health of students. Counseling services and wellness programs further support students' mental health and well-being, helping students develop resilience, empathy, and effective communication skills.

With a core value of connection, St. Elizabeth's School believes that a supportive community is essential for student success. The school strives to create a warm and welcoming environment where students, parents, and staff work together. Built on the values of curiosity, compassion, courage, and connection, the school encourages parent involvement and offers various opportunities for families to engage with the school, including parent-teacher associations, volunteer programs, and school-wide events. This [strong sense of community](#) helps families feel connected and supported throughout their child's educational journey.

Families are invited to experience the St. Elizabeth's School difference firsthand. Join a group tour to see the [redefined approach to education](#) in action. During the tour, you will have the opportunity to explore the beautiful campus, meet the dedicated staff, and learn more about the programs and philosophy. You will see how the nurturing environment, inclusive community, and commitment to excellence create a unique and [enriching educational experience](#) for students.



*Photo: St. Elizabeth's School.*



*Photo: St. Elizabeth's School.*

[Take the first step](#) toward providing your child with a transformative education. Schedule your tour of St. Elizabeth's School today and discover why this inclusive Episcopal school in Denver is the right choice for your child's learning and development.

St. Elizabeth's School is an active member of the National Association of Episcopal Schools (NAES), the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), the National Business Officers Association (NBOA), and is a charter member of the Episcopal Urban Schools Alliance (EUSA), a ministry of the NAES with a mission to offer excellent private school educational and spiritual opportunities to families regardless of economic status. From the very beginning, St. Elizabeth's School has adhered to independent school accrediting standards. We are fully accredited members of the Association of Colorado Independent Schools (ACIS).

For more information, visit [www.stelizabethsdenver.org](http://www.stelizabethsdenver.org)



Photo: St. Elizabeth's School.



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Images: McBoat Photography



# Opening Doors So All May Thrive

**A Conversation with Elycia Cook,  
President and CEO of Big Brothers, Big Sisters  
By DR. ANGELIC COLE**

**Cole: What would you say is the primary motivating factor behind your leadership?**

**Cook:** The primary motivating factor behind my leadership in the positive youth development/mentoring industry is my desire to be the person I needed most when I was a child.

I was born into some of life's most challenging circumstances — my teen mom was police-escorted to the hospital during the worst riots in Detroit's history. This marked the beginning of my story filled with adversity. As former Denver Mayor Michael Hancock once said, "We may all be born with the same potential, but we are not born with equal opportunity."

Born to a teen mom with an absentee father in Detroit's inner city, where I witnessed gang violence and struggled in overcrowded schools, privilege was not part of my story. However, mentors were my gift. They ignited my potential at every stage, leading me from a childhood

with stacked odds to becoming the first African American CEO of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Colorado. My primary motivation is an enduring passion to ensure that regardless of a child's circumstances, there is a trusting caring adult who is not a family member that is always there at every stage of their life, befriending them, encouraging them, advocating for them, and opening doors to unlimited opportunities.

**Cole: Who are your role models, and what life-changing lessons did you pick up from them?**

**Cook:** My greatest role model and hero is my father-in-law, Felix W. Cook Sr., whom we recently lost earlier this year. His life of intentional service continues to inspire me profoundly. From Papa, I learned:

- Community service is the rent we pay for life on this earth.
- After thorough preparation trust yourself and



Photo: McBoat Photography

never look back, no regrets.

- "The righteous man walks in his integrity: his children and children's children are blessed" (Proverbs 20:7).

Papa's integrity was unmatched, and his life was a testament to its rewards. Despite humble beginnings in rural Louisiana, with each promotion he broke barriers of poverty and racism, achieving high-level positions and paving the way for African Americans in his field. He epitomized service to this country and Colorado communities, generously supporting his family and extending help as far as Tanzania. His legacy of investing in education and generational wealth, especially for his eight granddaughters, remains a guiding light for me. As I navigate life and leadership without him, I lean into integrity, combat self-doubt, and hear his voice reassuring me that **I AM MORE THAN ENOUGH.**

**Cole:** How do you ensure that others benefit from the life-changing knowledge you gained from your mentors?

**Cook:** I ensure that others benefit from the life-changing knowledge of my mentors by actively mentoring others myself. At Big Brothers Big Sisters Colorado, we embrace and have trademarked MentorLife™, a commitment to both being mentored and mentoring others. I believe in paying forward the transformative impact of mentorship that shaped my journey.

**Cole:** What advice do you wish someone had given you earlier in your career?

**Cook:** Two pieces of advice that I wish I had back them and resonate deeply with me now:

- "Do something today that your future self will thank you for."
- "Accept people where they are but place them where they belong. You are the CEO of your life — hire, fire, and promote accordingly." (Todd Hayes)

Discovering these principles later in my career, particularly the idea of being the CEO of my own



Photo: McBoat Photography

life, was a significant revelation. This perspective, accompanied by a photo I found online of Maya Angelou in conversations with her younger self, underscores what I would have wanted to hear for my personal and professional journey earlier on, but am trying to embrace today.

**Cole:** What inspired you to pursue a career in the nonprofit field, and how did you get started?

**Cook:** After over 20 successful years in sales and witnessing profound injustices like the Rodney King incident and the AIDS epidemic's impact on marginalized communities, my passion for advocacy and community service intensified. Leading "GirlTalk," a support organization for Black women living in Japan whose community service was to mentor children of Black men and Japanese women, raised in Japan by their Japanese mothers often ostracized with little to no connection to the other side of their heritage, further fueled my commitment to championing

mentoring. I returned to the states and to my sales career but with that experience still deep in my heart and soul. When my first child was born, I realized my calling was not to sell another widget or gadget but to contribute to a better world for future generations. I transitioned from a lucrative career in software sales to the nonprofit sector, where I could align my skills with my values. Today, as CEO of Big Brothers Big Sisters Colorado, I continue to draw on my sales background to fundraise and advocate for youth empowerment.

### **Cole: What do you believe to be the most important piece of advice for a leader to follow?**

**Cook:** One principle I embrace is that effective leadership requires the ability to follow. In an often-critical landscape where leadership is scrutinized, empathy and support for leaders is crucial. While it is essential to speak truth to power, fostering a supportive environment where team members contribute their insights is equally vital. I encourage my team to challenge me and believe that leaders are accountable for creating opportunities for growth and advancement which can be difficult in a small nonprofit. Leaders need armor bearers, ride or “ride” team members, and they need to feel believed in. If I cannot do that for my organization, then I cannot be at an organization. I am lucky that there are only a couple of organizations that I have parted ways with because I could not support the leadership and the direction. In my 40-plus-year career, I have often been promoted to the leaders’ right hand or given the opportunity to lead the work. I believe my heart to follow has been a key determinant of that. Sometimes nothing sounds better to a CEO who has many sleepless nights worried about fulfilling the mission and supporting their team, than hearing from a staff member, whatever it is “I got you” or “We are in this together.”

### **Cole: How can you inspire others while also maintaining that you continue to be inspired**

### **by Big Brothers Big Sisters overall mission?**

**Cook:** Everyone involved with Big Brothers Big Sisters Colorado— from staff and volunteers to donors and advocates — to Bigs, Littles and families has a unique story that drives their passion and connection to the mission. I encourage sharing these stories because they remind us of our collective “why” and inspire action. Personally, I share my journey whenever possible, hoping to motivate others to mentor, support, and advocate. Every day, I witness the profound impact of our programs on the lives of our Bigs, Littles, High School Mentors, Mentees, and my own Little, Tay. Nonprofit work demands resilience, but it also offers unparalleled rewards, especially for those farthest from opportunities.

### **Cole: How do you prioritize work-life balance, and what advice do you have for junior professionals struggling to find balance?**

**Cook:** Achieving work-life balance was a struggle for me for a long time, and I still receive guidance from my mentors. I prioritize self-care by reserving dedicated time weekly for myself. Unless it is essential for our mission or a rare chance to connect, I guard my Friday evenings and Saturday mornings for alone time and personal rejuvenation. When by some odd chance I do not take this time, I feel it the entire following week. Traveling and immersing myself in new experiences are also ways I recharge.

As a leader in youth services, where the mission feels omnipresent, balancing dedication to our cause with personal well-being is crucial. For junior professionals, I encourage setting boundaries early and prioritizing activities that restore energy and perspective. I was blessed to attend the Big Brothers Big Sisters National Conference where I heard Brene Brown speak. She said, “Boundaries is the distance so that I can love you and still love me.” Lack of personal and professional boundaries can suck the life out of you, rendering you bitter, overwhelmed, suffering from martyr-ism and helpless to anyone. Doing the work that we do at nonprofits



Photo: McBoat Photography

supporting our mission and one another can become all encompassing, cause secondary trauma, or riddle us with guilt or even a saviorism mentality. Brene Brown also said, “When you do this kind of work, you become tethered to people, but you must find a way to know when your story ends and theirs begin, or you won’t make it.” Balance for me is also when I can untether myself, with no regrets.

**Cole: As an African American women leader, what do you consider to be one of the most difficult obstacles you have faced?**

**Cook:** The BridgeSpan Group’s 2020 report on racial equity in philanthropy highlighted disparities for leaders of color, underscoring challenges I have navigated throughout my nonprofit career. Nonprofits led by people of color often receive less support from donors compared to those led by white counterparts, impacting financial stability and community trust. The average is 24% less financial support. But for Black leaders, it can be as much as 45% less financial support and 91% less unrestricted

donations. Cultural differences and perceptions of professionalism further complicate some board and donor relationships. Despite these noted obstacles, with the help of my board and staff we are committed to driving equity and inclusion within the organization and beyond. Leading with integrity and resilience, I challenge misconceptions and advocate for funding equity to support communities effectively.

The imbalance of wealth in our country does not help as CEOs of color’ social and professional circles often do not have the financial wealth/ resources of that of our counterparts.

The article ends with “Because most nonprofits primarily serve marginalized Black, Brown, poor or “othered” communities, population-level impact on the issues donors care about cannot happen without funding more leaders of color.” In 2020-2022 many funders leaned into these findings and support increased exponentially for organizations led by Black, Brown, some LGBTQ and those with lived experience leaders of nonprofits, including mine. It has not been without consequence as we navigate the attacks on JEDI efforts, and weather losses of other

revenue sources or new revenue opportunities, despite exponential increase in demand for services, and expansion of programming in communities that need it most. Secondly, it seems as if more local Colorado funds are being directed to smaller, BIPOC lead, more grassroots, organizations. I fully support this commitment. And, I am a leader of color, serving almost 80% Black and Brown youth, who has dedicated my life to creating programs that are proven to work, collaborating with and helping to build capacity with smaller nonprofits, while strengthening BBBSC's commitment to cultural competency and community voice more than ever before. We continue to drive representation and Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion at every level of the organization. I am learning a lot from our funders and more importantly we are giving more voice and power to the communities that we serve. Yet, I sometimes feel like I am fighting an uphill battle internally and externally.

As I navigate this journey some feel like I am not driving JEDI enough, especially our younger staff and perhaps some funders. Others usually of a different generation, have expressed that they think BBBSC has become too focused on Justice,



Photo: McBoat Photography

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. I don't believe in cancel culture but in working it out where you will always hear me say win-win-win. The greatest win is for those we serve. This can be a delicate balancing act, but it should not be. This work is not a divider but a unifier. It should be embedded into all that we do and all that we are as an organization, a society, and as a people, so that **ALL MAY THRIVE!**

Secondly, with the rising cost of living, the cost of employment is higher and harder for nonprofits to meet the salary levels of for profit, hospitals, and universities. Our people do good work, meaningful work. Nonprofits are crucial to thriving communities, companies, the economy, and humanity. **WE CAN NOT TAKE THE BEST CARE OF OUR PEOPLE AND SUPPORT THEM IN BEING WHOLE** without financial resources that align with rising cost of living, Healthcare and overall cost of doing business.

I know I have many areas in which I can grow as a leader, influencer and effective communicator. Big Brothers Big Sisters Colorado and I personally have many champions, supporters, and advocates of all races, genders and generations; I hope you know who you are. I am forever grateful. Yet the findings of the BridgeSpan study still reign true and there is still much work to be done. Therefore, I cannot discount or rule out the role my gender and ethnicity play here. This is where I must celebrate every victory both large and small. I invite others to do the same. I also continue to lean into my papa's voice telling me, "I Am More Than Enough so lead with no regrets."

**Cole:** What do you think are the biggest challenges facing the nonprofit world today, and how do you see Big Brothers Big Sisters overcoming them?

**Cook:** Today's nonprofit sector faces evolving donor priorities, rising living costs impacting staff compensation, and growing turnover among early-career professionals. Additionally, COVID-19 exacerbated mental health disparities

and educational inequities among youth. At Big Brothers Big Sisters, we address these challenges by diversifying our mentoring programs to reach more underserved youth, including those on our waiting list. We adapt to meet post-pandemic needs, focusing on school-based, peer, and group mentoring models that support social-emotional wellbeing and educational success. We are also critically examining ourselves and organizational infrastructure because when you know better, you do better.

**Cole: How clear is your vision for what the future of community responsibility should look like at Big Brothers Big Sisters?**

**Cook:** My vision is unequivocal about the transformative power of mentoring in young lives. I envision every young person served by Big Brothers Big Sisters graduating high school with a plan for their future, having had a mentor whose impact lasted a lifetime for the Mentor and Mentee. While our mission is clear, daily operational challenges sometimes obscure this vision. By prioritizing mentorship in communities that need us most and nurturing impactful relationships, we uphold our commitment to

positive outcomes for youth.

**Cole: In what direction does Big Brothers Big Sisters see itself going?**

**Cook:** Big Brothers Big Sisters continues to demonstrate the enduring impact of one-to-one mentoring, evidenced by decades-long relationships that enrich both Bigs and Littles. Showcasing our alumni's success at events like the upcoming Big Little Gala held on September 12, 2024, further highlights our commitment to lifelong support. With a growing waiting list and increased demand for our services post-pandemic, we have expanded our evidenced informed, highly sought after, mentoring programs to include diverse needs like post-secondary readiness and support to include the 5 E's emotional, educational, enlistment, entrepreneurship, and enlistment. We are also increasing and expanding our program development, staff and mentor training, and resources for children of incarcerated parents. We remain dedicated to fostering resilience and opportunity for every young person we serve.

Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce, thank you for allowing me to share our story and highlight the critical role of mentoring. We are #BiggerTogether.

# GET INVOLVED


## JOIN A COMMITTEE:

- **Business Policy Cabinet with Senator James Coleman**  
First Thursdays, 3pm MT. Starts April 4th
- **CBCC Public Policy Committee**  
Second Mondays, 4pm MT. Starts April 8th
- **CBCC Membership Committee**  
Third Tuesdays, 3pm MT. Starts April 16th
- **Gala Committee**  
Fridays, times To Be Determined



**FOR MORE INFORMATION,  
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[HTTPS://CBCC.BIZ](https://cbcc.biz)



**RISE team.**  
*(Photo courtesy of DJ Stelly)*

## **Redefining Financial Empowerment: The Journey and Impact of DJ Stelly**

By DAMIAN “DJ” STELLY

At Warriress Wealth, our mission is to redefine the landscape of the financial planning industry, making it a safe space for diverse communities seeking financial education, empowerment and social impact. Within our district, DJ Stelly stands out as a financial advisor with a passion for coaching and a commitment to serving his community.

DJ Stelly's journey into financial advising is rooted in his background as a founder and coach of RISE Basketball, a prominent club basketball organization. Over 14 years, he dedicated himself to mentoring young athletes, instilling in them values of discipline, hard work, and strategic thinking. His transition from coaching basketball to financial advising in 2019 was a natural progression of his desire to educate and empower others.

As a financial advisor at Northwestern Mutual, DJ established his own financial planning practice, leveraging his coaching background to guide individuals and families towards financial stability and growth. His work focuses on comprehensive financial planning, retirement planning, budgeting, investing, debt management, risk protection through disability and life insurance, and helping clients achieve their personal goals.

### **So when we ask DJ Stelly - Why He Does What He Does...**

DJ's passion for financial advising stems from a deep-seated desire to educate and empower those looking to improve their financial situation. He is driven by:

1. **Education:** DJ aims to educate individuals on financial literacy and the various financial vehicles they can utilize to improve their financial health.

2. **Passion for Helping:** With a background in coaching, DJ is enthusiastic about helping others grow and reach their goals, whether on the court or in their financial lives.
3. **Normalizing Financial Conversations:** DJ strives to make financial literacy a common and approachable topic, particularly in underserved communities.
4. **Leadership and Coaching:** His role allows him to continue being a coach and leader, guiding clients towards making informed financial decisions.

**DJ - What motivates you to do what you do... IMPACT!**

Paying it forward, serving our community and advocating for those things that matter. Through his work, he provides:

1. **Peace of Mind:** By ensuring that clients have risk protection in place, DJ offers them peace of mind knowing they are safeguarded against unforeseen events.
2. **Future Focus:** He encourages clients to think about their future selves and set long-term goals, fostering a mindset geared towards growth and planning.
3. **Spending Awareness:** DJ helps clients gain awareness of their spending habits, leading to more mindful financial decisions.
4. **Goal Accomplishment:** He assists clients in achieving their short-term goals, building confidence and momentum towards larger financial objectives.
5. **Prioritizing Financial Goals:** DJ helps clients prioritize their financial goals, making them more attainable and aligned with their values.

DJ's dedication extends beyond individual clients. He is a staunch advocate for financial literacy in black and brown communities, striving to make financial planning accessible and attainable for all. By normalizing financial conversations and promoting legacy planning, DJ seeks to empower individuals and families to build a secure financial future.

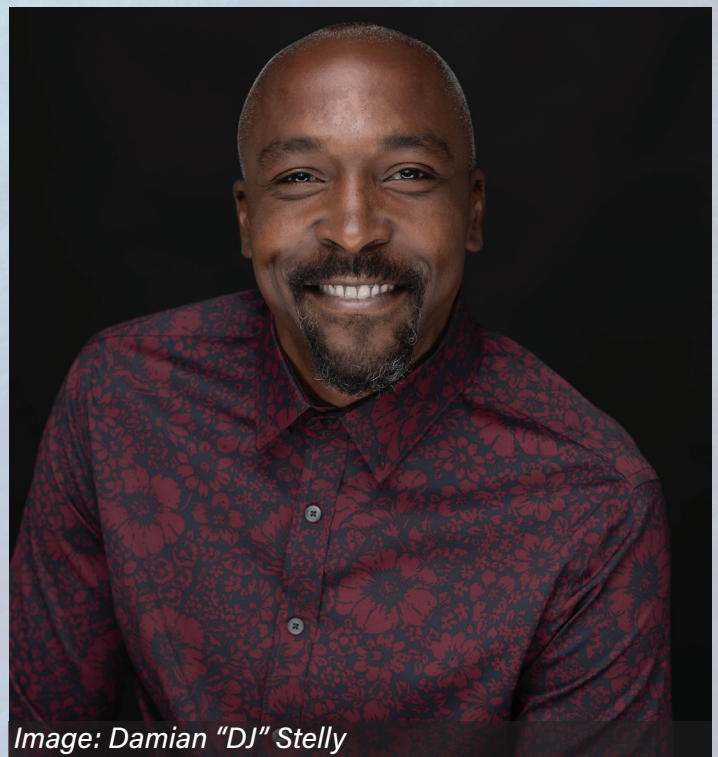
Growing up in Denver, DJ understands the unique challenges faced by underserved communities. His commitment to his career and family drives his dedication to making a positive impact on

the lives of others. His work is a testament to the belief that financial planning is not just for the wealthy but is a necessary and obtainable tool for everyone.

To bring it all together: At Warriress Wealth, we promise to provide a comprehensive, 360-degree financial planning experience that respects who you are and where you come from. Our mission is to redefine the landscape of the financial planning industry, making it the go-to sanctuary for diverse communities seeking financial empowerment and social impact.

DJ Stelly embodies this mission through his work, advocating for fellow business owners and clients, and spreading awareness about the importance of financial planning. His empathetic and professional approach ensures that every client feels supported and empowered to take control of their financial future.

In conclusion, DJ Stelly's journey from the basketball courts to financial advising is a testament to the power of education, passion, and community service. His work with Warriress Wealth is paving the way for a more inclusive and accessible financial planning industry, one where everyone has the opportunity to thrive and achieve their financial goals.



*Image: Damian "DJ" Stelly*



## JOIN THE CONVERSATION BUILD YOUR COMMUNITY

The Colorado Black Chamber is the voice of Black business owners and an advocate for resources and policies that impact Black business owners. Your success is our success.

### At the Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce we:

- **Create** programs & services to support our Black-owned businesses
- **Connect** Black-owned businesses with each other
- **Collaborate** with corporate partners and other organizations to support Black-owned businesses

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**JOIN TODAY**



Image: Pexels

## Take Control of Your Online Presence: Learn SEO and Become an Expert

By A. PARKER

Are you tired of getting lost in the vast online world, struggling to make your mark? Take control of your online presence and become an expert in search engine optimization (SEO). By mastering the art of SEO, you can improve your website's visibility, attract more organic traffic, and establish yourself as a trusted authority in your industry.

In this article, we will uncover the secrets to optimizing your online content, mastering keyword research, and understanding the algorithms that determine search engine rankings. With step-by-step guidance and real-world examples, you will learn the tactics and strategies that top SEO experts use to dominate the search results.

Whether you're a seasoned marketer or just starting your online journey, this article is your comprehensive guide to taking charge of your online presence. From understanding the importance of high-quality backlinks to optimizing your website speed and performance, we will equip you with the knowledge and tools to propel your website to the top of search engine results pages.

Don't let your online presence be left to chance. Start learning SEO today and become the master of your digital domain.

### The Importance of Online Presence

In today's digital age, having a strong online presence is more important than ever. With millions of websites and online businesses competing for attention, it's crucial to stand out from the crowd. A well-optimized website can help you achieve just that.

Having a strong online presence not only increases your visibility but also builds credibility and trust with your target audience. When people search for products or services related to your industry, you want your website to appear at the top of the search results. This is where SEO comes into play.

### What is SEO and Why is it Important?

SEO, or search engine optimization, is the process of optimizing your website to improve its visibility in search engine rankings. When someone searches for a particular keyword or phrase, search engines like Google use complex algorithms to determine which websites should appear at the top of the results page. By implementing SEO techniques, you can improve your website's chances of ranking higher in search engine results pages (SERPs). This increased visibility can lead to more organic traffic, higher conversion rates, and ultimately, more revenue.

### The Benefits of Becoming an SEO Expert

Becoming an SEO expert can have numerous benefits for your online presence and business. Firstly, you will have the knowledge and skills to optimize your own website, saving you money on hiring external SEO agencies. Additionally, you will have the ability to analyze your website's performance, make data-driven decisions, and adapt to changes in search engine algorithms. Furthermore, by mastering SEO, you can position yourself as an industry expert and build credibility with your audience. People are more likely to trust businesses that appear at the top of search results, and by consistently delivering high-quality content and optimizing your website,

you can establish yourself as a trusted authority in your industry.

## Understanding Search Engine Algorithms

Search engine algorithms are complex mathematical formulas used by search engines to determine the relevance and quality of websites. While the exact algorithms are closely guarded secrets, there are certain factors that we know influence search engine rankings.

One important factor is the relevance of your content to the search query. Search engines analyze the keywords and phrases on your website to determine its relevance to specific search queries. By conducting thorough keyword research and incorporating these keywords into your content, you can increase your chances of ranking higher in search results.

Another important factor is the quality and authority of your website. Search engines

consider factors such as the number and quality of backlinks pointing to your website, the overall user experience of your site, and the loading speed of your pages. By focusing on these factors, you can improve your website's authority and increase its chances of ranking higher in search results.

## Keyword Research and Optimization

Keyword research is a crucial step in the SEO process. By understanding the keywords and phrases that your target audience is searching for, you can optimize your website to appear in relevant search results.

Start by brainstorming a list of relevant keywords and phrases related to your industry. Use tools like Google Keyword Planner, SEMrush, or Ahrefs to research the search volume and competition for each keyword. Aim for a balance between high search volume and low competition to maximize your chances of ranking well. Once you have identified your target keywords,



Image: Pexels

it's important to strategically incorporate them into your website's content. This includes optimizing your page titles, meta descriptions, headings, and body text. However, it's important to use keywords naturally and avoid keyword stuffing, as this can negatively impact your rankings.

### **On-Page SEO Techniques**

On-page SEO refers to the optimization of elements on your website itself. This includes optimizing your page titles, meta descriptions, headings, URLs, and internal linking structure. Start by ensuring that each page on your website has a unique and descriptive title tag. This title should accurately represent the content of the page and include your target keyword. Similarly, meta descriptions should be concise, compelling, and include relevant keywords.

Headings, such as H1, H2, and H3 tags, should be used to structure your content and highlight important information. Use headings to break up your content into logical sections and include relevant keywords where appropriate.

URL optimization involves creating clean and user-friendly URLs that include relevant keywords. Avoid using long strings of numbers or irrelevant characters in your URLs, as these can confuse both search engines and users. Finally, internal linking is an important on-page SEO technique that helps search engines understand the structure and hierarchy of your website. By linking relevant pages together, you can distribute link equity and improve the overall visibility of your content.

### **Off-Page SEO Techniques**

Off-page SEO refers to activities that take place outside of your website but still contribute to its overall visibility and authority. The most important off-page SEO technique is building quality backlinks.

Backlinks are links from external websites that point to your website. Search engines consider backlinks as "votes of confidence" for your



Image: Pexels

website, indicating that other websites find your content valuable and trustworthy. However, not all backlinks are created equal.

Focus on building high-quality backlinks from reputable and relevant websites. This can be done through techniques such as guest blogging, influencer outreach, and content promotion. Additionally, ensure that your website is listed in online directories and social media profiles to increase its visibility and attract more backlinks.

### **Building Quality Backlinks**

Building quality backlinks is an essential aspect of off-page SEO. To build high-quality backlinks, start by identifying authoritative websites in your industry. Look for websites that have a strong online presence, high domain authority, and a significant number of backlinks.

Once you have identified these websites, reach

out to them with personalized and compelling outreach emails. Offer to contribute guest posts or collaborate on content that adds value to their audience. By providing high-quality content and building relationships with other website owners, you can increase your chances of earning valuable backlinks.

Remember, building quality backlinks takes time and effort. Focus on creating valuable content, building relationships, and consistently promoting your website to attract natural backlinks.

### **Measuring and Tracking SEO Success**

To measure the success of your SEO efforts, it's important to track key metrics and analyze data. There are several tools available that can help you monitor your website's performance, keyword rankings, organic traffic, and more. Google Analytics is a free tool that provides valuable insights into your website's performance. It allows you to track metrics such as the number of visitors, bounce rate, average session duration, and conversion rates. By analyzing this data, you can identify areas of improvement and make data-driven decisions. Additionally, there are several paid SEO tools available that provide more advanced analytics and insights. Tools like SEMrush, Ahrefs, and Moz can help you track keyword rankings, analyze backlink profiles, and conduct competitor research.

Regularly monitor your website's performance and make adjustments to your SEO strategy as needed. SEO is an ongoing process, and it's important to stay up-to-date with the latest trends and algorithm changes.

#### **Resources and Courses for Learning SEO**

There are numerous resources and courses available that can help you learn SEO and master the art of optimization. Whether you prefer self-paced online courses, in-person workshops, or reading industry-leading blogs, there is a wealth of knowledge at your fingertips.

Some popular online platforms for learning SEO include Udemy, Coursera, and Moz Academy.

These platforms offer courses taught by industry experts and cover a wide range of SEO topics, from beginner to advanced.

Additionally, there are several influential SEO blogs and websites that regularly publish informative and up-to-date content. Some notable examples include Moz, Search Engine Journal, and Backlinko. These resources provide valuable insights, case studies, and best practices that can help you stay ahead in the ever-changing world of SEO.

Don't wait any longer to take control of your online presence. Start learning SEO today and become the master of your digital domain. With dedication, persistence, and the right knowledge, you can optimize your website, attract more organic traffic, and achieve online success.



*Image: Pexels*

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## Six Sigma Black Belt - What is It?

By LARRY C. PICKETT

What exactly is a Six Sigma Black Belt? That's a question you might be asking yourself. Quite frankly, the answer is simple: "Six Sigma is a process that's focused on cost savings. It helps you identify customer critical problems that can affect the outcome of your business."

More specifically, it reduces defects or errors that are critical to your customer. There are many different variables that can impact the "Cost of Poor Quality" (COPQ). This is another name (in six sigma language) that we give to chronic waste. COPQ is very important because it ultimately distracts you from effectively serving your customers. Often, it affects your company's performance, overall customer service, revenues, products, and bottom-line results.

In a nutshell, Six Sigma can make a big difference in your organization. Several black belts are using their skills to save our company money. My project team applied six sigma principles to business travel processes. As a result, we came up with several recommendations for improvements and cost savings.

Our team's research helped identify ways to reduce expenses and lost time associated with

business travel. More importantly, the feedback from the project was included as part of our company's "Strategy for Cost Containment."

Six Sigma is a smarter way to manage a business or a department. It puts the customer first by using facts and data to drive better solutions. As a rule, Six Sigma targets three main areas: Improving customer satisfaction, decreasing the time it takes to do a job, and reducing product defects.

Six Sigma is a methodology that uses data and statistical analysis to measure and improve performance. It can be traced all the back to Carl Gauss who introduced the "Normal Distribution Curve" (also known as the bell curve). There are several ways six sigma can be used: Quality control, competitive advantage, return-on-investment (ROI), process improvement, customer satisfaction and long-term sustainability.

Okay—so what's a Black Belt? A black belt is the highest level of training received in the six sigma program. This level is only out ranked by a master black belt (the instructor) who usually conducts the certification process. You might recall the old movie "Karate Kid" where the master instructs the learner using a specific process. Basically, the master teaches the learner how to concentrate on components of the process. In six sigma, that process is known as the DMAIC process. The acronym (DMAIC) stands for Define, Measure,

## Analyze, Improve and Control.

In essence, a certified black belt will always approach an existing problem with the DMAIC process in mind. To better understand chronic waste and cost containment, there are several questions that every black belt will ask:

- What are the critical elements of your business or industry?
- Do you know what is important to your customer?
- Which inputs (Xs) are impacting your product?
- How do the inputs drive output (Y) cost?
- Do you know the root causes?

The role of the black belt is to develop, coach and lead six sigma project teams. They also mentor and advise project champions and management regarding plans, methods, and lean tools.

A certified black belt must successfully conduct an oral defense presenting evidence of a company project that shows a cost savings of at least \$250,000. The oral defense is usually a 2-hour presentation where a black belt explains the details of the project.

A master black belt listens, asks questions and approves the process based on the evidence of the presentation. Afterwards, a review board receives the presentation and determines if he or she is approved as a certified black belt.

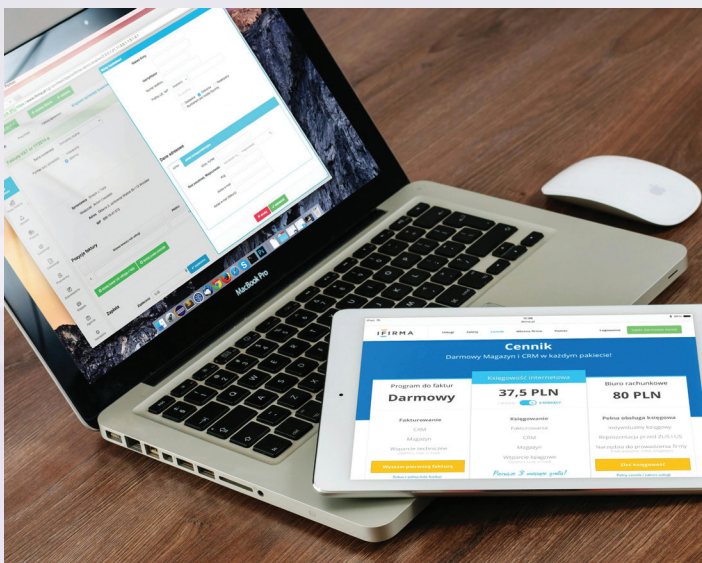


Image: Pexels

Like almost everything else in business, the success of six sigma depends on the people who do the work. Team commitment is essential, and the support of a champion is critical. Developing six sigma skills is a great learning experience.

Here are a few lessons I learned:

1. Six Sigma is a process, and it may mean extra work (at first). However, the benefits are tremendous.
2. Six Sigma is a quantifiable method, and its process is quite convincing. Moreover, it can help improve your operations and enhance company performance.
3. It will also increase the skills of your employees. After all, they are the greatest return-on-investment (ROI) you will ever have. Invest in your people and encourage them to learn new skills.

In closing, Six Sigma is more than a process—it's an investment. It's another way to empower the workforce. There are two words that can explain Six Sigma, and those two words are "Continuous Improvement." Remember, when it comes to making an existing process better—every hand counts!

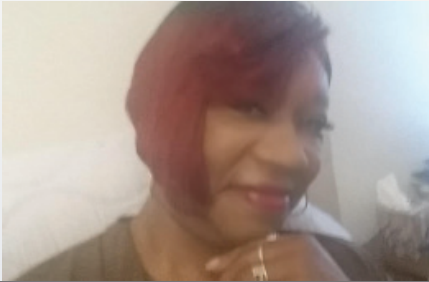
## DID YOU KNOW?!

CBCC offers committees and special interest groups for members to get involved with, including:

- **Business Policy Cabinet with Senator James Coleman**
- **Public Policy Committee**
- **Membership Committee**
- **Gala Committee**
  
- **Black Construction Group**
- **Black Retailers Group**
- **Black Professional Services Group**

Join us today! For more information, please contact Dr. Angelic Cole at [dr.angelic.cole@cbcc.biz](mailto:dr.angelic.cole@cbcc.biz).

# Black Business ON THE MOVE



**Dr. Yolanda Taylor, CEO and Founder.**  
3 time Cancer survivor, Mother of 9 children & 15 grandchildren. Passionate about her company with a powerful meaning behind it.

## Executive Divas Cleaning LLC: Empowering Cancer Patients Through Cleanliness

By DR. YOLANDA TAYLOR

**Company Overview:** [Executive Divas Cleaning LLC](#) is a premier cleaning service company dedicated to providing top-notch cleaning solutions. The company is renowned for its commitment to excellence and its mission-driven approach to business.

**Special Initiative:** In a bid to support the community, Executive Divas Cleaning LLC has launched a special initiative aimed at empowering cancer patients through cleanliness.

**The Initiative: Empowering Cancer Patients**  
**Objective:** The primary objective of this initiative is to alleviate the burden of maintaining a clean and healthy living environment for cancer patients, allowing them to focus on their treatment and recovery.

### Services Offered:

- **Free Cleaning Services:** Providing complimentary cleaning services to cancer patients, ensuring their homes are sanitized and safe.
- **Customized Cleaning Plans:** Tailoring cleaning plans to meet the specific needs of each patient, taking into consideration their



- medical condition and personal preferences.
- **Use of Safe Cleaning Products:** Utilizing non-toxic, eco-friendly cleaning products to ensure the safety and well-being of patients, particularly those with compromised immune systems.

### Impact on Cancer Patients:

- **Physical Well-being:** A clean environment helps in reducing the risk of infections and complications, which is crucial for cancer patients undergoing treatment.
- **Emotional Support:** A tidy and organized living space can significantly improve the mental and emotional state of patients, providing them with a sense of normalcy and comfort.
- **Focus on Recovery:** By taking over the responsibility of cleaning, Executive Divas Cleaning LLC allows patients and their families to concentrate on healing and spending quality time together.

Inviting the community to support Executive Divas Cleaning LLC in their mission to empower cancer patients through cleanliness, whether by volunteering, donating, or spreading the word. Visit: <https://www.executive-divas-clea.com/> or call 970-230-0428 for more information.

By providing essential cleaning services to those battling cancer, Executive Divas Cleaning LLC is not only enhancing their quality of life but also fostering a compassionate and supportive community.



**THG Denver launch reception.**  
(Photo: The Hunter Group)

**THG DENVER LAUNCH RECEPTION** -- The Hunter Group (THG) held its “launch reception” to help kickoff the opening of the new Denver Office. Pictured from left: Georg Hill (Former Denver Mayor’s Office), Colorado State Senator Rhonda Fields, Emily Burr (Kleinfelder-Denver Office), Lisa Millet (Kleinfelder-Denver Office), Kimberly Tyler James, (Colorado Springs) and Dale Hunter (Founder). THG is a government relations consulting firm that specializes in water and energy issues. See more via link at <https://thg.consulting>



**Welcome toast.**  
(Photo: The Hunter Group)

**WELCOME TOAST** -- Roger Cobb (CBCC Member), join other guests for a welcome toast at the Denver Launch Reception for The Hunter Group (THG). THG recently opened a new Denver Office. Pictured from left: Rosina Hunter (Denver), Jean Tyler (Colorado Springs) and Roger Cobb (Economic Development City and County of Denver)



**CBCC support.**  
(Photo: The Hunter Group)

**CBCC SUPPORT** -- Dr. Angelic Cole (President/CEO Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce) and other CBCC Members gave a special salute to Dale Hunter at the rooftop reception for the Denver Launch of The Hunter Group.

## Share Your Story with Us!

Are you a Black business owner in Colorado making an impact? We’re seeking submissions for our “Black Businesses on the Move” section! In 500-1,000 words, tell us what sets your business apart, your contributions to the community, and any challenges you’ve overcome. Please include relevant photos and/or bios to accompany your story.

Send your submissions to:  
[TheAcumen@cbcc.biz](mailto:TheAcumen@cbcc.biz).

**Let’s celebrate your achievements and inspire our community together!**

# Editorial and Deadline Calendar

| <b>Featured Topic</b>                   | <b>Space Reservations</b> | <b>Materials Due</b> |
|---|---------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>August 2024</b>                      |                           |                      |
| National Black Business Month           | Tuesday, July 16          | Friday, July 19      |
| <b>September 2024</b>                   |                           |                      |
| 911 Memorial                            | Tuesday, August 13        | Friday, August 16    |
| <b>October 2024</b>                     |                           |                      |
| Health                                  | Tuesday, September 17     | Friday, September 20 |
| <b>November 2024</b>                    |                           |                      |
| Youth Entrepreneurs                     | Tuesday, October 15       | Friday, October 18   |
| <b>December 2024</b>                    |                           |                      |
| National Write a Business Plan Month    | Tuesday, November 12      | Friday, November 15  |
| <b>January 2025</b>                     |                           |                      |
| A Salute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. | Tuesday December 10       | Friday, December 13  |
| <b>February 2025</b>                    |                           |                      |
| Black History Month                     | Tuesday, January 14       | Friday, January 17   |
| <b>March 2025</b>                       |                           |                      |
| International Women's Day               | Tuesday, February 11      | Friday, February 14  |
| <b>April 2025</b>                       |                           |                      |
| Black Women's Month                     | Tuesday, March 18         | Friday, March 21     |
| <b>May 2025</b>                         |                           |                      |
| National Small Business Month           | Tuesday, April 15         | Friday, April 18     |
| <b>June 2025</b>                        |                           |                      |
| Juneteenth                              | Tuesday, May 13           | Friday, May 16       |
| <b>July 2025</b>                        |                           |                      |
| International Day of Cooperatives       | Tuesday, June 17          | Friday, June 20      |

# Advertisements

Boost your business's visibility by advertising with the Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce in **The Acumen**. Connect with a wide, engaged audience that supports local enterprises and gain unparalleled exposure within the community. Don't miss this opportunity - contact us today to place your ad and expand your reach!

## Advertising Rates

Listed in cost per ad placement.

|                       | <b>1X</b> | <b>3X</b> | <b>6X</b> | <b>9X</b> | <b>12X</b> |
|-----------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| <b>Full Page</b>      | \$1000.00 | \$900.00  | \$800.00  | \$700.00  | \$600.00   |
| <b>Junior Page</b>    | \$750.00  | \$675.00  | \$600.00  | \$525.00  | \$450.00   |
| <b>Half Page</b>      | \$500.00  | \$450.00  | \$400.00  | \$350.00  | \$300.00   |
| <b>Quarter Page</b>   | \$250.00  | \$225.00  | \$200.00  | \$175.00  | \$150.00   |
| <b>Eighth Page</b>    | \$125.00  | \$112.50  | \$100.00  | \$87.50   | \$75.00    |
| <b>Sixteenth Page</b> | \$62.50   | \$56.25   | \$50.00   | \$43.75   | \$37.50    |

## Advertisement Sizes

|   | <b>Without Bleed (inches)</b> | <b>With Bleed (inches)</b> |
|---|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Full Page</b>                                | 8.500 w x 11.000 h            | 8.750 w x 11.250 h         |
| <b>Junior Page</b>                              | 5.000 w x 7.750 h             | 5.250 w x 8.000 h          |
| <b>Half Page - Horizontal</b>                   | 7.500 w x 4.875 h             | 7.750 w x 5.125 h          |
| <b>Half Page - Vertical</b>                     | 3.625 w x 10.000 h            | 3.875 w x 10.250 h         |
| <b>Quarter Page - Horizontal</b>                | 4.875 w x 3.625 h             | 5.125 w x 3.875 h          |
| <b>Quarter Page - Vertical</b>                  | 3.625 w x 4.875 h             | 3.875 w x 5.125 h          |
| <b>Eighth Page (business card) - Horizontal</b> | 3.500 w x 2.000 h             | 3.750 w x 2.250 h          |
| <b>Eighth Page (business card) - Vertical</b>   | 2.000 w x 3.500 h             | 2.250 w x 3.750 h          |
| <b>Sixteenth Page</b>                           | 1.750 w x 2.375 h             | 2.000 w x 2.625 h          |

**To purchase advertising space, or to request more information, please contact [TheAcumen@cbcc.biz](mailto:TheAcumen@cbcc.biz).**



## ATTENTION ALL CBCC MEMBERS!

Want to share your story with fellow members?  
Submit an article about your business or industry to be included in **THE ACUMEN**, a Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce monthly publication.

## Are you a member of the Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce?

The CBCC is a thriving business community that is driving success for Black-owned business. We create programs and services for business assistance and support; we connect Black-owned businesses with each other for networking and visibility; and we collaborate with corporate partners and other organizations to support the community as a whole. The Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce is the voice of Black business owners and an advocate for resources and policies that impact us.

Our membership offers unparalleled networking opportunities, exclusive access to business resources, and strong advocacy for your business interests. Elevate your business with our educational workshops and events that keep you at the forefront of industry trends. Connect, grow, and succeed with a community that champions your success. Take the first step towards unlocking your business's full potential.

**Join today and be part of a network that drives growth and innovation!**

**[Explore Member Benefits](#)**

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