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### STAFF AT AHDC

Clevon Young  
Executive Director  
Administrative Office

Linda Scott  
Operations Officer  
Administrative Office

Tera Gardner  
Comptroller  
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Kimberly Marshall  
Business Engagement Specialist



Edna Ramirez  
Business Engagement Specialist

Arkansas Human Development Corporation Business Engagement Specialist Kimberly Marshall is a businesswoman in her own right as founder and co-owner of KMPR Consulting Group, Little Rock.

Edna Ramirez served AHDC as a contract Health Promoter for two years before joining the staff as Business Engagement Specialist. AHDC hopes that her fluency in Spanish and English will be especially welcoming to the Latino community.

Contact them for more information on no-cost technical assistance or referrals to business resources. Ms. Marshall can be reached at [kmarshall@arhdc.org](mailto:kmarshall@arhdc.org) or Ms. Ramirez at [eramirez@arhdc.org](mailto:eramirez@arhdc.org), or just call (800)482-7641.



# AHDC

EAST ARKANSAS SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE



Arkansas Human Development Corporation is proud to be part of the Arkansas Small Business Navigator program alongside its long time partner Arkansas Small Business and Technology Development Center (ASBTDC).

Mr. Clevon Young,  
Executive Director of AHDC

### Keynote speaker- Matuschka Lindo Briggs

Senior Vice President & Regional Executive of the Little Rock Branch of the National Reserve Bank of St. Louis

Mrs. Matuschka Briggs Lido, Senior Vice President & Regional Executive of the Little Rock Branch of the National Reserve Bank of St. Louis, shared her inspiring career journey as the keynote speaker at the 2023 Rural Business Development Conference in West Memphis on February 25th.



Mrs. Briggs highlighted that the Federal Reserve is a multifaceted network including the Board of Governors, twelve independent reserve banks, and the Federal Open Market Committee. This structure promotes diverse insights and perspectives.

She emphasized the Fed's data analysis through community engagement, industry councils, and research. Such insights crucially shape decisions, offering understanding of challenges faced by small businesses and communities.



Discussing the economic landscape, she addressed inflation management, economic stability, and global uncertainties impacting the US. Mrs. Briggs stressed Chair Jerome Powell's quote, "Without price stability, the economy does not work for anyone," reflecting the Fed's commitment.

Her diverse career spans journalism, political and healthcare reporting, and proponent roles in the Federal Reserve. Her experiences highlight real-time data's importance, collaboration, and stability in shaping economic policy. Beginning with work on the MyRA retirement initiative, she moved into public affairs and community development roles. As a regional executive, Mrs. Briggs now oversees the Federal Reserve activities in Arkansas and she tirelessly represents Arkansas' interest in the wider economic panorama.

Mrs. Matuschka Lindo Briggs:  
[matuschka.l.briggs@stls.frb.org](mailto:matuschka.l.briggs@stls.frb.org) (314)296-7526

### HOW TO FINANCE YOUR BUSINESS

Facilitator: Claudia Wilson - Outreach and Marketing Specialist  
Arkansas District Office U.S. Small Business Administration



After the opening remarks by Mr. Clevon Young, Executive Director of Arkansas Human Development Corporation, and an invocation by Mr. Darrell Anthony, Owner/Principal Broker at DCA Realty & Youth Pastor at Old St. Paul Baptist Church, the Rural Business Development Conference of 2023 commenced.



To kick off the conference, Mrs. Claudia Wilson, Outreach and Marketing Specialist of the Arkansas District Office at the U.S. Small Business Administration, led a panel discussion on "How to Finance Your Business." Mr. Monty Hodges, Senior Lending Officer at Southern Bancorp, initiated the panel by explaining how Southern Bancorp is a commercial and consumer lending

company with over 30 years of experience in the banking industry. He highlighted how small businesses serve as the "backbone of rural America" and pointed out that inadequate capital sometimes leads to their failure.

Southern Bancorp acts as a comprehensive solution, guiding small business owners from point A to point B in terms of financing. This assistance extends not only to those with good credit but also encompasses resources to aid individuals with marginal credit in building their credit through the Credit Builder Program offered by Southern Bancorp. Mr. Hodges emphasized the role of the Small Business Administration (SBA) as an invaluable resource that aids potential small business owners in structuring their vision more practically before seeking financing from the bank.

Mr. Monte Hodges:  
[monte.hodges@banksouthern.com](mailto:monte.hodges@banksouthern.com) - (870)246-5828

## EAST ARKANSAS PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

Mr. Jarrett Free, another panelist, is the Financial Services Director of the East Arkansas Planning & Development District (EAPDD). EAPDD is a non-profit regional planning and development organization consisting of the following divisions:

- **Economic Development Division:** Helps with grant writing, project management, data analysis, and planning for things like hazard mitigation.
- **The Financial Services Division:** Aids businesses unable to secure financing through traditional means in obtaining funding.
- **The Environmental Services Division:** Houses the East Arkansas Regional Solid Waste Management District, responsible for waste collection and disposal.

The EAPDD serves 12 counties with 116 communities. Through their revolving loan funds, they offer abundant opportunities for small businesses. These funds cover expenses such as land acquisition, associated costs of land purchase and operation (including machinery/equipment), working and startup capital, and investment in existing businesses, among others. Loan amounts can range from \$10K to a maximum of \$500K for any business or organization. The standard interest rate, varying between 2-6% above the prime interest rate, is influenced by factors such as job/cost ratio, collateral, credit, and alignment with the area's goals.

Mr. Jarrett Free:  
jfree@eapdd.com - (662)719-3633

## BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS & TRAINING

The insights shared by Mr. Jack Poff Jr. Director of the Arkansas Small Business and Technology Development Center (ASBTDC) shed light on the significance of strategic social media marketing and provide actionable guidance for businesses aiming to enhance their online presence and engage effectively with their audience.

Mr. Poff focused on:

- **Exploring Different Channels:** Understanding the various social media channels available and their unique advantages.
- **Where to Start:** Guidelines on how businesses can embark on their social media journey effectively.
- **Best Practices:** Insights into proven strategies that yield positive outcomes in the realm of social media marketing.
- **How Brands Work Online:** A deeper dive into the mechanics of how brands establish and thrive in the online landscape.

Mr. Poff emphasized the services provided by ASBTDC which include a wide range of training through seminars, workshops, and practical information on various business topics. It also offers one-on-one consultations for personalized business planning, financial analysis, marketing strategies, growth, and management. Additionally, ASBTDC aids in research needs by offering industry reports, business listings, financial analysis, consumer spending data, and demographic insights.

Mr. Jack Poff Jr.:  
jlpoff@asumidsouth.edu - (870)733-6805

## FORGE PROVIDES ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE CAPITAL FOR BUSINESS

During the panel discussion, Mrs. Latanyua Robinson, East Arkansas Regional Director of FORGE Community Loan Fund, shared valuable insights about FORGE's impactful support for small businesses and nonprofits. She highlighted the challenges these entities often encounter when seeking loans from traditional sources, emphasizing FORGE's pivotal role in fostering their success. FORGE's mission transcends words; it's a dynamic force. Ms. Robinson explained how FORGE links investors with entrepreneurs, bridging urban-rural gaps and ensuring equitable credit access for low-income groups. It serves as a lifeline, providing small businesses with affordable capital and comprehensive development services. This aid extends beyond finances, encompassing startup funds, equipment, working capital, operations, improvements, and real estate ventures. The motto "Good Loans to Good People" underscores their commitment to uplifting businesses that enrich their communities.

Mrs. Robinson also spoke about Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) and how they are mission-driven institutions dedicated to providing financial services to meet the needs of economically disadvantaged individuals within underserved communities. Additionally, Ms. Robinson outlined various lending options for small businesses, including the KIVA NWA Hub, which lends up to \$15,000; FORGE, a microlender that can provide loans of up to \$50,000; and traditional banks, which typically offer loans of up to \$200,000.

Finally, she advised that it is crucial to have a business plan to "convince yourself and others that your business will succeed." This means making a budget, setting goals, estimating sales, figuring out expenses, and keeping track of your cash flow.

Mrs. Latanyua Robinson:  
latanyua@orgefund.org - (901)617-3020

## INNOVATIVE METHODS TO RECRUIT QUALITY STAFF



In the ever-evolving realm of workforce dynamics, the quest for exceptional talent has become both a challenge and an opportunity for organizations seeking sustained growth and innovation.

In this captivating presentation, Mrs. Neki Catron, the Manager of Community Relations at Southland Casino Hotel Delaware North Companies, Inc., shared a wealth of insights on elevating employee engagement through innovative talent recruitment methods. When employees are

genuinely engaged, they are emotionally committed to their work and the company's mission.

Therefore, with the goal of attracting and retaining top-tier talent who can evolve into deeply engaged employees, Mrs. Catron presented range of visionary approaches aimed at transforming traditional recruitment models:

- **Better Recruitment Methods:** Using fresh approaches to find diverse candidates for better hires.
- **Creative Interviews:** Introducing ways to assess skills and adaptability, like understanding behavior and situations.
- **Strong Company Brand:** Stressing how a good reputation and recognition attract employees.
- **Community Impact:** Noting how connecting with the community appeals to the modern workforce.

To conclude, she emphasized boosting engagement should be an ongoing practice within your organization that should start with the recruitment process because when employees are engaged, everyone wins: employees, employers, and customers.



## INVESTING IN RURAL PROSPERITY



Mrs. Sam Evans, the Community Development Advisor at the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis made a notable contribution to the conference discussions as well. Her insightful talks revolved around crucial themes such as "Investing in Rural

Prosperity," Fed Small Business includes small business research and analysis by the Federal Reserve Bank System.

The Small Business Credit Survey (SBCS), a collaborative effort among the 12 Reserve Banks' Community Development teams. The purpose of SBCS is to gather comprehensive and reliable data on the experiences and credit needs of small businesses in the United States. The survey aims to provide insights into various aspects of small businesses, their financial challenges, access to credit, and overall economic conditions. This information is valuable for policymakers, researchers, financial institutions, and other stakeholders to better understand the dynamics of the small business sector and make informed decisions to support its growth and sustainability. The 2021 questionnaire also included questions about the ongoing impact of the pandemic, operational challenges, and use of government-provided financial assistance.

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