



# CAAO Grapevine

## Consortium of African American Organizations

Connie Atkins - Executive Director

JULY, 2002

### Letter from the Executive Director of CAAO

Recently, I had the honor of being a panelist at the PowerNetworking Training Conference sponsored by FraserNet and Ford Motor Corporation. My focus during our session was the importance of building relationships. I would now like to challenge all readers to take this to the next level – building positive collaborations.

Collaborations help us to build capacity, share resources, share knowledge, share best practices, etc.

So, how can you be a part of a positive collaborative process? You can join a CAAO member organization, serve on a committee, participate in an empowerment circle, joint venture with others, join an investment club or pass your knowledge and resources on to others.

Thanks and happy sharing !!

Connie Atkins  
Executive Director  
Consortium of African American Organizations



### Urban Financial Services Coalition Hosts Regional Conference in Cleveland

The theme for the conference is “**Economic Empowerment: Where Do We Go From Here?**” The theme centers around the financial industry and the exclusion of minorities from advancement beyond certain thresholds in banking. Our intent is to train members in the central region and to enhance their skills, qualifications, and credentials. One seminar will cover what it takes to get the big jobs, so we can stop hearing statements such as, “no minorities applied for this position”.

Cleveland’s 55th Mayor, Jane L. Campbell, will be the keynote speaker for the 2002, central region conference luncheon. This luncheon will take place October 25, 2002 at 12:00 p.m. at the Marriott at Key Center. The two day conference will be packed full of excellent workshops that will be facilitated by some of Cleveland’s greatest speakers.

Thursday night October 24, 2002, we will host a reception at The Club at Key Center, sponsored by National City Bank. The Federal Reserve Bank will host a Friday night reception. KeyBank is the major sponsor for the conference. On Saturday morning October 26, 2002, KeyBank will sponsor our President’s breakfast, along with a Town Hall Meeting with Congresswoman Stephanie Tubbs-Jones. Another part of the conference includes the Oratorical Contest, featuring talent from the central region chapters. This dynamic event will include FOX 8 TV celebrity Wayne Dawson.

Other speakers includes: Ron Jones, Key Next Inc; Margot Copeland, Key Bank; Patrick Prout; Fred Cummings, McDonalds Investments; and fitness trainer Carl K. Harmon, Fit For Life. UFSC invites all CAAO members to come participate in this event. For more information please call Janice Magee at (216) 689-1669.

## Current Member Organizations



1. African American Faculty and Staff of CWRU
2. Black Data Processing Associates
3. Black Professionals Association
4. Blacks in Government
5. Blacks in Management
6. CSU Black Alumni Organization
7. Cleveland Women's Council of National Association of Real Estate Brokers
8. Forest City Dental Society
9. National Alliance of Market Developers
10. National Assoc. of Black Accountants
11. National Black MBA Association
12. National Society of Black Engineers
13. National Technical Association
14. President's Council
15. Urban Financial Services Coalition

**Our Strategic Partner,**  
Enterprise Development, Inc.

**Founding Supporting Member**  
Northeastern Regional Sewer District

**Collaborative Member**  
Northern Ohio Minority Business Council

**Our Funders**  
Cleveland Foundation  
The George Gund Foundation

## MISSION STATEMENT

To utilize the resources of greater Cleveland African American professional organizations to promote economic development in African American communities and to enhance career and entrepreneurial opportunities for African Americans.

## CAAO Volunteers

By William Holdipp

I wanted to take time to acknowledge all the volunteers who have assisted in the growth of the CAAO programs. Your assistance has been greatly appreciated. Some of these volunteers include:

- Quelina Jordan – facilitator for the CAAO Entrepreneurial Empowerment Circle
- Art Beasley – volunteering assistance to CAAO member organizations
- Renae Bolton – volunteering assistance to CAAO member organizations
- Betty Lyons – bakes goodies for CAAO meetings. Yummy!
- Chris Starr – developing a report to assist CAAO with fundraising strategies
- Elizabeth Pirnat – assisting CAAO with website development and with planning of the CAAO Holiday Party
- James W. Wade III – design and layout of CAAO newsletter
- Patrice Kelly – assisted in writing articles for CAAO newsletter
- Marcia Pledger – assisted in writing articles for CAAO newsletter

If you are interested in becoming a CAAO volunteer please send me an email at [caao\\_cleveland@yahoo.com](mailto:caao_cleveland@yahoo.com)

## “CAAO Entrepreneur of the Month”

CompuLogic, The Logical Approach To Advancing In The Technology Age.

By Gwen Davis



CompuLogic, Inc. provides the technology needs of individuals and businesses in the Greater Cleveland area. Tyjuan (Hank) and Gwen Davis started CompuLogic in order to provide PC and technology support to family and friends who were trying to make sense of PC purchases and the use of computers in their homes and businesses.

The affordable computer products and services offered at CompuLogic allow individuals to access quality PCs and support. Most of our customers are looking for a way to incorporate technology into their lives and budgets, without the need for a degree in Computer Information Systems. We pride ourselves in understanding what the customer is looking for and our ability to provide them a logical approach to accomplish their task.

Most people know what they need in terms of accessing the Internet, developing documents, and working with new equipment or gadgets, but they don't want to talk megahertz, gigabytes or RAM. We like being able

to translate the needs of our customers into a usable product while providing them with the information that they need in order to make a smart purchase. For example, if you are looking for an affordable PC to use with your new digital camera, we are going to let you know about the requirements of the PC that you need. We are not going to sell you a PC with a hard drive that won't handle the size of the documents/pictures that you will be creating, and we are not going to steer you towards the purchase of equipment with features and processing that you won't need. It's rewarding to see people really understand and appreciate their purchases.

The Davis team has over 15 years of computer experience and pride themselves on providing affordable computer services to their customers. In recent years, the day-to-day tasks of running a business have filled each day (and night) with new challenges. The major goal for 2002 was to find and explore new networking opportunities. CompuLogic is a member of the Black Data Processing Association (BDPA), CSU Alumni, and the National Association of Female Executives (NAFE) as well as the CAAO Entrepreneur Empowerment Circle (EEC). CompuLogic was added to the [CAAO e-mail list](#) and took advantage of an invite to an Ohio Venture Association luncheon where we learned of the CAAO EEC. The EEC has definitely shown us the power of networking. We have benefited from listening to the challenges and successes of other business owners while sharing the same. The CAAO EEC has provided CompuLogic with many new customers, in addition to providing access to other qualified black-owned businesses to use as suppliers and vendors. CAAO staff also consults and provides advice on small business management, procurement, and finance.

Networking has provided many tangible benefits to CompuLogic, and we now feel that we are working smarter as a result of the many things that we have learned. CompuLogic is located at 22054 Lakeshore Blvd., Euclid, OH 44123. Store hours: Monday – Friday 12pm – 6pm. Please visit our web site at <http://www.compuLogicinc.com> As a thank you to CAAO, CompuLogic is pleased to announce that it is offering free telephone support and consultations until August 15, 2002. So if you are interested, please contact us at 216-738-9760 and mention the promotional code 022.

# INNOVEST 2002

By William Holdipp

CAAO had the opportunity to attend the annual Innovest Conference in Akron, Ohio on May 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>. Innovest is Ohio's premier venture capital event, bringing together companies seeking funding and investors. This event is put on annually by Enterprise Development, Inc. This event included 30 companies who were given the opportunity to showcase their businesses in a 10-minute presentation. The type of companies varied. Some of the companies that caught my eye were:

- JumpHome, Inc: A home connection service that allows people moving to a new residence to activate utilities and other services (such as electricity, newspaper, and insurance) with one phone call, saving time and reducing transaction costs.
- Swapalease, Inc.: Matches buyers and sellers of in-process leases via the internet, enabling the person with the lease to get out of it without penalties and the person wanting the lease to take it over without a down payment.
- Viztec Inc.: Flexible plastic liquid crystal displays (LCDs) that will replace glass LCDs (a \$22 billion market) with virtually unbreakable lightweight displays that cost significantly less to manufacture.

Most of the companies who presented were looking for funding in the range of \$1 – 3 million. Connie Atkins, the executive director of CAAO took full advantage of the opportunity to attend Innovest. Some of her accomplishments include:

- Speaking with the first day keynote speaker, A. Malachi (Mal) Mixon, III, Chairman and CEO of Invacare Corporation. Mr. Mixon is a seasoned entrepreneur and an investor. Mr. Mixon expressed an interest in making himself available to speak to CAAO entrepreneurs.
- Speaking with Innovest presenter EmployOn. William T. Ross, Vice President of Professional Services and Strategy, expressed an interest in giving CAAO some advice that will make CAAO's job page on the website more effective.
- Speaking with SkyLan, a company that provides wireless broadband, about hiring African Americans during their expansion phase. Recently SkyLan hired its first African American employee who is a CAAO member.
- Talked with employees of Battelle (one of the sponsors of Innovest 2002), matching invited CAAO members who can take advantage of Battelle's programs.
- Was approached by a venture capitalist that noticed Connie while she was trying to find opportunities for CAAO members. He was kind enough to give us 20 minutes of his time. He explained what types of investment possibilities interested his company. Connie told him about CAAO's mission. By the second day of the event, Connie was able to match the venture capitalist with a CAAO member who has a product he was interested in funding.
- Was approached by Mr. Berry of NASDAQ to discuss which presenters offered the best opportunities from Connie's perspective for the African American community.

Connie Atkins is truly the network queen. It was great to see her in action. Connie planted some seeds during this two-day event that we hope bears fruit for many members of CAAO.

I want to thank Charles Burkett and Elizabeth Pirnat of Enterprise Development Inc. for making it possible for CAAO staff and some of its members to be in attendance at Innovest 2002. If you are interested in attending Innovest 2003, please contact Charles Burkett at [cburkett@edinc.org](mailto:cburkett@edinc.org)



by Cheryl Liggins

The President's Council consists of 14 CEOs of some of Cleveland's largest African American-owned businesses. The President's Council supports economic and entrepreneurial development. The organization places a great deal of emphasis on African American inclusion in mainstream companies.

The May 28, 2002 issue of The Plain Dealer had an article entitled, *African American Firms in Ohio make leaders list*. The article mentioned that according to Black Enterprise Magazine's 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Report, 11 Ohio-based firms are among the nation's largest African American-owned businesses. The good news was that five of those firms were from the Cleveland area. In fact, two of those firms are President's Council member firms: SBK Brooks Investment Corporation and Industrial Inventory Solutions. The bad news is that there weren't more Cleveland companies on that list.

Statistically, African Americans start businesses at twice the rate of the nation as a whole; however, wealth creation is twice as unlikely for African American entrepreneurs.

The work of the President's Council extends beyond its 14 members. The President's Council Foundation was established in 2000, and it funds the programs of the President's Council. One of those programs is our Emerging Entrepreneurs Program. This program was created in response to the need to help established African American entrepreneurs move their businesses to the next level.

The Emerging Entrepreneurs Program consists of ten four-hour sessions held once a month at ShoreBank. Each session is designed to provide tools to help the entrepreneurs think more strategically. Our educational partner, Baldwin-Wallace College, has provided professors from their college of business to teach some of the sessions. We also use successful African American entrepreneurs to offer their insights about running effective businesses and the unique challenges that African American entrepreneurs face. CEOs of major Cleveland corporations and other experts in business planning and development have led workshops. For more information, contact Cheryl Liggins at 216-771-8702.

Here are some statements from a current student of the Emerging Entrepreneurs program.

Nicole Cumberlander of Noir Blanc Salon and Spa

The Emerging Entrepreneur's Program has been extremely helpful to my husband, Orlando, and me. We actually started out thinking about looking to open a school to enhance our existing business; and through the Emerging Entrepreneur's Program, we were able to put together a strategic plan to help us make better decisions as to how to open our new venture and whether or not it was a good idea. The information we got was invaluable, and it has helped our new and existing business ten times over through our leadership skills, our strategic planning skills, let alone the contacts we were able to make.

Overall, I really, really advise anybody who has the opportunity to go through the program. It is almost like a condensed MBA program to help your business get to the next level. It definitely has done that for us. We are so very blessed to be a part of it.

**This Newsletter Is  
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**CAAO**

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