

1,200 Attendees Gathered from Across the Nation for Empowerment Network's 17th Annual Rebuilding the Village Conference

OMAHA, NEBRASKA, USA, June 13, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On Friday, June 7, more than 1,200 attendees walked through the doors of the CHI Health Center Omaha & Hilton Omaha Downtown to listen to captivating speakers during the 17th Annual Rebuilding the Village Conference and Luncheon. Hosted by the [Empowerment Network](#), the event also featured the Revive Omaha Black Business Expo, as well as a powerful and energizing speech delivered by keynote speaker Eric Thomas, Ph.D., a New York Times best-selling author, educator and motivational guru.



The Revive Omaha Black Business Expo was designed to increase economic impact for local Black-owned businesses.

"Think big and take action! The Rebuilding the Village Conference was a tremendous success, bringing together local and national leaders, visionaries and community members who are committed to making a tangible difference," said Willie Barney, CEO and founder, Empowerment Network. "We were able to convene over 1,200 participants, including 600 youth from our Step-Up Omaha program. This conference is more than an event; it's a movement that empowers teamwork to revitalize our communities. Together, we are forging a path towards sustainable growth and collective prosperity."

The Rebuilding the Village Conference and Luncheon brought together community leaders, activists, entrepreneurs and stakeholders to address critical issues facing underserved communities. With a strong focus on professional and community development, this year's conference was centered around career advancement, DEI, entrepreneurship, leadership development and wealth building. Sessions were designed to enhance collaboration and strengthen the economic impact in Omaha and beyond.

As keynote speaker, Thomas talked about the importance of inclusive leadership strategies and purpose with emphasis on working collectively. "As a leader, you have to stop ambushing, as a leader, you have to stop doing the one-on-one, as the leader, you have to stop being in isolation," said Thomas. "You've got to understand why [purpose] is so significant; it's so significant because whoever you are, whatever assignment you're on, you have to fulfill that assignment. You are better when you move together."

Supported in part by the My Brother's Keeper Alliance, a program of The

Obama Foundation, the Empowerment Network is dedicated to building safe and thriving communities through economic, educational and social success. Programs like Omaha 360 and Step-Up Omaha exemplify these efforts. My Brother's Keeper Alliance promotes supportive communities for boys and young men of color, ensuring they feel valued and have clear pathways to opportunity.

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Willie Barney, CEO of the Empowerment Network

students with their gifts and strengths.

“There's always more work ahead, but we have seen a measurable impact through our collective work and collaboration with hundreds of organizations and the engagement of thousands,” said Barney. “Step-Up students are graduating from high school, going to college and entering the workforce. Graduates of Legacy Wealth are buying homes, launching and scaling businesses, saving and investing. Alumni of Redefine the Game are receiving promotions, advancing their careers and moving into leadership. We are launching the next round of these cohorts and two others focused on fund development and leadership.”



More than 1,200 attendees gathered to participate in the 17th Annual Rebuilding the Village Conference on June 7.

In the coming months, the Empowerment Network is working with partners to launch the next phase of transformation this summer - pathway to careers, wealth and ownership. Additional growth opportunities including:

- Connecting 200 more youth per year to the Step-Up youth employment and entrepreneurship programs, to grow to 1,000 students per summer within three years
- Expanding STEAM programming including drones, robotics, music production, entrepreneurship and culinary
- Launching Skill Up! and EmPower Up! for hundreds of North Omaha adult residents to increase wages by providing wrap around and certified educational services
- Investing in small businesses, entrepreneurship, tourism and job creation
- Expanding efforts to reduce gun violence by an additional 50 percent
- Assisting 250 organizations, small businesses, neighborhoods and churches with capacity-building

As an effort to invest back into Omaha's Black-owned businesses, the conference featured a variety of entrepreneurs during the Black Business Expo, in addition to three breakout sessions specifically for small business owners.

More than 20 panel discussions and interactive workshops led by industry experts and community leaders were also held.

"We greatly appreciate all the attendees, sponsors, speakers, volunteers and all engaged," said Barney. "We encourage you to support small businesses and stay engaged."

To stay connected with the Empowerment Network and learn about upcoming events, visit <https://empoweromaha.com/>. To see photos from this year's event, follow Empowerment Network on Facebook at [Facebook.com/EmpowermentNetwork](https://www.facebook.com/EmpowermentNetwork).

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About the Empowerment Network



Keynote speaker Eric Thomas, Ph.D., delivered a powerful and energizing speech about the importance of inclusive leadership strategies and working in your purpose during the 17th Annual Rebuilding the Village Conference on June 7, 2024.

The Empowerment Network is a nonprofit organization committed to advancing economic, social, and civic progress within Omaha's African American community, North Omaha and the region. Through collaborative efforts and innovative initiatives, the Empowerment Network strives to create opportunities for empowerment and transformation in every zip code and neighborhood in Omaha and beyond.

Vicki Quaites-Ferris

The Empowerment Network

+1 402-502-5153

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