

Influential Women Highlights Brenda Stevens, MA, CBA®: Empowering Local Entrepreneurs And Strengthening Ohio Business

CANTON, OH, UNITED STATES, August 28, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Bringing More Than Three Decades of Experience in Entrepreneurship, Higher Education, Workforce Development, and Business Consulting

Brenda D. Stevens, MA, CBA®, is a business development, workforce development, and community empowerment leader whose career has centered on creating opportunities for entrepreneurs, students, and communities. With more than three decades of experience spanning entrepreneurship, higher education, workforce development, and business consulting, Brenda has dedicated her professional life to helping individuals and organizations overcome barriers, access resources, and achieve meaningful growth.



Most recently, Brenda served as Regional Director of the Minority Business Assistance Center (MBAC) in Akron under the Ohio Department of Development from 2022 through January 1, 2026. In this role, she directed workforce and entrepreneurship initiatives across a nine-county region supporting minority-, women-, and veteran-owned businesses. She built strategic partnerships with educational institutions, workforce organizations, employers, chambers of commerce, and economic development agencies while leading a team of five professional advisors responsible for business coaching, training, and technical assistance.

During her tenure, Brenda designed and facilitated entrepreneurial learning programs and workshops focused on leadership development, procurement readiness, financial management, and business growth. She also managed organizational performance through measurable key

performance indicators, consistently exceeding State of Ohio contract goals. Her efforts helped businesses secure more than \$2.2 million in contract awards while supporting more than 80 businesses through state certification processes.

Brenda's approach to business development is grounded in firsthand entrepreneurial experience. She and her husband co-owned City Flooring and Design, a family business they built over more than 25 years before eventually selling the company. The experience gave Brenda an intimate understanding of the challenges involved in starting, operating, and sustaining a business. It also taught her the value of perseverance, resourcefulness, strong relationships, and knowing when to seek outside support.

Her entrepreneurial experience extended beyond operating the business itself. Brenda developed a hands-on workforce training initiative that introduced young people to flooring and cabinet installation while preparing individuals facing employment barriers, including those re-entering the workforce after incarceration, for careers in the skilled trades. The initiative reflected her broader commitment to connecting people with practical skills and meaningful employment opportunities.

Before entering the MBAC leadership role, Brenda spent nearly 26 years at Malone University, serving as Director of Multicultural Services from September 1996 through June 2022. There, she provided leadership in diversity and inclusion, student development, career readiness, and community engagement. She led faculty, staff, administrators, and students involved in strategic planning initiatives while developing partnerships with local businesses, community organizations, and workforce stakeholders.

At Malone University, Brenda also provided individual coaching, career guidance, and resource navigation to students during and after their college years. She developed professional development, leadership, and career-readiness programs designed to prepare students for successful transitions into the workforce. Her ability to connect education with real-world opportunities became a defining element of her leadership philosophy.

Earlier in her career, Brenda served as Program Director for The Education Enhancement Partnership in Canton, Ohio, where she administered several education and STEM initiatives, including the SAMM Van Project and after-school programming. She developed partnerships involving 16 school districts, employers, higher education institutions, and community organizations and directed a multidisciplinary team of educators and engineers. She also successfully administered grant-funded educational initiatives exceeding \$450,000.

Brenda's commitment to expanding access to educational and career opportunities also took shape through her work as Program Director of the Buffalo Area Engineering Awareness for Minorities (BEAM) Program at the University at Buffalo. The program was designed to increase participation in engineering among minorities and women. Brenda developed pre-college programming, strengthened industry relationships, supported fundraising efforts, and created

educational opportunities that introduced young students to STEM careers.

Across these roles, Brenda has consistently focused on building bridges among schools, businesses, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, employers, and communities. Her career reflects what she describes as a “kaleidoscope career,” with each experience providing a different perspective and contributing to the work she does today.

Following her years in higher education and entrepreneurship, Brenda expanded her work through business consulting and coaching. She has provided guidance to women, minorities, veterans, and other aspiring entrepreneurs, helping them understand certification processes, identify opportunities, access resources, strengthen operations, and develop strategies for sustainable growth. Her consulting approach emphasizes education and empowerment rather than simply helping someone launch a business.

Brenda believes entrepreneurs benefit greatly from looking beyond the resources and networks they already know. She encourages women business owners to seek mentors, explore different professional networks, learn from people within their industries, and build relationships with other entrepreneurs. She also challenges business owners to reconsider how they view competition, noting that competitors can become collaborators, sources of knowledge, and valuable professional allies.

One of the most important lessons Brenda has learned throughout her career is the importance of authenticity. Early in her professional journey, she experienced imposter syndrome and had to develop the confidence to use her voice in professional settings, including boardrooms and leadership spaces. Over time, she learned to speak her truth, take ownership of her accomplishments, and accept responsibility when circumstances do not unfold as planned.

That growth has shaped the advice she offers to other women. Brenda encourages women to recognize their achievements and give themselves credit for the value they bring. She also believes that understanding one’s identity and culture can be an important part of developing confidence and finding one’s voice.

Brenda’s commitment to service extends beyond her professional roles. She has participated in community and leadership organizations, including the United Way of Greater Stark County Education Council, Leadership Stark County, the Stark County Minority Business Association, and Heritage Christian School’s Board of Education. She has also held leadership roles within Delta Sigma Theta, Inc., including serving as vice president.

Her commitment to education and cultural understanding has also taken her abroad. Brenda has led student groups on educational and service experiences in Kenya, Mainland China, Hong Kong, South Africa, Botswana, and Zambia, providing students with opportunities to learn through international engagement.

Faith and family remain important foundations of Brenda's life and leadership. She credits her parents with teaching her the importance of diligence, perseverance, and always giving her best effort. Through personal challenges, changes, and difficult circumstances, Brenda has continued to draw strength from her faith and the support of her family.

Her faith also influences the way she works with others. Empathy, compassion, service, and a willingness to help others navigate difficult circumstances are central to her leadership philosophy. Brenda believes that success is not measured solely by whether every goal is achieved, but also by knowing that genuine effort was made and that one's work positively affected others.

As the business and workforce development landscape continues to evolve, Brenda recognizes that access to funding, contracting opportunities, certification assistance, and other resources can remain significant challenges for entrepreneurs. Rather than allowing uncertainty to discourage progress, she believes leaders must continue serving their communities, adapting to changing circumstances, and helping businesses identify new pathways forward.

Today, Brenda continues to build on more than three decades of experience in entrepreneurship, education, workforce development, and community leadership. Her career demonstrates the impact that can be created when professional expertise is combined with lived experience, perseverance, faith, and a commitment to service. Through her continued work, Brenda Stevens remains dedicated to helping entrepreneurs and emerging leaders build confidence, access opportunities, strengthen their organizations, and contribute to stronger communities.

Learn More about Brenda Stevens:

Through her Influential Women profile: <https://influentialwomen.com/connect/brenda-stevens>

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