



For Immediate Release

Kelsey Johnson of Los Angeles Named America’s Top Young Entrepreneur

Nearly 20,000 students across the U.S. compete in NFTE’s annual Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge series; prizes awarded in the final round of competition total \$40,000

NEW YORK, NY (October 15, 2018) — [NFTE \(Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship\)](#) today announced 18-year-old, Kelsey Johnson of Los Angeles, CA, won the top prize at the 13th annual NFTE National Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge, presented by Citi Foundation and Ernst & Young LLP (EY US), on October 11, 2018, in New York City. Nearly 20,000 students across the U.S. compete in NFTE's annual Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge. Johnson was one of 46 young entrepreneurs who qualified for nationals by prevailing in earlier rounds of regional competition. The national qualifiers battled it out in elimination rounds throughout the day and into the evening last Thursday, vying for their share of a total of \$40,000 in seed capital awarded to help NFTE’s top young alumni launch new businesses or pursue their educational goals.

Johnson, a graduate of Hamilton High School now attending Santa Monica College, was awarded the top prize of \$15,000 for her business, Kinky Kaps an innovative shower turban for people with long, heavy hair.

The idea was conceived based on Kelsey's own challenges of fitting her long braids into a traditional shower cap. One day, she decided to use a pair of leggings to protect her hair in the shower and realized she had stumbled upon a solution that might benefit a great many people.

“Braids are a trend in my community, so I know many people looking for something like my product,” said Johnson. Inspired by NFTE’s business course, Kelsey has rekindled confidence in herself and is moved by the community support she has discovered through

her business. “The most important thing I learned from NFTE is that there are people other than your friends and family that are willing to support you.”

Two runners-up were also named: James Murray, age 15 of Davie, FL, founder of Guardian Helper, a wristband that helps prevent wandering children stray from their parents, and Joseph Franco, age 18, of Hayward, CA, founder of F Connect, an app that brings a trusted network of support and tools to foster kids. Each runner-up received a \$5,000 prize.

Earlier in the day, top students from NFTE’s newest advanced course, Entrepreneurship 2 (or E2), participated in a separate competition track. The winning E2 business was Color HerStory, founded by 18-year-old Simone Hufana of San Leandro, CA. Hufana took home the top prize in the E2 competition: \$10,000 in seed capital to build her business, which is an educational, interactive coloring book focused entirely on influential women of color.

Two other businesses named runners-up in the E2 competition each received \$2,500 in startup capital: DesignAhhJeans, a service that customizes jeans based on clients' unique styles, and Pawfect Pets' Festival, an expo which allows pet owners to buy and sell pet products directly to their target demographic. The founders of DesignAhhJeans are Yetunde Arongudade, age 18, Antonio Finley, age 19, TyVon Jones, age 19, Diate Jackson, age 18, and Hasan Lipscomb, age 18, all of Chicago, IL. The founder of Pawfect Pets' Festival is Elizabeth Berenguer, age 15, of Hialeah, FL.

“We congratulate this year's winners and commend all the competitors. Participating in our national finals is an accomplishment whether or not you take home the top prize. It's a highly demanding, highly competitive day of back-to-back pitching. They're an extraordinary group of young people, who demonstrate the kind of creativity and initiative it takes to be a successful entrepreneur,” said Shawn Osborne, President and CEO of NFTE. “But those are qualities NFTE students and alumni are known for. Our programs help young people build business skills and develop their entrepreneurial mindset, so they can thrive –in business and in life.”

Judging the final round of the National Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge were Ari Ackerman, Founder and CEO of Tribe, Founder of bunk1.com, and part owner of the Miami Marlins; Elisabete Miranda, President and CEO of CQfluency; Randy Sloan, Managing Director, Global Functions Technology Services, Citigroup; David Jolley, EY Americas Growth Markets Leader; and Jamila Payne, Founder and CEO of Daily Success Routine. Payne is an alumna of NFTE.

“Each year I'm inspired by the ingenuity and confidence NFTE students exhibit leading up to and at the National Challenge,” said Brandee McHale, President of the Citi

Foundation. “These emerging entrepreneurs are a testament to the great work NFTE does to help students build networks and the skillsets employers are seeking. We're grateful to the hundreds of Citi volunteers across the U.S. that have dedicated more than 3,000 hours to support NFTE, working with students in their local communities as coaches, mentors and competition judges.”

NFTE’s award-winning entrepreneurship programs prepare students from under-resourced communities for academic and economic success by activating their entrepreneurial mindset and teaching startup skills. Research shows that 86% of NFTE alumni are either employed or furthering their education, compared to just 46% of low-income young people overall.

“EY US supports NFTE’s National Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge because we believe entrepreneurship is critical to economic growth – and developing an entrepreneurial mindset is the best way to prepare for the dynamic future of work. To succeed in today’s competitive world, young people need to develop diverse skill sets, build professional networks, and gain the confidence necessary to reach their career and life goals,” said David Jolley, EY Americas Growth Markets Leader. “NFTE’s impactful programming delivers on all three fronts, empowering youth to succeed. That should excite anyone dedicated to investing today in the world we want to live in tomorrow.”

Photos and detailed biographies are available on request for all the National Challenge competitors, along with information about the winning businesses.

About NFTE

NFTE is an internationally recognized nonprofit that activates the entrepreneurial mindset in young people. Research shows that the entrepreneurial mindset—skills including innovation, self-reliance, comfort with risk, communication, and problem-solving—prepares young people for lifelong success. Equipped with the mindset, as well as the business and academic skills that NFTE teaches, NFTE students are ready to thrive in the innovation economy no matter what path they choose. NFTE focuses its work on under-resourced communities. Through its nationwide network of U.S. offices, NFTE programs reached almost 35,000 students in over 1000 schools last school year. Partnerships in eight other countries allowed NFTE to serve an additional 40,000 young people internationally. Learn more at nfte.com.

About Citi Foundation

The Citi Foundation works to promote economic progress and improve the lives of people in low-income communities around the world. We invest in efforts that increase financial inclusion, catalyze job opportunities for youth, and reimagine approaches to building economically vibrant cities. The Citi Foundation’s “More than Philanthropy” approach

leverages the enormous expertise of Citi and its people to fulfill our mission and drive thought leadership and innovation. For more information, visit citifoundation.com.

About EY

EY is a global leader in assurance, tax, transaction and advisory services. The insights and quality services we deliver help build trust and confidence in the capital markets and in economies the world over. We develop outstanding leaders who team to deliver on our promises to all of our stakeholders. In so doing, we play a critical role in building a better working world for our people, for our clients and for our communities.

EY refers to the global organization, and may refer to one or more, of the member firms of Ernst & Young Global Limited, each of which is a separate legal entity. Ernst & Young Global Limited, a UK company limited by guarantee, does not provide services to clients. For more information about our organization, please visit ey.com.

This press release has been reviewed by Ernst & Young LLP, the member firm of Ernst & Young Global Limited serving clients in the United States.

#

Media Contact

Alyssa Miller

alyssa.miller@nfte.com

(973) 615-1292