

## St. Louis high school teens compete in National Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge



St. Louis has no shortage of Black teens pursuing innovation and entrepreneurship in the region. High school students from around the world participated this past fall in the annual Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship's National Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge, including two teams from the St. Louis area. The network is an international educational non-profit organization providing entrepreneurship training and education programs to young people from low-income urban communities. Teens who would like to get involved can inquire if the program is available through their high school guidance counselor. The Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge is an eight-month series of business plan and pitch competitions that take place at the local, regional and national levels, culminating in a high-stakes national championship in New York City. Every year, thousands of students compete for the chance to win the championship title. This year, **Micah Montgomery, 16, a transfer student from Jennings Senior High to Hazelwood East, pitched her business, Cavy Pads, to a**

**team of judges in the quarterfinal elimination round.** Cavy Pads is a product that provides owners of guinea pigs and other small animals stylish, easy-to-clean, affordable, animal-safe cage bedding. The idea started over a year and a half ago with her guinea pig, Max, and with the help of her family and the \$500 prize money she won after advancing to the semi-finals, she has successfully launched her business and is open to receive orders. Micah credits the program for opening her path to entrepreneurship. "Before NFTE, I didn't think of entrepreneurship as a path for me, but they brightened my insight to entrepreneurship and I'm grateful I started at Jennings and am excited to continue my growth with entrepreneurship at Hazelwood East," she said in an interview. In the next few years she hopes to realize her goal of distributing Cavy Pads in at least one major retail pet store. The teens who competed in the quarter-final round of the NFTE competition also included Lailah Hall, 17, and Anthony McDonald, 18, with their venture QuickFarm, an app that offers healthy and affordable options to predominantly Black and Brown people who live in food deserts. Although the team did not advance to the semi-finals, both Lailah and Anthony have successfully completed their first semesters as college students, at Florida A&M and Jackson State University, respectively, and hope to continue their work.