

**MEMPHIS
CHALLENGE**

Inspiring and developing future Memphis leaders.

35

**Est.
1989**

**FACING THE
CHALLENGE**

A LOOK AT 35 YEARS OF MEMPHIS EXCELLENCE

Weekend of Impact
November 22-23, 2024

The Memphis Challenge: 35 Years of History and Impact

In 1989, Joseph R. “Pitt” Hyde, a visionary business leader and philanthropist, founded The Memphis Challenge, a high school program that began with 20 seniors from East High School. Dr. Tom Eppley led the program, which started in AutoZone, to create a learning experience supporting the growth and development of high-achieving students in the city. The program also aimed to expose these students to colleges and universities across the United States. In 2003, under the leadership of Cassandra H. Webster, the program expanded to include junior high school students recruited from Memphis and Shelby County schools. This expansion increased the number of students served from 20 to over 50. The program aimed to enhance students’ social and emotional capital, positioning them as highly sought-after diverse talent. The core workshops were designed to catapult students and empower them with tools and networks to thrive in colleges and universities across the United States. In the summer, Challengers return to Memphis to paid summer internships at businesses, companies, and non-profits to gain experience and the opportunity to gain full-time employment once they finish college.

The 9/10 Movement, launched in the summer of 2014, has profoundly impacted ninth and tenth-grade students. This initiative aims to provide these students with the social and emotional skills needed for academic success and community leadership. Its growth from 50 to 130 students and participants from 10 to 35 high schools demonstrates the program’s success. Additionally, more than 40 percent of students continue the program through their senior years. Our ability to mentor, coach, nurture, and develop Challengers during this critical phase in their growth trajectory demonstrates its effectiveness and the significant impact on our students.



In January 2016, the Tell Me A Story arts immersion experience was launched to provide students with art therapy. The goal was to support student mental health by using creative expression to explore feelings and self-awareness. Throughout this learning journey, the Challengers have engaged in various creative activities such as writing children’s storybooks, sculpting their hands, creating digital zines, short films, and spoken word performances. Each year, the Challengers decide what form of art to explore. The students’ dedication to their art projects is awe-inspiring, with many devoting hours and weekends to their creations. The projects have been exhibited at notable venues such as FedEx World Headquarters, Hattiloo Theatre, and Baptist Hospital. The upcoming installment, Tell Me A Story: “What Keeps Me Up At Night,” will involve creating quilt squares, encouraging students to explore their struggles and sources of comfort, similar to traditional quilts that reflect the stories of their makers. Through this project, students engage in a historic and culturally significant art form and contribute to a collaborative piece that reflects their shared experiences and resilience.

The Memphis Challenge has seen 54 percent of its alumni choosing to live and work in Memphis, directly contributing to the local economy and community development. Our strategic partnerships support these outcomes by providing participants with internships, job opportunities, mentorship, and additional resources to enhance their personal and professional growth. Our alumni have pursued careers in various fields, including arts and culture, business, finance, education, entrepreneurship, nonprofit leadership, healthcare, law, and politics. This diversity of careers makes The Memphis Challenge proud to have alumni in each profession.



Celebration Gala Guest Speaker

Elise Neal

Actress and Producer | Overton High School Class of 1984

Native Memphian Elise Neal is an actress and producer known for her roles in hit films *Scream 2*, *Money Talks*, *Hustle and Flow*, and *Rosewood*. She also starred in the Marvel Comics film *Logan* alongside Hugh Jackman. Her nominations include a SAG-AFTRA nomination for “Best Cast in *Hustle and Flow*” and seven NAACP Image Awards nominations. Elise was featured in the BET series *The Black Hamptons* and received a 2023 NAACP nomination for “Best Limited Series.” She also gained attention as a fitness inspiration and created her fitness brand, “BOD-E.”



MEMPHIS CHALLENGE
Inspiring and developing future Memphis leaders.

FACING THE CHALLENGE
A LOOK AT 35 YEARS OF MEMPHIS EXCELLENCE

Weekend of Impact

November 22-23, 2024

Back to School Daze

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 22

9:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. (time subject to change)

Memphis Challenge alumni return to their high school and share their experiences with students.

Target schools: East, Central, Overton, Ridgeway, White Station, and Whitehaven High Schools



Challenger Impact Day

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 23

10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Volunteer with Neighborhood Christian Centers, Inc.

Gala Celebration

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 22

VIP Reception 5:30 p.m. | Gala 6:30 p.m.



35TH DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARDS

Celebrating **35 Distinguished Alumni** and **5 Rising Stars** whose impact resonates in Memphis and beyond, with accomplishments spanning Arts/Culture, Nonprofit/Education, Business, Entrepreneurship/Finance, and Law/Politics.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER ELISE NEAL

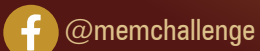
Actress and Producer

Overton High School Class of 1984



SILENT AUCTION

5865 Ridgeway Center Pkwy. Suite 304 | Memphis, TN 38120 | 901.312.9620 (office) | memphischallenge.org





MEMPHIS CHALLENGE
Inspiring and developing future Memphis leaders.

FACING THE CHALLENGE
A LOOK AT 35 YEARS OF MEMPHIS EXCELLENCE

Sponsorship Levels

VISIONARY SPONSOR.....\$50,000

The pinnacle of support for The Memphis Challenge, recognizing those who have played a foundational role in the organization’s history and impact. The Visionary demonstrates an unwavering commitment to the Memphis Challenge’s mission and a deep belief in its potential to transform lives and communities.

- Two tables at the Gala with premiere seating (20 seats)
- Eight tickets to the VIP Reception with keynote speaker Elise Neal
- On-stage remarks during the Gala
- Prominent logo placement on event materials and step-and-repeat banner
- Exclusive VIP photo opportunities and media interview
- Commemorative photo and framed medallion

CHAMPION SPONSOR\$35,000

A unique opportunity to be the driving force behind the event’s most impactful elements. By sponsoring the keynote speaker, hosts, and VIP reception, the Champion ensures an unforgettable experience for all attendees while gaining significant visibility and recognition.

- Two tables at the Gala with premiere seating (20 seats)
- Eight tickets to the VIP Reception with keynote speaker Elise Neal
- Introduction of keynote speaker Elise Neal
- Prominent logo placement on event materials and step-and-repeat banner

LEADERSHIP SPONSOR\$15,000

Empowers alumni to share their stories and ignite a passion for learning in students. By supporting Back to School Daze, sponsors invest in the next generation of leaders and contribute to a brighter future for the community.

- One table at the Gala (10 seats)
- Six tickets to the VIP Reception with keynote speaker Elise Neal
- On-stage remarks during the Gala
- Featured in the “Back to School Daze” highlight reel presented during the Gala
- Prominent logo placement on event materials and banner during Back to School Daze
- Recognition on social media highlighting the sponsor’s support for Back to School Daze

SUSTAINER SPONSOR\$10,000

Actively participate in creating positive change by supporting the Challenger Impact Day. This hands-on involvement allows sponsors to connect with the community, demonstrate their commitment to social responsibility, and make a tangible difference.

- One table at the Gala (10 seats)
- Four tickets to the VIP Reception with keynote speaker Elise Neal
- Prominent logo placement on event materials and banner at Challenger Impact Day
- Recognition on social media highlighting the sponsor’s support for Challenger Impact Day

PARTNER SPONSOR.....\$5,000

Create an unforgettable atmosphere at the gala by sponsoring the entertainment. The sponsor’s contribution will elevate the event experience for all attendees, ensuring a memorable and enjoyable evening.

- One table at the Gala (10 seats)
- Two tickets to the VIP Reception with keynote speaker Elise Neal
- Recognition during the event video presentation
- Logo placement on event materials related to the entertainment
- Recognition on social media highlighting the sponsor’s support for the gala entertainment

ADVOCATE TABLE SPONSOR\$2,500

- One table at the Gala (10 seats)
- Two tickets to the VIP Reception with keynote speaker Elise Neal
- Recognition on social media

For more information, please contact:

Cassandra Webster, Executive Director

Phone: 901-292-7505

Email: cwebster@memphischallenge.org