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## URBAN LEAGUE, PROFESSIONAL NETWORKING COMPANY JOIN FORCES



BY TRACY-ANN TAYLOR



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DAVIE — The Urban League of Broward County is partnering with a professional networking company to stress the importance of cultivating the next generation of leaders.

ICABA Media Holdings and the Urban League have created a bridge of support that will allow future leaders to tap into the expertise of acclaimed trailblazers.

During a reception that drew about 30 people on April 18 to the Davie home of Jerome Hutchinson Jr., CEO of ICABA, Hutchinson presented the company's new mentorship program. Several influential black leaders and members of the Urban League's Young Professionals Network (YPN) came together to initiate the first step of the groups' mission.

The groups seek to enhance career opportunities and positively impact communities, thus improving the lives of minorities.

"The vision is to establish an environment where accomplished black professionals and entrepreneurs can develop productive relationships, share information and also be able to do the kind of things that really support your goals, aspirations and lifestyles," Hutchinson told attendees. "At the end of the day, if we can't help you enhance your life and make it better, then there's no reason for our existence."

Germaine Smith-Baugh, president and CEO of the Urban League of Broward County, said, "When you think about the Young Professionals Network only being two years old and the fact that we can now partner with the likes of a company like ICABA, it shows that you all are doing something."

ICABA, which stands for Identify, Connect, and Activate the Black Accomplished from all walks of life, is a multimedia project launched in November 2008. It is a continuation of the *Who's Who in Black South Florida* directory launched in 2007 by Hutchinson's late wife, Pamela Hutchinson. As the *Who's Who* directory's associated publisher, Pamela Hutchinson sought to promote the accomplishments of black people in the region and provide a vehicle for them to network. Jerome Hutchinson worked with his wife on the project.

She died in November 2007 at 45, following brain surgery.

"When we were doing the *Who's Who* we realized that a one-dimensional print directory was not functional enough to meet the needs of the black community as it did not really connect people. So, this is her legacy," Jerome Hutchinson said.

The Urban League is a movement that seeks to empower African Americans economically and socially.

Selected members of the YPN will receive mentoring for a year from acclaimed ICABA members in their same business field. In return, the young professionals must commit to mentor college students for 12 months. The students will then mentor high school students, creating a spiral toward success.

"It's going to be a full-fledged program and I think that by the time you finish at the end of the year you will be, without question, far above what you are today," Horace Hord, corporate relations consultant for ICABA, told prospective mentees at the event.

YPN members in good standing will submit their applications and resumes at [www.icabaonline.com](http://www.icabaonline.com) no later than May 4, 2009. About 10 individuals will be selected later that month, followed by a personal interview. After they are selected, they will be matched with ICABA members, Hord said.

ICABA seeks to forge these new relationships in both the virtual and physical worlds through social networking at signature events that include art shows, conferences, recognition receptions and travel opportunities; a website that features profiles of accomplished black people and lists local and national events of interest; and a printed quarterly profile directory that will identify entrepreneurs in various professions.

The first publication of the print directory is scheduled to be available in August.

Among those in attendance at the partnership launch last weekend were Carolyn Stewart, assistant vice president of Florida Atlantic University's Broward Office of Community Relations. Stewart said she was very supportive of Hutchinson's vision.

"I have a passion for connecting individuals, hence my background in career development," Stewart said. "ICABA works with connecting and linking individuals, and I do believe that once we discover individuals and how they can be of benefit to each other, that we should definitely link them."

[Taylra9@Aol.com](mailto:Taylra9@Aol.com)

Photo: Jerome Hutchinson

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