

## YOUNG PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR AWARD FINALISTS

### LaDaya Owens

Human Resources Business Partner, Home of the Innocents

LaDaya Owens, widely known as Kami, is a dynamic and passionate human resources professional and a proud Kentucky native who is dedicated to advancing leadership development and creating inclusive workplace cultures. She currently serves as a Human Resources Business Partner at Home of the Innocents, where she supports three key divisions: Residential Treatment and Emergency Services, Behavioral Health Services, and Support/Administration. She also provides strategic HR support to the Quality Compliance and Insurance Team and the Development and Fundraising Team. Her work centers on building equitable systems, coaching leaders through organizational change, and fostering environments of belonging at every level. Kami earned her bachelor's degree in business management with a minor in vocal performance from the University of Kentucky, where she was crowned Miss Black University of Kentucky, a member of the prestigious UK Opera Theatre, and selected as the 2008 Gatton College of Business and Economics Student Commencement Speaker. She later completed her MBA in International Business from Campbellsville University. Currently, she is pursuing her Ph.D. in Education and Social Change at Bellarmine University, with a dissertation focused on developing cultural competency in HR professionals across the United States. She anticipates completing her degree in Summer 2025. Her long-term goal is to advance research in human resource development and management. With a strong foundation in HR leadership, Kami specializes in leadership coaching, strategy, policy development, organizational development, creating inclusive workplaces, and performance management. As a community connector, in September 2023 – April 2024, Kami created a partnership experience between Atherton High School and the Home of the Innocents to support student development in communications and videography. Among her most recent accomplishments is the creation and implementation of a system-wide Stay Interview Survey at Home of the Innocents, a data-driven initiative she leads to report findings and strategic insights directly to the Chief Human Resources Officer and C-Suite executives. Prior to her current role, she supported over 800 employees at Goodwill Industries of Kentucky, spanning retail operations, administration, and the successful launch of The Excel Center—Kentucky's first adult high school—where she led leadership onboarding and inclusive employee engagement strategies. Deeply committed to representation and inclusive excellence, Kami founded Bellarmine University's first graduate student registered organization: The Black Professional and Graduate Student Association. Through this organization, she empowers Black graduate students and builds platforms for leadership, advocacy, and visibility in higher education. A dedicated community leader, Kami currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Louisville Society for Human Resource Management (LSHRM) as the Director of College Relations and Emerging Professionals. In this role, she connects students and early-career



professionals with career-building opportunities and mentorship. Kami's impact has earned her both local and national recognition. She was awarded 2nd place in HR.com's 2025 National Emerging HR Leader Award, named a 2023 Louisville Business First Forty Under 40 honoree, and received the 2024 Young Professionals Association of Louisville Award. She has delivered breakout sessions at the 39th Annual Kentucky SHRM Conference and the 25th Annual SHRM Breakfast Series hosted by Indiana University Southeast SHRM. In 2024, through her participation in the Ignite Louisville leadership program, Kami authored a proposal to launch a Young Professionals Advisory Board for the Louisville Orchestra. Her team believed in her vision, and they presented the idea to the Board of Directors and received unanimous approval. The board will officially launch in July 2025, amplifying the voices of emerging leaders and enhancing the Orchestra's outreach to a younger, more diverse audience. In March 2025, Kami was celebrated during Women's History Month by the Muhammad Ali Center at the Shining a Light – Iconic Women Series, where her portrait is part of a yearlong installation honoring influential women globally and in the community. Furthermore, in August 2025, she will be featured in the "Boss Babe Exhibit" in Lexington, KY, curated by Ashley Lowe Photography in support of NAWBO Kentucky, highlighting women who are making bold moves in business and entrepreneurship across the state. Kami is a proud member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., a Greater Louisville Inc. Ambassador, and an active mentor in the University of Kentucky Women in Business Program at the Gatton College of Business and Economics. She leads with empathy, purpose, and authenticity, believing in the power of inclusive leadership and community-driven impact. She is currently preparing to sit for the SHRM-SCP certification in July 2025.

### Why Should This Nominee Be Recognized as Kentucky's Young Professional of the Year?

I am honored to nominate LaDaya Kami Owens for Kentucky's Young Professional of the Year. Having known LaDaya for many years, first as her mentor and now as a friend, I have witnessed her remarkable journey and growth. Her impressive bio speaks volumes about her professional achievements, but it is her compassionate heart that truly sets her apart. LaDaya is not only a dynamic and passionate Human Resources professional but also a person of integrity and empathy, making her someone you want to learn and grow with. LaDaya currently serves as a Human Resources Business Partner at Home of the Innocents, where she supports multiple divisions and provides strategic HR support. Her dedication to creating inclusive workplace cultures and advancing leadership development is evident in her work. She has also made significant contributions to the community, such as creating a partnership experience between Atherton High School and Home of the Innocents to support student development. Throughout our years of collaboration on various HR projects, I have always appreciated LaDaya's insights and innovative ideas. Her ability to lead with empathy and purpose has been inspiring. One of her notable achievements includes the implementation of a system-wide Stay Interview Survey at Home of the Innocents, which provided valuable strategic insights to the organization's leadership. LaDaya's commitment to representation and inclusive excellence is further demonstrated by her founding of Bellarmine University's first graduate student registered organization, empowering Black graduate students. Her numerous accolades, including national recognition and local awards, are a testament to her impact and dedication. In summary, LaDaya Owens is a deserving nominee for Kentucky's Young Professional of the Year. Her leadership, dedication, and compassionate heart make her an exemplary candidate for this honor.