



 EY Entrepreneur
Of The Year®

Meet the judges

2026 Southeast program

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Entrepreneur Of The Year® recognizes the most ambitious leaders who are building and sustaining successful, dynamic businesses around the world.

Entrepreneur Of The Year Award winners comprise a global network of visionaries, each on a transformational journey to create, innovate, grow, learn and build a better world.

About the judging panel

The success of the program relies on the efforts of our independent panel of judges. The panel comprises past Entrepreneur Of The Year Award recipients and civic and community leaders who devote significant effort to review and deliberate the merits of each nominee. We deeply appreciate their dedication to the program.

Click on the judges to learn more about them.

Meet the judges

The judges evaluate nominees on a variety of criteria, including, but not limited to:

Entrepreneurial spirit | Purpose | Growth | Impact | Financial performance



Michael Burcham

Chief of Strategy & Talent Development, Shore Capital Partners

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Michael Burcham began his career at Hospital Corporation of America after graduating from the University of Mississippi Medical Center in 1983. He holds an MBA from Belmont University and a doctorate in Health Administration from the Medical University of South Carolina.

An entrepreneur, investor and investment strategist, Michael has led three investor-backed firms to successful exits and invests in multiple early-stage companies. He is a Professor for the Practice of Management at Vanderbilt's Owen Graduate School of Management and faculty director of Vanderbilt's Center for Entrepreneurship. Additionally, he serves as Chief of Strategy and Talent Development for Shore Capital Partners, leading strategic planning and talent development across the portfolio, and directs Shore University.

Previously, Michael founded and served as CEO of Narus Health, a healthcare concierge organization that became part of Lucent Health in 2019. He was also the founding president and CEO of the Nashville Entrepreneur Center from 2010 to 2015 and co-chair of the National Advisory Council on Innovation and Entrepreneurship for the U.S. Secretary of Commerce from 2014 to 2016.

Michael has been honored as Nashvillian of the Year (2014) and Tennessean of the Year (2015). He chaired the National Advisory Council on Innovation & Entrepreneurship for President Obama from 2013 to 2016.

From 2000 to 2007, Michael was president of ParadigmHealth, now part of Optum Health, and from 1993 to 2000, he was president and founder of Theraphysics, a venture-backed specialty rehabilitation firm. Michael's contribution to entrepreneurship is at the heart of everything he does.



Glenn Gonzales

Co-founder and CEO, Lonewolf Global

Entrepreneur Of The Year 2021 Southeast winner

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Prior to forming Lonewolf Global, Glenn Gonzales provided transportation solutions as the regional sales manager for the Eastern United States for Honda Aircraft Company. In this role, Gonzales developed and executed a sales, communication and marketing business plan and strategy to sell Honda's first venture into aviation, the \$5m+ HondaJet. Preceding his efforts with Honda Aircraft Company, Gonzales performed a sales support role as an international demonstration captain for Gulfstream Aerospace Company. He began his career in the US Air Force (USAF) as a T-38A instructor pilot and his military career culminated as an F-15C flight commander and 4-Ship flight lead. He also participated as an active member of the US Embassy Kyrgyz Republic Country Team while deployed during Operation Enduring Freedom. Gonzales has an MBA from the Darla Moore School of Business at the University of South Carolina and a master's in Aeronautical Sciences from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. He completed his undergraduate studies at the United States Air Force Academy earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Behavioral Sciences with a concentration in Human Factors Engineering. In the community, he has served as a spokesperson for the Make-A-Wish Foundation; founded a military community outreach organization, The 71st Fighter Squadron Iron Foundation; and served as program coordinator for the Special Olympics Area 22 regional competition. He has spoken at countless universities, corporations, primary schools and community organizations sharing his career experiences and the business of private aviation. Glenn Gonzales still serves as a lieutenant colonel in the USAF Reserves and is married to his wife of 18 years.



Marc Gorlin

CEO, Roadie

Entrepreneur Of The Year 2021 National winner

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Marc Gorlin is the founder and CEO of logistics management and crowdsourced delivery platform Roadie, which he launched in 2014. Roadie offers businesses fast, flexible and asset-light logistics solutions for last-mile delivery. The Atlanta-based company works with consumers and businesses across almost every industry to enable a faster, cheaper and more scalable solution for same-day and urgent delivery. Roadie became a wholly owned subsidiary of UPS in 2021. Before launching Roadie, Gorlin co-founded and served as chairman of Kabbage Inc., which provides working capital to small and medium-sized businesses. It was acquired by American Express in 2020. Prior to that, Gorlin co-founded VerticalOne Corporation, a content personalization service that was sold to S1 Corporation (Nasdaq: ACIW) for \$166 million. In 1996, Gorlin was a co-founder and original board member of Pretty Good Privacy (PGP), a company formed to commercialize one of the most prevalent security standards on the internet, popularized in the book *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*. Gorlin helped launch PGP and oversaw its financing, growth and eventual sale to Network Associates in December 1997. Gorlin is a UGA graduate and an active speaker on serial entrepreneurship, innovation and venture funding. In 2021, he received the EY Entrepreneur Of The Year National Award. He was also the 2022 recipient of the John Imlay Leadership Award.



Todd Latz

CEO, GoHealth Urgent Care

Entrepreneur Of The Year 2023 Southeast winner

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Todd Latz has been the CEO of GoHealth Urgent Care for the past nine years. Together with his team, he has grown the company from 7 to over 395 on-demand care centers across 16 states through a unique, partnership-oriented model with 12 nationally recognized health systems. Todd and his team have created a digitally enabled, omnichannel, on-demand offering that includes Direct-To-Employer, Transitional Primary Care, Behavioral Health, and Value-Based Care services.

Prior to joining GoHealth Urgent Care, Todd was the CEO of MedQuest, Inc., a leading owner, operator and manager of diagnostic imaging facilities, with over 75 centers in 8 states and multiple health system joint ventures. Under Todd's leadership, MedQuest also provided management and billing services to integrated health systems, physician practices, and ambulatory surgery centers. Over the past 15 years, Todd has led over 40 acquisitions, divestitures, joint ventures and other strategic transactions.

Before joining MedQuest, Todd practiced law at King & Spalding LLP in Atlanta, Georgia, where he focused on public and private company securities matters, mergers and acquisitions, corporate governance, and capital raising transactions. Todd graduated *summa cum laude* from Duke University and was awarded a post-graduate Fulbright Scholarship, during which he was affiliated with the Universität Leipzig in Germany. He received his JD from the University of Virginia School of Law and was a member of the Virginia Law Review and Order of the Coif.



Rod McDaniel

CEO, S3 Recycling Solutions

Entrepreneur Of The Year 2024 Southeast winner

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Rod McDaniel is an award-winning chief executive and business leader with a track record of scaling organizations that drive sustained growth while building strong, people-centered cultures. He currently serves as CEO of S3 Recycling Solutions, where he has expanded the company's reach across the United States, Canada and Mexico while developing a high-performing and values-driven team.

Under Rod's leadership, S3 has earned multiple appearances on the Inc. 5000 list of America's fastest growing private companies and has been recognized multiple times as a Best Place to Work. He is a multi-time Most Admired CEO Award Winner and was named the 2024 EY Entrepreneur Of The Year Southeast Regional Winner, one of the program's most distinguished honors.

Rod is deeply engaged in the broader business and technology ecosystem. He serves as chairman of the Greater Nashville Technology Council and holds leadership roles on four additional boards, where he advocates for innovation, community engagement and responsible growth.

Rod's leadership philosophy centers on the belief that businesses should scale profitably while elevating people and communities. This belief is reflected in his commitment to building organizations that create both economic value and lasting social impact.



Christa Pitts

Co-Founder and Co-CEO, The Lumistella Company

Entrepreneur Of The Year 2023 Southeast winner

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Imagine being applauded for “revolutionizing the essence of Christmas.” That is precisely what American businesswoman and entrepreneur Christa Pitts is celebrated for.

Christa serves as the co-CEO and co-founder of The Lumistella Company, a dynamic enterprise behind the enchanting brand, The Elf on the Shelf. Under her strategic leadership, more than 28 million The Elf on the Shelf brand Scout Elves, Elf Pets and Elf Mates have been adopted in 29 countries across five continents, solidifying a massive global reach.

Considered a scion in branding, Christa’s journey began as a QVC Program Host, amassing 2,000 hours of live, unscripted television experience. During this time, she honed her expertise in understanding the mechanics of sales, the intricacies of advertising and the significance of brand authenticity.

This wealth of knowledge proved invaluable when she joined forces with her mother and twin sister to share their cherished family Christmas tradition with the world.

Highly regarded for her business acumen, Christa is a sought-after keynote speaker and TV media personality. She is frequently requested to share her perspective on diverse subjects, from being a woman in business to supply chain-related issues on mediums including MSNBC and CBS.

Over the years, she has been featured hundreds of times on prominent platforms and stages, including the TODAY Show, *Forbes*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. Recognizing the power of her work, *Entrepreneur Magazine* has named The Lumistella Company “A Christmastime IP Giant.”

A symbol of empowerment for women in business, Christa’s voice resonates with many. Most recently, she was named the Entrepreneur Of The Year 2023 Southeast regional winner. Christa embodies the spirit of breaking barriers and redefining what it means to lead with passion, resilience and unwavering dedication.



Denise Shields

Co-Founder and CEO, Nych Brands

Entrepreneur Of The Year 2023 Southeast winner

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Denise Shields is the co-founder and CEO of Nych Brands, a multi-brand consumer products company designing and distributing outdoor living solutions sold through major retailers such as Amazon and Home Depot. With more than 20 years of experience in global sourcing, product development and operations, Denise has built an asset-light platform known for disciplined execution, innovation and scalable growth.

She has led the company through multiple trade and tariff cycles, rapid post-COVID expansion, and the diversification of manufacturing across Asia to strengthen supply-chain resilience. Under her leadership, Nych has invested heavily in digital transformation, including AI-ready product documentation, automation of operational workflows and data-driven decision systems designed to improve accuracy, speed, and customer experience.

Denise was named a Regional EY Entrepreneur Of The Year® Award winner in 2023. She is passionate about applying technology thoughtfully, building durable operating models, and helping founders scale innovative businesses with clarity, resilience and long-term value creation.



Justin Strickland

Founder and CEO, Strickland Brothers 10 Minute Oil Change

Entrepreneur Of The Year 2023 Southeast winner

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Justin Strickland is a husband, father and entrepreneur, best known as the founder and CEO of Strickland Brothers 10 Minute Oil Change.

Justin began his career as a college dropout working as a lube technician to support his newlywed wife and young son. After being denied the opportunity to even apply for an assistant manager position, he realized that if his future was going to change, he would have to build it himself. With no capital, limited education and no meaningful connections, he set out to reimagine a dated industry through better systems, technology and disciplined growth.

After being turned down by more than 30 lenders and investors, raising zero dollars, Justin's grandfather, a former tobacco sharecropper, leveraged the family home for \$35,000 so he could "have a shot" at a better life. That act of faith became the foundation of everything that followed from business to giving back.

Over time, Justin grew Strickland Brothers into a national brand through steady execution, careful capital allocation and a deep commitment to the people who power the business. In 2022, he was honored as the Southeast winner of EY Entrepreneur Of The Year.

Today, Strickland Brothers has grown into a \$225m+ platform, created hundreds of jobs and continues to expand across the country. Over the past two years alone, the company has added an average of two net new jobs per day.

Justin and his wife Jessica also founded Strickland Legacy Group, their family office focused on supporting operating businesses through Impact Brands, their operating arm, and advancing long-term philanthropic efforts aimed at generational impact.

Justin believes entrepreneurship is stewardship of capital, of people, of opportunity and views his success as the result of faith, family support, relentless grit and a team committed to building something that lasts.

Entrepreneur Of The Year Southeast team

Chevy Arnold | Entrepreneur Of The Year Southeast Program Director

Kimberly Kicklighter | Entrepreneur Of The Year Southeast Program Director

Ryan Emerson | Entrepreneur Of The Year Southeast Program Manager

Alexis Levy | Entrepreneur Of The Year Southeast Program Coordinator

For more information, visit ey.com/us/eoysoutheast or contact us at eoysoutheast@ey.com.

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About Entrepreneur Of The Year®

Entrepreneur Of The Year® is the only global program of its kind that supports entrepreneurs as they unlock their ambitions. Established in 1986, this flagship program operates across more than 60 countries and jurisdictions and boasts a global ecosystem of over 30,000 distinguished entrepreneurs. Program participants benefit from lifelong connections, learning resources and insights to help navigate their growth journey, and opportunities to raise the profile of their companies. Each program concludes with a competition and announcement of a winner who goes on to represent their country or region in the ultimate global competition and event for entrepreneurs: World Entrepreneur Of The Year®. ey.com/eoy

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