

# 2022 Annual Conference and Awards Ceremony

## ENTREPRENEUR-of-the-YEAR AWARDEES

**EAC: Capital Region Chamber Foundation**

**Entrepreneur: Erica Beckford**

**Business: Holt Virtual Assistance / M.C. Samuel's Logistics**

### Turning a Hustle into a Thriving Businesses



Holt Virtual Assistance / M.C. Samuel's Logistics is a virtual assistance and freight dispatch/logistics service. Erica Beckford's journey to get here took some hustling along the way.

After earning a degree in the health sciences field, Erica successfully landed work as a case manager at MetLife. When Erica was laid off despite 8 years of rapid promotions, she saw an opportunity in this turn of events. She identified a disconnect between a patient's disability claim and the physician's medical information and how it caused stress and worry for the patients and frustration for the doctors. That frustration led to the need for Holt Virtual Assistance to focus more on value-based care.

Erica formally established Holt Virtual Assistance after graduating from Capital Region Chamber Foundation's ("CRCF") EAC Spring 2018 Entrepreneur Boot Camp training. Erica was not new to business ownership; asked why she needed the training to create this particular business, she replied, "My first venture wasn't a real business; it was a side hustle that helped me support my son and get through school. I was always juggling two or three jobs at a time; I never thought about it, it was just something that moms do." Holt Virtual Assistance struggled for three years to stay open. Then the pandemic hit, and the type of assistance needed by businesses and customers shifted dramatically. They responded by expanding their capabilities and services to include direct mental health services and assistance with freight delivery/logistics services to address the driver shortages and supply chain issues so many businesses were experiencing.

She quickly pivoted into mental healthcare, government contracting and logistics. "If it wasn't for CRCF, I would have never made all these connections." M.C. Samuel's Logistics was thus created, named after her son and her late father. She got certified, licensed, and bonded. Despite being DBE certified, in a male dominated industry she soon realized that she needed more to compete in this arena and positioned herself to have plentiful drivers so other brokers would call Holt Virtual Assistance dispatch services for driver capacity. To date, she has personally assisted 57 owners/operators establish their small business and become part of her carrier/driver network. Her agility and resilience have positioned her to breaking through her first \$100,000 where she can finally think about creating generational wealth for her family.

As she has grown her business, she has also grown her presence and contributions to the community, leveraging her expertise & network to help other entrepreneurs, creating, and connecting individuals with employment & income opportunities. Erica speaks passionately about giving back and regularly and actively supports CRCF's Entrepreneur training program serving as a speaker, panelist and mentor to successive classes of entrepreneurs.