



**Get AMPED about Dave Christopher,  
Music Producer and Tech Educator Committed  
to Growing Black Businesses**

Dave W. Christopher Sr. grew up in Gary, Indiana, the youngest of nine children. His childhood was rocky -- both parents were disabled, one brother was shot in the back and paralyzed from the waist down at age 17 during gang violence, and another brother went to prison accused of murder. Dave was a strong student, but was also prone to getting into trouble. One of his high school counselors encouraged him to join the military -- which might have saved his future.

Dave joined the Air Force and it was there that he learned Information Technology (IT) skills and became an entrepreneur. But, the experiences from his boyhood left him committed to helping others who may be in similar situations growing up.

In 2014, he founded the Academy of Music Production Education and Development (AMPED) in Louisville, a community center and after-school program. The program worked to not only keep kids off of the streets, but teach them about music production and technical skills such as coding. With the help of a grant from the National Center for Families Learning, he later added workshops for parents to play music with their kids and offered twelve-week classes to teach parents employable technical skills. Since 2015, he has trained about 375 students for tech jobs, graduating 85 percent of them. But even with the success of this program, Dave wasn't satisfied. Workforce creation is one thing, but business creation was the problem he really wanted to tackle.

“My heart is for the people going through what I’ve gone through,” he told the Rockefeller Foundation. “If Louisville is 24 percent Black, then 24 percent of businesses should be Black-owned. Right now, it is less than 1 percent. And when you create strong Black businesses and employ people at living wages, the entire community is lifted up.” They listened. The Foundation invested \$500,000 in the project. Other Louisville businesses have invested as well, including Brown-Forman, YUM, Humana, and many more.

Out of this, Amped Russell Tech Business Incubator (RTBI) was born as a model to address generational wealth gaps and other impacts of systemic racism. Their goal: to create not only jobs but businesses, and through this, to support economic growth, mobility, entrepreneurship, and independence.

RTBI recently moved into the Molo Village at 12th St. and W. Jefferson in Louisville and will begin with a cohort of 15 businesses, with several entrepreneurs that are graduates of AMPED Louisville. These businesses will receive training, access to capital and other resources, including accountants and attorneys.

Great work, Dave!

To learn more,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HXBiH5sDqKw>

<https://www.courier-journal.com/story/news/local/2020/12/14/west-louisville-business-tech-incubator-aims-to-bridge-disparities/6463916002/>

<https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/case-study/from-a-difficult-background-a-business-innovator-is-born/>