



December 2023 E-Newsletter

Dear Friends:

During this holiday season, I want to express my heartfelt appreciation for your interest, passion and support to Uplift Solutions. Every day our staff works tirelessly to reduce the barriers for justice-impacted individuals and at-risk youth, helping them find pathways to long-term success. 2023 culminates with several highlights and achievements:

- We created a new at-risk youth program that features mentoring, tutoring, career exploration, conflict resolutions skills and trauma therapy.
- We built the City of Philadelphia's first Neighborhood Resource Center in Hunting Park. Stay tuned for Ribbon Cutting details in January!
- We launched the Uplift Alumni Association (UAA) that gives back to the community through neighborhood clean-ups.
- We cleared 224 justice-impacted individuals records. Our highest number ever!
- We started "Food for Thought," a support group for our graduates to stay connected about their challenges and successes.
- We graduated individuals who will start new careers in Retail, HVAC and CDL.
- We continue to boast a recidivism rate of 2% (national average is 70%!)

Please help us continue to offer life and job skill training to justice-impacted individuals by donating [HERE](#). From the whole team at Uplift Solutions, Happy Holidays to you and your loved ones!

Atif Bostic

Atif Bostic

Proud President and CEO of Uplift Solutions



Uplift Solution's President/CEO and staff at our December 7th, 2023 graduation from left to right: Mark Tucker, Brian Mincer, Jeremiah Berry, Wayne Garrett, Atif Bostic, Barry Johnson, Maureen Cislo, Lauren Ruday, Monique Oakman-Robinson, Jeff Jones, and Christina Pomponio.

Beaming Smiles and Thunderous Applause Highlight December's Graduation



60 graduates proudly received their graduation certificates in front of their families and friends at Temple University's stunning Mitten Hall on December 7, 2023. "There is so much joy in this room right now and I am so proud of my husband getting a second chance on his life. He is graduating from your CDL track and can't wait to start driving again," said Ms. Snead, who is the wife of Class Speaker Eddie Snead. 23 graduated with

certifications HVAC (Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning); 19 from our CDL (Commercial Driver's License) training; 17 from our retail/customer service course and 1 from our Youth Program. 2 people graduated from the Same Day Work In Pay Program. In fact! One Same Day Work In Pay grad, Debra Shipley, was actually working at her very own graduation as she has secured a catering position with Brotherly Grub.

The event was MCed by Barry Johnson, Uplift's Vice President of Workforce Operations. "We all know the barriers faced by folks who have a criminal record. The goal of the program to not just offer job training but to finish with a guaranteed job that can offer a career ladder, has been transformative. We believe someone's mistakes in the past should not dictate their future," said Barry Johnson, Workforce Solutions.

Keynote Speaker, Judge Hanif Johnson (the youngest judge ever elected in Pennsylvania) gave an insightful speech about his brushes with law enforcement and how he tenaciously turned his life around through education and hard work. "Remember: You got this. Don't forget how far you have come and know that we are all family and here for you, so let us know how we can continue to support you," said Johnson.

As student's names were called to go on stage, they received certificates from their perspective instructors: Monique Oakman-Robinson (Retail, Same Day Work and Pay and Youth Program) Mark Tucker (HVAC) and Jeremiah Berry (CDL.) There were plenty of hugs, handshakes, tears and TONS of photos!

Everyone was treated to a passionate welcoming into the Uplift Alumni Association (UAA) by President and alum, Wayne Garrett. "You have been officially inducted into the exclusive UAA," he said. Garrett went on to explain the association meets regularly to foster brother and sisterhood; check in on one another and maintain our communities through neighborhood clean ups and various other activities in the spirit of giving back to our community. For more information [click here](#).

Uplift President and CEO, Atif Bostic closed out the event with a message of gratitude and hope: "One of my favorite books is the Alchemist. It is the story of a man's journey through life; the people met along the way, the help some give and the decisions that need to be made along this sometimes daunting and arduous trek. And as I think about this book, I am thinking of you and your journey. I am thinking of you and your journey. Thank you for choosing us to help you in this journey. I know you will succeed," said Bostic.

Congratulations to all our grads- we are so proud of you!

HVAC

Joseph Brown
David Bruce
Dylan Capanna
Ashley Connelly
Andre Davis
Romaine Garrick
Vernus Green
Joseph Henry
Lamar Lewis
Troy Merke
Hosea Moore
Dameion Muse
Herbert Page
Harold Pelzer
Sophan Ptith
James Renwick
Damir Skipworth
Devin Smith
Samantha Teti
Archie Toe
Tahir Ward
Nathaniel Wilson
Rachel Wilson

CDL

Kylia Alston
Carlos Benitez
Richard Brown
Sharif Byrd
James Coulter
Carl Douglas
George Epps
Ronnie Fowler
Qinzells Hampton
Christopher Jarmusik
Tyree May
Jaquan McFadden
Troy McNeil
Raymond Purifory
Marquise Roman
Eddie Snead
Robert Taylor
Antoine Towns
Jaquanda Wright

Youth Program
Stephen Pen

Retail

Shanel Bell
Antonio Brown
Kevin Byrd
Rodney Carroll
Richard Catena
Darnell James Davis
Joseph Fetko
Jeffrey Grace
Ronald Hawkins
Calvin Hughston
Wayne Johnson
Rachel Mitchell
Marcus Philpot
Danny Reynolds
Amere Robichaw
Belinda Sepkoski
Maria Torres

Same Day Work Pay
Jaquan McFadden
Debra Shipley



Keynote speaker Judge Hanif Johnson giving a heartfelt speech that moved the room.



Graduates celebrate their accomplishments at Uplift's Graduation Luncheon.

Mindfulness Matters

Uplift Solutions cares about everyone's mental health and as such is launching a new monthly column called: "Mindfulness Matters." Our two Life Skills instructors, Monique Oakman-Robinson and Brian Mincer will write thoughtful copy every month offering tips and reminders about how to take care of ourselves, be good to ourselves and stay grounded.

Greetings of Health, Peace, Love, Fun, and Laughter. This season is widely recognized for giving and receiving gifts. Take a moment to reflect and appreciate the gift that you see each time you look at yourself in the mirror. In the mirror is a gift that is precious, delicate, full of worth and quality. Before it can become a present to anyone else, be sure the gift follows the instructions below.

1. Practice self-care



2. Set healthy boundaries.
3. Get proper rest.
4. Learn to say no without feeling guilty.
5. Praise and reward the gift.

This gift is **YOU!** Remember to be a gift to yourself this season.

Sincerely,
Monique "Ms. Mo" Oakman-Robinson, Education and Training
Manager

A Letter from Uplift's Community Engagement Manager:

Season's greetings! Having recently joined the Uplift Solutions team in the Fall as the Community Engagement Manager, I have enjoyed the pleasure of working with some awesome people on our Team and throughout the City to support programs and services for our participants. During the last quarter of the year the Uplift Solution Community Engagement Team has been busy working to secure employment partnerships with Philly Auto and Parole, Sam's Club and Everybody Builds Philadelphia. Each of these organizations has the potential to provide training and or job opportunities for Uplift participants. We're also hopeful for some good news to share early in the year regarding budding relationships with the West Philadelphia Skills Center and Grant Blvd. Along with these workforce relationships the Community Engagement will also be hosting various community outreach events with the help the Uplift Alumni Association to further enhance Uplifts exposure and positive impact in City. So be on the lookout for dates and times, as well as ways that you can support us in the upcoming year! Until then we hope that you have a joyful and prosperous New Year! If you know of companies that are interested in becoming an employment partner with us, please contact me directly at: Jeff.Jones@UpliftSolutions.org



Sincerely,
Jeff Jones, Community Engagement Manager

Getting to Know You

Our monthly newsletters will start featuring a new column to get to know our staff better! We hope you enjoy it! This month we get to hear from Case Manager Christina Pomponio.

Q: Why do you work at Uplift?

A: I am passionate about helping people. Uplift provides returning citizens with an amazing opportunity to turn things around and get started in a career. It is an honor to work with our participants on that



part of their journey.

Q: What impresses you most about our students?

A: Their resilience and strength!

Q: Which Philly team is your go to and why?

A: E-A-G-L-E-S!!! Win or lose, I am a die-hard Eagles fan. I don't understand people that are born and raised in Philly and aren't Eagles fans!

Q: Best piece of advice you ever got from another person that you would like to pass on?

A: "You can't pour from an empty cup" and "NO is a full sentence." Learning to take time for myself and practice self-care instead of just non-stop doing for others has been a game changer for me!

Q: Share an inspiring story about one of the students you have helped.

A: One particular participant came into the program with one foot on the right path and the other on the wrong path. He had no support outside of Uplift staff and was living out of his car. With some support and encouragement, he completed the HVAC program and started working at Giant. He returned for our CDL program and it was immediately visible that he made major changes in his life. His attitude and demeanor was completely different, he came dressed in a button down shirt, seen a doctor and got prescription glasses, and was even sitting with his shoulders back and head up. He had a totally different mindset than when he first started. He is a perfect example of why I love my job! I felt honored to be able to witness his transformation and couldn't be more proud of him! Every one of our participants has potential and it's an amazing sight when they realize it for themselves!

Taking Care of Yourself During the Holidays

Uplift Solutions wants to make sure everyone has a safe and peaceful holiday. We know that while there is always good cheer, the holidays can present some challenges. According to the American Psychiatry Association, nearly one in three Americans expects to be more stressed this holiday season than last year. "This time of year can be extremely stressful, especially if you already suffer from things like anxiety and depression," says Uplift's Client Services Manager, Lauren Ruday. Lauren reminds us to practice Square Breathing as it is a great relaxation technique that can be done almost anywhere at any time to help ease your anxiety and help you be more present in the moment.

Here are the steps:

If possible, it is usually a good idea to sit in a chair with your back supported. Place both of your feet on the floor. Really feel the support of the chair and floor under you. Alternatively, you can sit in a seated meditation position or even lie down. The important thing is that your body is open to allow the breath to flow freely.

- Begin by slowly exhaling all of your air out.
- Then, gently inhale through your nose to a slow count of 4.
- Hold at the top of the breath for a count of 4.
- Then gently exhale through your mouth for a count of 4.
- At the bottom of the breath, pause and hold for the count of 4.

"Remember to take care of yourself, mentally and physically, this holiday season and EVERY season!"
says Lauren.



Uplift's mission is: "Reducing the barriers for justice involved individuals and at-risk youth, helping them find pathways to long-term success." Uplift's vision is: "A world in which all people have paths to meaningful opportunities allowing them to reach their full potential."

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