

NEWS FROM



April 2024

This month, we celebrate the success of two major events: the Transforming Justice Conference and our April Record-Clearing Clinic. Additionally, we'd like to give a warm welcome to Anna Keith who has been appointed to Uplift's Board of Directors. Maureen Cislo, Uplift's Director of Development and Communications, has also provided us with a wonderful article and short story about Andre, one of our graduates, whose life has been positively impacted by Uplift Solutions.

A Message from the CEO

As we observe National Reentry Month, we double down on our efforts to reduce barriers for justice involved individuals and at-risk youth. We renew our commitment to helping our most vulnerable neighbors find pathways to long-term success. As you are aware, this work takes many forms that include workforce development training, advocacy, awareness, and exposure.

On April 18th, we held our 4th Transforming Justice Conference focused on Moving Forward in partnership with Chestnut Hill College, The Institute for Forgiveness and Reconciliation, and Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church. This one-day conference brought together this region's top leaders, thinkers, practitioners, and stakeholders to include those impacted, to have a candid and transparent conversation on how we move issues of justice impacting our city, state, and country forward.



On April 19th, we participated in a city-wide job fair hosted by Temple University specifically for those impacted by the criminal justice system. Employers and vendors invited to this one-day job fair were there to give access and opportunity to those that are challenged to gain traction on moving their careers and in some cases lives, forward. We were there to give access to individuals looking to gain employment in HVAC or CDL, as well as those that may need to start by gaining access to same-day-pay employment.

Our work did not stop there. On Saturday, April 20th, we held a Record Clearing Clinic in Partnership with the Philadelphia Lawyers for Social Equity and Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church (Enon) at Enon for their Men's Know Your Numbers Event. The event connected over 600 men to health care screenings and services and more than 50 men and women to free expungement services.

On April 22nd, I had the opportunity to sit down with Thera Martin, host of News You Can Use to discuss Uplift. The 10-minute interview focused on the work of the organization and the impact we seek to make; including how Uplift got into the business of workforce development. The interview can be found at:

<https://youtu.be/PyGyj3fBph0>

As we close this month, we celebrate and lift up all of the men and women that work to support our most vulnerable; justice impacted citizens. Please take a moment and read each of the articles in this newsletter that provide more detail on our activities. If there is anything that inspires you or you would like to share, we would love to hear from you.

We look forward to staying connected with you as we continue to support our communities.

Sincerely,



Atif Bostic

President and CEO, Uplift Solutions

Uplift Welcomes Anna Keith to the Board of Directors



Anna Keith (Uplift Board of Directors)

Uplift Solutions is pleased to announce the appointment of Anna Keith to the Board of Directors. Ms. Keith currently services as the Vice President of Long-Term Services & Supports (LTSS) at PA Health & Wellness. Ms. Keith is a highly respected healthcare services leader having more than 30 years' experience in LTSS, serving more than 10 years with the Centene Corporation.

Ms. Keith began her journey with Uplift over 6 years ago, when she led an initiative to bring Uplift's workforce programs to Chester, Pennsylvania. As she states, her efforts were underpinned by her belief that, "people stay healthier longer if they are working."

As an active member of the board, Ms. Keith continues to volunteer to support our most vulnerable citizens, those that are justice impacted. Most recently, Ms. Keith volunteered at our Record Clearing Clinic held at Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church on April 20th. Ms. Keith says that she most enjoyed talking to the people she registered and learning their stories. In those stories, she recognized the short and long-term impact of clearing someone's; how it helps them get back to work and ultimately back on their feet. During the clinic Ms. Keith stated, "one mistake should not ruin a person's whole life. I like giving people back an opportunity to have a quality of life and am moved by the success stories I hear from Uplift's students. It inspires me to promote Uplift's magnificent work."

In her career, Ms. Keith has led comprehensive support for adults and seniors having disabilities and receiving Waiver Services. She has had responsibility for programs supporting technology solutions, service coordination, supported and independent housing, respite care, and employment solutions. Most recently, she has focused her energy on developing and driving value-based initiatives that improve quality outcomes and reduce health care costs while creating new funding opportunities for diverse provider partners. Ms. Keith is a Policy Board member for the National MLTSS Association and co-chairs the Value-Based Care committee.

"We are thrilled to welcome Ms. Keith to the Board and feel she will be an asset to key strategies and initiatives as we continue to grow," says Uplift CEO, Atif Bostic.

Andre's Story of Hope

By: Maureen Cislo, Director of Development and Communications

Andre sits at the kitchen table peering over his daughter's homework. He is amazed at how fast she can complete difficult math problems and understand complex scientific data. She has an advanced vocabulary and excels in spelling and writing. The apple doesn't fall too far from the tree.

"You see," he explains, "I was that child too. I loved school and my mom always made sure I did my homework. I went to a Catholic grade school because she wanted me in a safe and nurturing place. Home was Harrison Plaza ... the projects. It was just us. No dad. No siblings. We were very poor, and mom struggled to make ends meet working as a chef but many times, she was out of work," he says.

Continue reading [here!](#)

Transforming Justice was a Huge Success

In its fourth year, the Transforming Justice Conference was a huge success with more than 200 attendees and an array of prominent city and state leaders engaged in guided discussions focused on how we can collectively “Move Forward” fair and equitable systems of justice.

Held on April 18, 2024, at Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church in Philadelphia, PA, the conference opened with a compelling message on “The Role of the Church in Supporting and Advocating for Communities” from the church’s senior pastor, Reverend Dr. Alyn E. Waller. This was followed by a rousing talk on justice equality led by Former Philadelphia Chief Defender, current partner at Montgomery McCracken, and Uplift Board Member, Keir Bradford-Grey.

Uplift’s President and CEO, Atif Bostic then challenged attendees to explore what justice meant to them by sharing the Merriam Webster definition, “the maintenance or administration of what is just especially by adjustment of conflicting claims or the assignment of merited rewards or punishments.” He then asked questions related to what it means to be “just”, and if we were a truly “just” society. Further, could we be “impartially just?” In closing, Atif introduced award winning filmmaker, Shuja Moore, who discussed the impact and opportunity of real fresh start afforded by a pardon.

Before leaving the church’s Family Life Center, attendees had an opportunity to view “Pardon Me,” Shuja’s award-winning documentary on the importance and impact of the pardon process. The film featured individuals that successfully navigated the pardon process and had gone on to achieve greatly, to include the former Pennsylvania Secretary of Pardon’s, Brandon Flood. Following the film Brandon, Shuja, and Executive Director of the Promise, Mike Banks would serve on a panel further discussing the pardon and expungement process.

The middle of the day was filled with a series of other breakout sessions that included:

Pennsylvania's Role in Moving Forward with State Representatives Jordan Harris and Darisha Parker, as well as Deputy Director of State Policy at FAMM, Celeste Trusty.

The Restorative Justice Models and Practices breakout featured speakers Jack Drummond, Director of Restorative Practices at Penn Medicine and Rev. Dr. Donna Jones, Executive Director of the Christian Council of Philadelphia.

Designing a Youth Court was taught by Kathy Smith, Associate Professor of Law & Legal Studies at Chestnut Hill College and John Papiano, Youth Courts Coordinator for the School District of Philadelphia. "We had so many attendees in our breakout interested in how to start youth courts in their schools and communities. They understood how powerful it is to educate young children about justice," says Smith.

Forgiveness and Reconciliation was led by Sister Cathy Nerney, SSJ, Ph.D. Director of the Institute of Forgiveness and Reconciliation. There was not a dry eye in that classroom as attendees went through a range of their own emotions that delved into how forgiveness or others, and oneself is the key to true freedom and peace. "This is how we move forward, by forgiving," Nerney says.

The Narrative Justice breakout was moderated by Ryan Murphy, Associate Professor, Sociology, at Chestnut Hill College who brought in 2 of his students to share the capstone project in their Social Inequality course at Chestnut Hill College, where they are in teams to produce audio podcasts examining issues of social inequality in the City of Philadelphia. The students put emphasis on narrative and stories – as ways to illustrate course content, to dig deeper than statistics – to hear from real individuals grappling with these issues and/or trying to address them. After the presentation, the panel lead a discussion with attendees about the importance of stories and personal narratives to challenge existing stereotypes and social structures that may constrain or disadvantage certain populations. "It was a lively, and deeply personal conversation – with many folks in attendance sharing their own or their loved ones' stories," says Murphy.

Educational Justice was led by Sena Owereko, Vice President of Programming and Innovation at Graduate Philadelphia. The workshop focused on the importance of educational equity for our city and region. Sena spent time speaking with attendees about how Graduate Philadelphia is working to achieve educational equity and ways they could get engaged.

But perhaps the most compelling part of the conference was when attendees gathered for a Fireside Chat on Restorative Justice and what the future holds for safer Philadelphia. This passionate discussion was moderated by Pastor Waller who posed thoughtful questions to city leaders that included Philadelphia District Attorney, Larry Krasner, Philadelphia Police Commissioner Kevin Bethel and Philadelphia Chief of Public Safety, Adam Geer. While Bethel and Krasner vowed to work together for the common good of all Philadelphians, the biggest surprise of the afternoon, was an apology from Pastor Waller to Krasner and a subsequent apology from Krasner to Waller.

City Council President Kenyata Johnson rounded out the day with his personal story of what he was accused of and how staying focused on his family, faith, friends and job got him through this trying time until he was found innocent. "They say it is innocent until proven guilty, but for me it felt like guilty until innocent. That has to change!" Johnson said. He promised attendees he would be an agent for that change. Attendees left feeling empowered and ready to implement the changes Johnson called out.

Through collectively working together with fairness, honesty, kindness, forgiveness, owning one's mistakes and constantly working to improve oneself ... the City of Brotherly Love will be a beacon of light and hope and shining example of how we MOVE FORWARD.

For more information on the initiatives discussed please visit the speakers' respective websites.

Transforming Justice Conference Background

The Transforming Justice Conference was founded in 2019 by Uplift Solutions CEO Atif Bostic, Sister Cathy Nerney, Executive Director of the Institute of Forgiveness and Reconciliation and Lauren Barrow, PhD., Chair of the Center for Education, Advocacy and Social Justice at Chestnut Hill College to create a space for raising issues of injustice, inequality, and inequity with local, regional, and national leaders; whereas they are actively engaged in the collectively problem solving necessary to address them. Fostering a dialogue between leaders and stakeholders is a critical component of this platform. Uplift Solutions would like to thank its sponsors for a highly successful 2024 event! Enon Tabernacle Church, Chestnut Hill College, and the Institute of Forgiveness and Reconciliation. "We look forward to start planning for 2025 so stay tuned for further information as we are exploring offering CEUs for attendees," says Bostic.

Below you can find an assortment of photos from TJC



Record Clearing Offers Fresh Start

Uplift Solutions is proud to announce another 60 Philadelphians have started the process to get their records cleared thanks to another FREE record clearing clinic held on April 20, 2024. “Unfortunately, the way the system is designed, clearing your record is the only real way to get a fresh start,” says Atif Bostic, Uplift CEO.

The Event was held at Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church during their annual “Men’s Know Your Numbers” day. The event was attended by more than 600 men who had an opportunity to take advantage of free health screenings to include prostate, retina, glucose, and more. The event also featured free haircuts, massages, and games.

Volunteer attorneys from the Philadelphia Lawyers for Social Equity (PLSE) held private confidential meetings with individuals seeking to clear their record where they reviewed their individual cases, developed an action plan, and started expungement and pardon applications. “This was an opportunity for individuals that have a past criminal record, who may have lost hope, meet with an attorney to discuss their individual case and apply for a pardon or expungement, giving them renewed hope and possibility,” says Maureen Cislo, Uplift’s Director of Development and Communications.

Uplift is proud to partner with Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church, Philadelphia Lawyers for Social Equity, and the Promise to bring hope and resources to our communities. Aligned with our mission of reducing barriers for justice impacted individuals, we will continue to hold record clearing events throughout the year.

Thank you to our sponsors: The Promise, PLSE and Enon Tabernacle Church.

Same Day Work Program (SDWP)

In 2023 Uplift began a Same Day Work Program (SDWP.) SDWP is a trauma-informed, no-barrier approach to assisting underserved individuals in need of an immediate solution for employment. As stated by a recent participant, “this program literally saved my life. I initially used the money to buy food and get a haircut. I did a good job and now I work full time for the employer. I am slowly getting myself back on my feet. I am saving for my own apartment so I can leave the shelter I have been living in.”

To achieve success, Uplift created a practice model which standardizes the SDWP experience by taking a trauma informed approach, while maintaining a level of flexibility to meet individuals where they are. This program targets individuals who are experiencing homelessness, housing insecurity, and/or just released from prison.

The SDWP is a half-day program that runs 4 days per week for 3 weeks. At the conclusion of the 3-week program, participants are transitioned to one of our workforce training programs or into permanent employment with at their current jobsite.

Enrollment

- Must be at least eighteen (18) years of age or older.
- Must reside in the Philadelphia area.
- There is NO ID required to enroll in Same Day Work Pay.

If you know someone that would be interested in or benefit from this program or any of our other programs, please contact Emma Spearing at:
Emma.Spearing@Upliftsolutions.org

April is the National Month of Hope



Monique Oakman-Robinson (Uplift Education and Training Manager)

The month of April is recognized as the National Month of Hope. Hope is an effective and powerful feeling that can have a significant effect on an individual's life as well as the world around them. It can encourage people to push through tough times, pursue dreams, and have the courage to overcome challenges and setbacks. Be a beacon of hope to those around you by:

- Being a role model to someone in your home or community.
- Calling a friend to lift their spirits.
- Contributing your time and energy to someone in need.
- Posting a motivational quote on social media.
- Expressing gratitude for yourself and others.

Spread your hope to others. And, always have hope for yourself.

Sincerely,

Ms. Mo

Uplift would not be what it is today without your help! Please continue to make our work possible by clicking the donate button below. THANK YOU!

[**DONATE HERE!**](#)