

BLACK MEN SPEAK™

HEALTH COMMUNITY & HOPE

MENTOR

ME

I CAN & I WILL

PRESENTED BY

our

HEALTH

matters™

www.kcourhealthmatters.com

**"It is easier to build
strong children than to
repair broken men."**

— Frederick Douglass, 1818-1895
Abolitionist, American Social Reformer and Writer

2024 SPECIAL EDITION

A close-up, profile shot of a Black man with short hair and a beard, wearing a plaid shirt and a black face mask pulled down to his chin. He is holding a black microphone to his mouth and appears to be speaking or singing. The background is a blurred green, suggesting an outdoor setting. A diagonal white line cuts across the image from the bottom left to the top right.

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MENTOR ME! I CAN & I WILL

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I SEE BLACK MEN & BOYS WINNING

In this special edition, we highlight recruiting Black men to become mentors. However, I also want you to know the mentees and understand their wide and diverse needs. According to Big Brothers Big Sisters, most potential mentees fall under these categories:

- One-guardian or single-parent households
- Dealing with the death or illness of a close family member
- Living with relatives (grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.)
- Has a parent who is deployed
- Has an incarcerated parent or sibling
- Are part of the LGBTQ+ community
- Are in foster care
- Referred by a counselor or teacher by a partner school or organization
- Are lacking a positive adult role model

In this edition we present men who are forthright about their commitment to mentor; they share lived experiences and understand the void left when a positive Black role model is absent. They are pouring into Black boys what someone poured into them, or what no one poured into them. They are “paying it forward.” **Read every story and every account. You will not be untouched!**

As we educate the community about the mentoring needs of Black boys, we do so with a heart of thanks for the support of our sponsors, special guests, the “men of the village” and our community.

What’s next? We build an army of Black men, mentoring Black boys! Watch for announcements (visit kcourhealthmatters.com) about upcoming Mentoring Education Workshops to get involved in this important work.

Give oxygen to HOPE!

Be safe. Stay strong and mentor someone.

Ruth Ramsey, Publisher and CEO

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BLACK MEN ARE WINNING

In November of 2022 **Our Health Matters™** released our inaugural special edition, **Black Men Speak: Health, Strength and Hope**. We featured Black men and boys from our community who shared personal glimpses into their opinions, challenges and accomplishments. Their insights fueled our interest to continue with a different conversation on the importance and benefits of Black men mentoring Black boys—**MENTOR ME! I CAN & I WILL**.

We continue to celebrate these alumni and encourage them to “pay it forward.”



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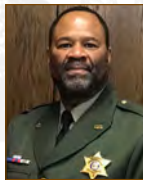
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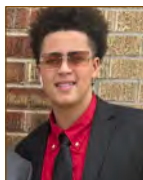
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6501 E 87th Street
Kansas City, MO 64138

Emmanuel Family & Child Development Center

4736 Prospect Avenue
Kansas City, MO 64130

Excelsior Springs Early Childhood Center

500 N Jesse James Road
Excelsior Springs, MO 64024

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Swope Health Leavenworth Pediatrics

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Leavenworth, KS 66048

Substance Abuse Center

Imani House

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TOGETHER WE CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

QUINTON D. LUCAS
MAYOR, CITY OF KANSAS CITY, MO

In Kansas City, the number of youths affected by violent crime is rising. As mayor of Kansas City, it is heartbreaking and concerning to see such an uptick in youth-related homicides. Mentorship and guidance are more important now than ever to ensure our children stay alive and reach a successful future.

Growing up, it took my whole community to shape me, including my track coach, who taught me important life lessons, how to keep going and accelerate—even when I wanted to quit. It is our responsibility as a community to step up and guide young people. Mentors are incredibly important for growth, and I am grateful for the men and women in my life who led me on a bright path.

To our community heroes—the teachers, neighborhood leaders, coaches, who are all serving as violence interrupters, mentors, and doing everything they can to guide our young

people toward success—thank you for all you do. It takes people to help us save lives.

Kansas City has several opportunities to make a positive impact on young people, including summer camps and after-school programs and other activities hosted by Aim4Peace and Kansas City Parks and Recreation. You can learn more about those opportunities at KCMO.gov.

Let's work together and make Kansas City a better place to live and build a future.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read 'Q. Lucas', written over a light blue grid background.

Quinton D. Lucas
Mayor, City of Kansas City, MO

FOREWORD

PAGE 10 **ARE YOUNG BLACK MEN IN DANGER?**

Bernard Franklin, PhD

Managing Director, Uncornered

“To be male, poor and African American is to confront on a daily basis a deeply held racism that exists in every social institution.”

PAGE 24 **THE MISSION—HELP BLACK BOYS SUCCEED BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY**

George Ramsey III

Sr. Program Manager

Veteran Outreach & Diversity Recruiting

“I often think about what my life would be like had I not had a village of positive mentors throughout my life.”

PAGE 34 **BLACK MEN—A POWERFUL ANTIDOTE**

Erik Dickinson, CEO and President
Urban Ranger Corps

“I am acutely aware of the transformative impact that mentorship can have, especially when it comes to Black men mentoring Black boys.”

PAGE 36 **EMPOWERING YOUTH THROUGH MENTORING**

Tyrone Taylor, Basileus Omicron Xi
Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Incorporated

“My mentee has struggled in school; with my help and guidance he improved his behavior.”

PAGE 44 **BUILDING MEN IS BETTER THAN MENDING BOYS**

Dr. Alan K. Green
Optimist Club of Clayton, MO
St. Paul Saturdays

“Many of the young men who come into the program don't have a father in the household. All of them, regardless of their family situation, need support.”



FOREWORD

ARE YOUNG BLACK MEN IN DANGER?

BERNARD FRANKLIN, PHD
MANAGING DIRECTOR, UNCORNERED

"To be male, poor, and African American is to confront on a daily basis a deeply held racism that exists in every social institution," says Camille Busette of the Brookings Institute, a nonprofit public policy organization based in Washington, DC. "No other demographic group has fared as badly, so persistently and for so long."

African American boys and young men are in deep crisis. The data is clear. We cannot ignore it. The number one leading cause of death for young Black men ages 14–25 is death by homicide—they are killing each other. The number two leading cause of death for young Black men is death by suicide—they are killing themselves. We are no longer talking about third-grade-to-prison pipeline. Now educators and social scientists are describing a pre-school-to-prison pipeline crisis. More and more young Black men are involved in the criminal justice system.

More young Black men are not graduating from high school and college—higher than any other group. As a result, many are not learning at their potential levels. The education system is failing them. That lack

of learning leads to higher school dropout levels, higher rates of poverty and higher incarceration rates. This is a crisis! We must challenge ourselves not to become numb to this data.

As Black men, we must step up and support the young people who are wreaking havoc in our streets.

Why Is Mentoring So Important?

Young African American men in Kansas City need mentors to provide guidance. They need solid, trustworthy adults to support them to ensure no one slips through the cracks. This community must help itself, and it starts with each one of us becoming more involved. As Black men, we must step up and support the young people who are wreaking havoc in our streets. The lived reality of Black boys and young men is riddled with socioeconomic challenges that contribute to diminished academic outcomes, lack of career options, low income, unstable relationships, deep involvement in the criminal justice system, poor health and addictions and death. Many young men in our community do not have a stable

home environment where they're loved, accepted, encouraged, or have an adult male to trust and rely on. As a result, some turn to negative influences such as drugs, crime or dropping out of school and face a tougher, uphill battle in life.

For too long, the conversation about Black boys has focused on what's wrong with their homes, schools and communities. It's past time for us to humanize these young men by focusing on the assets and resources they possess as they navigate expectations related to their gender and race. To uplift the next generation of boys, we must focus on their successes and gifts while encouraging them to strive to become the best versions of themselves.

To save our community, we must save our young men in Kansas City. One way to do that is by becoming a mentor.

Should Kansas City Establish a Task Group for Young Black Men?

In my work, we seek to humanize the young men we work with, giving them many opportunities to tell their own stories about their experiences. Our work confirms that Black boys are just as complex and fully human as everybody else. They care deeply about the safety and well-being of their local communities.

If we aim to understand our boys' lived experience, we must consider a Kansas City Task Force on Young Black Men. We must bring serious focus to this critical issue to learn how they navigate their journey every day, how they spend their time outside of school and how they choose their peers.

A Call To Action

This call to action places importance on mentors, particularly for young Black boys. A mentor is a trusted counselor or guide who provides support in various aspects of the mentee's development, whether academic or professional. Most importantly, a mentor is someone who emulates and personifies all that our youth aspire to be.

Mentors must come from every sector of the community. We should consider collaborating with community colleges, four-year universities, or college access nonprofits, corporations, churches, and any organization where successful men might be connected. We might also consider near-peer mentors who can serve as role models and build strong relationships with Black boys in high schools, giving them a sense of what their own next steps may look like. These efforts can help students strengthen their connection and begin forming an attachment to institutions of higher education or trade skill pathways.

All kids need stable, healthy, trustworthy adults they can depend on to help them find hope and answers during these difficult times. Mentoring can help our students understand they're not alone. Life is about developing coping skills so we can successfully handle issues, pressures and opportunities that come our way. Mentors help students learn how to cope.

You can change a boy's life for the better by being someone they can trust. You don't have to be perfect! None of us have been able to escape all the pain life hands us, but we've survived. That's how you can relate to these boys. You give them hope for a brighter future. The impact you can have on a young boy by caring about who he is—that's immeasurable. Every young African American man is one caring adult away from unlocking his Einstein brilliance and his contribution to his community.

Bernard Franklin, PhD, is nationally recognized as a passionate advocate for children and youth who come from hard places. He is currently the managing director of Uncornered, an urban violence elimination program. KC UNCORNED launched in summer 2022, and currently assists more than 50 young people with mental health support, educational pathways, mentorship and financial resources. Its goal is to unlock the potential of Core Influencers—those most closely involved in street violence—to help urban communities thrive.



PREPARING THE NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS

**REV. LOUIS ENRIQUE NEGRÓN, SR.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & COO
100 BLACK MEN OF ATLANTA, INC.**

Relecting on my journey, one of the most valuable lessons I learned in this work is that “unhealed people hurt people.” My journey to healing my boyhood and young adult traumas has entailed healing my inner boy. Doing so has allowed me to focus on my work with boys, young men and men.

The motto of the 100 Black Men of Atlanta, Inc. is “If they see it, they will be it.” In my lifetime, I have been blessed with men who modeled the way to success, and I choose to use this gift to pour the same blessing into the lives of young people. What I love about being a member and the leader of the 100 Black Men of Atlanta, Inc. is connecting with young people and their families. It’s the small moments that make a big difference in the lives of young people. Our time, sharing wisdom, being present and being consistent are the trademarks of the men of the 100.

My call to action and challenge to my brothers is to learn to heal. In my own life, I used therapy, forgiveness, and love to overcome my traumas. I understood my father and the men in my life did not have the emotional tools to be healing or

loving. Their experiences shaped my life into what I am today; I forgive them for their missteps, and in the end, when my father was dying, that healing and forgiveness happened upon his deathbed. Take the time now to heal, love and serve your community.

Take the time now to heal, love
and serve your community.

Creating a Generation of Leaders— Protectors and Healers of Our Community

Louis Negrón is on a mission to make a difference in the lives of Atlanta’s youth and young adults. He and his team of volunteers and partners are preparing the next generation of leaders.

A natural servant leader, Negrón has spent his career working to improve the lives of people in his community. One of his priorities is to establish 100 Black Men of Atlanta as the protector of the city’s children, and further, to raise their profile as the premier Black volunteer mentorship group.

The founding members set the tone for excellence in 1986 when the chapter was established. Atlanta entrepreneur Nathaniel Goldston III and 18 close friends and business associates banded together to get it started. Some of the men included former Atlanta mayors Maynard Jackson and Andrew Young, as well as Hank Aaron, a legendary major league baseball player.

One of the first service projects the group undertook involved the Perry Homes community, public housing residences located on the west side of the city. They adopted a third-grade class and promised the students that if they graduated on time, they would be awarded scholarships to attend college. They didn't just make the promise and walk away. The 100 Black Men put tutoring programs in place to support them and their families.

For more than 38 years, 100 Black Men has opened programming to boys and girls throughout Atlanta, starting in grade six. The Atlanta chapter is one of the country's largest, with more than 300 members.

Programs support youth from middle school into adulthood. They work with students in a wide range of programs and activities that include:

- **Project Success.** Nationally recognized Saturday School (provides nurturing, personalized mentoring support and social, emotional and communication skill development).
- **STEM/Coding and Robotics.** To inspire elementary, middle and high school students' interest in the Science, Technology, Engineering & Math fields.
- **Father Initiative.** To foster and promote responsible fatherhood, healthy marriages, and ensure economic stability; a partnership with State of Georgia Department of Family and Children Services.
- **Mentoring.** Support students beginning in the sixth grade, up through college and into adulthood.

- **Education.** Partnerships with four area colleges: Morehouse College, Spelman College, Georgia State University and Oglethorpe University.
- **Career Exploration and Life Skills.** Mentorship to develop global leaders with skills to find, sustain and advance in any career.

THE 100 BLACK MEN OF ATLANTA VIOLENCE PREVENTION



Our Message: Reduce gun violence among the populations we serve.

Our Model: AWARENESS—means we can do something about it. We make gun violence the pariah and reinforce training in anger control and conflict resolution from the youngest to the oldest, to address impulsive and spontaneous behavior.

Our Medium: Our community hears and sees our commitment to eliminate violence. We use every medium of communication: radio, billboards, television, influencers, social media, sporting events, business and community events.

It Takes a Village

Before mentors can start working with mentees, they undergo a criminal background check, are 35 years of age and have experience working in their communities. 100 Black Men ensures that the mentor and mentee are matched and that it's a family decision. "We can't mentor a young person without the family being involved," Negrón says.

"We also ask our mentors to commit to being protectors and healers of our community," Negrón continues. "And to pour their gifts, time and talents into the work they are doing."



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IS AN EARLY START TO SUCCESS

JAMAL BERRY, CEO, EDUCARE DC
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION EXPERT
WASHINGTON DC

I knew at a young age that working with children and teaching was my gift. I have always had the ability to make connections and foster relationships easily. Some may call it being an extrovert or a people person; whatever it is called, it drives my passion for seeing children of color succeed. When passion is coupled with knowledge, magic happens.

I began my work in the early childhood education field while a collegiate athlete at Bowie State University in Bowie, Maryland. During the past 18 years, I have grown in the profession and continue to invest in the development of educators for our youngest learners. I am just one of the 3% of Black men nationwide in the early childhood field.

High-quality early childhood education requires intentional research-based strategies and curricula and an understanding of

how children grow and learn. It is important that children are exposed to this approach in the earliest stages of their development—that is when the brain is the most adaptive. According to Zero to Three, a non-profit organization dedicated to early development research, “During the earliest months and years of life, the architecture of the brain is being built at an unparalleled rate in response to nurturing early experiences.”

The experience of children of color in early childhood education is impacted by systemic racism and bias within the educational system. Gilliam, Reyes and Chin (2005) found that boys were expelled at a rate over 4.5 times that of girls. African Americans attending state-funded pre-kindergarten were about twice as likely to be expelled as Latino and Caucasian children, and over five times as likely to be expelled as Asian-American children.

For early childhood education environments to be diverse and inclusive, we must engage more men in education, specifically early childhood education, because representation matters. Seeing and relating to someone

who looks like you helps to build identity and balance.

I was able to matriculate through three degrees in child studies and early childhood education by obtaining scholarships, which relieved the financial pressure on my family. By creating intentional funding streams and recruitment efforts of men into the field of early childhood education, we can close the opportunity gap that many of our young children face. I believe if we train Black men to go into our classrooms, we can achieve higher educational outcomes for all children.

In life we are given many chances to make the world better when we leave than when we were born. Investment in early childhood education is an opportunity to do just that. Fredrick Douglass said it best: “It is better to teach young boys than to repair broken men.” Many of our societal woes can be curtailed if we start early.

Jamal Berry is a co-convener of DC Men in Early Childhood Education and founder of the Phi Nu Nu Graduate Chapter of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.

THE EFFECT OF TOXIC STRESS ON CHILDREN

OPPORTUNITY INSTITUTE AND ECONOMIC POLICY INSTITUTE. ABSTRACT OF 2019 REPORT.

According to the Opportunity Institute, a national nonprofit that works to increase social and economic mobility and advance racial equity, frightening or threatening situations are more sustained and are experienced more frequently by African American and socially and economically disadvantaged children. This report shows how toxic stress depresses children's outcomes and contributes to the "achievement gap." They suggest policy and practice recommendations that can reduce the reasoning, behavioral and health harm that toxic stress provokes. Key findings include:

- Beginning in infancy, children in poverty are more likely to have strong, frequent or prolonged exposure to major traumatic events, the frightening or threatening conditions that induce a stress response.
- Independent of other characteristics, children exposed to more frightening and threatening events are more likely to suffer from academic problems, behavioral problems and health problems.

These attributes present challenges to children's school and life trajectories.

Policy Recommendations

Ultimately, larger social change is needed to address the economic and social conditions at the root of children's toxic stress. But given that these larger social problems will not be easily or quickly solved, policymakers must find other ways to improve outcomes for children who are at high risk for toxic stress. The report suggests the following interventions in policy and practice:

- **Provide supports for parents.** To promote protective parenting, implement support programs such as home visits and/or therapy services by community health workers, nurses and other health specialists. These programs can build the capacity of caregivers to provide children with safe, stable and nurturing relationships.
- **Train school staff to support children.** To prepare trauma-informed staff and improve how preschools and schools support children exposed to frightening or threatening experiences, adults in these settings should receive training to help them understand how such experiences affect students' learning and behavior.
- **Address racially discriminatory policies and practices in schools.** Schools should be especially careful to eliminate in-school experiences that can be so stressful that they themselves can generate a toxic stress response. Racially discriminatory discipline policies can induce stress in children.
- **Engage healthcare professionals in screening and treatment.** All children should be routinely screened for frightening or threatening experiences. Healthcare professionals should be trained to understand how these experiences impact children's cognitive, behavioral and physical health outcomes, and they should screen and treat children for any resulting complications.

Sources: *The Opportunity Institute* (www.theopportunityinstitute.org) and *Economic Policy Institute* (www.epi.org).



A PERSONAL JOURNEY TO WELLNESS FOR BLACK MEN AND BOYS

L. NATHAN GAUSE MD, MBA

Greetings, community members. As a Black Orthopaedic surgeon, it is both an honor and a responsibility to be included in a special edition of *Our Health Matters*. In this issue, we embark on a journey to explore the unique health challenges faced by Black men and boys. Join me as we delve into the heart of health disparities, confront the hard truths, and discover actionable steps toward a healthier future.

In our community, health disparities are not just statistics; they are lived experiences. As a surgeon, I've witnessed firsthand the prevalence of chronic conditions such as hypertension and diabetes, as well as the resulting conditions that are the consequence of a previous disease or injury when left untreated. The numbers tell a sobering story—Black men face a higher risk of heart disease and have a lower life expectancy compared to our white counterparts. It's a stark reality that demands our attention.

Facing the Hard Facts

Black men are 30% more likely to battle heart disease, and widely feared prostate cancer looms twice as large for us. Diabetes, a silent adversary, is 77% more prevalent among Black adults. These are health challenges that many of us grapple with daily.

Empowering Black Men and Boys for Healthier Lifestyles

As Black men, we hold the power to transform our health outcomes. It starts with prioritizing our well-being through regular exercise, balanced nutrition and routine check-ups. Let's embrace a culture of health

consciousness and uplift each other toward healthier lifestyles.

Building Bonds with Healthcare Providers

I understand the hesitation many of us feel when it comes to seeking medical care. Historical mistrust and systemic biases have left their mark. But I implore you, as I've learned through my own journey, building positive relationships with healthcare providers is crucial. Ask questions, be an active participant in your health decisions and seek out providers who understand the unique challenges we face as Black men.

The Power of Mentorship—Pay it Forward

As the first physician in my family, my path was illuminated by mentors who shared my background. A mentor I met in high school, a descendant of Africans like me, fueled my ambition to pursue Orthopaedic Surgery. During residency, a Black orthopaedic surgeon ensured I gained the skills to succeed. Now, I pay it forward by mentoring underrepresented minorities during their education.

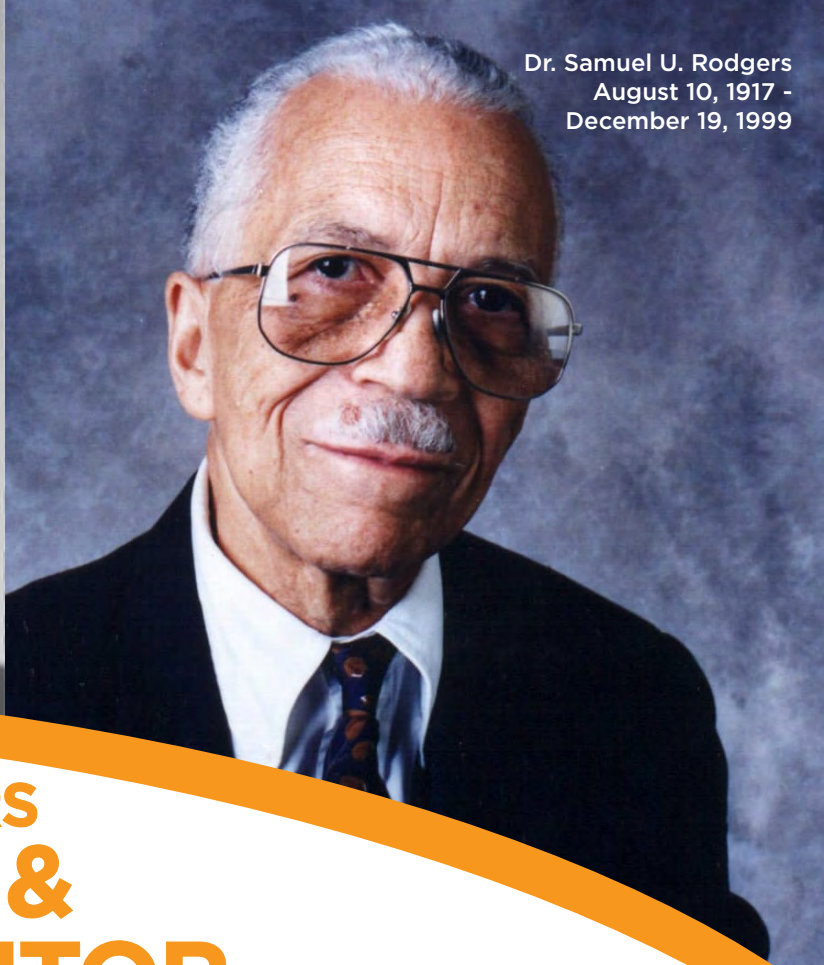
“You Can't Be What You Can't See”

Marian Wright Edelman's words echo the essence of mentorship. Mentorship isn't just about guidance; it's about providing a vision for what is possible. As Black boys see successful adults from diverse backgrounds, they gain a sense of hope and ambition. Mentorship becomes a powerful force, shattering preconceived limitations and fostering a brighter future.

I applaud this special edition of *Our Health Matters*. I share this journey with you—a journey of understanding, empowerment and hope.

Dr. L. Nathan Gause is a board-certified orthopaedic surgeon at University Health and Assistant Professor, Department of Orthopaedic Surgery at UMKC School of Medicine-Kansas City.

Dr. Samuel U. Rodgers
August 10, 1917 -
December 19, 1999



DR. SAMUEL U. RODGERS TRAILBLAZER & ULTIMATE MENTOR

Samuel Ulysses Rodgers, M.D., MPH was an integral part of the generation of Black physicians who brought an end to racially segregated healthcare in the Kansas City area. He was a true trailblazer and mentor for many in the medical profession and throughout the community.

After serving in Italy in World War II and being awarded a combat medical badge, Dr. Rodgers returned home and found he could not advance beyond the level of general practitioner. Segregation denied him opportunities to advance in his profession—yet he found a way to excel. He strongly believed Black doctors deserved the right to opportunities to become what they were capable of becoming, and he shared his knowledge by mentoring other Black doctors whom he knew had great potential.

In 1950, Rodgers became only the fifth Black board-certified OBGYN in the nation. After completing his residency at Kansas City's segregated General Hospital #2, he, along with several colleagues, established one of the first Black medical practices in Kansas City.

Rodgers founded the Wayne Miner Health Center in 1968 to increase health care access for the underserved in Kansas City's urban core. The center was renamed in 1988 to the Samuel U. Rodgers Community Health Center in acknowledgment of Rodgers' contributions. He served as the executive director for 29 years until his retirement as Director Emeritus in 1996.

After more than 50 years, Rodgers Health continues to demonstrate its passion for delivering quality healthcare services to all who walk through their doors, regardless of their ability to pay.

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SAMUEL U. RODGERS
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HAVE A MENTOR, AND BE ONE

CORNELL ELLIS

FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

BROTHERS LIBERATING OUR COMMUNITIES (BLOC)

Young Black boys are in a crisis in our country, and it is vitally important we support them with Black male mentors who help illuminate their potential. Through representative, intentional and purposeful mentoring, young Black boys can have an increased chance of being who they are supposed to be—and dream of becoming.

Having one Black educator in the life of a Black student increases their chances of graduating from high school and attending college by over 30%. Currently, only 2% of educators in America are Black men, according to Donors Choose. While 7-8% of students in America are Black boys, they make up the highest percentage of illiterate, suspended and dropout students.

This demographic crisis leads us to a revolutionary, yet simple solution: by adding more Black men to the education system, we can transform the educational landscape. It is well documented that Black male educators spend more time mentoring and building relationships with students outside of the classroom than any other teacher demographic.

The social, emotional and relational benefits derived from mentoring relationships are the foundations for community change.

As a founder and executive director of Kansas City's Brothers Liberating Our Communities (BLOC),

By adding more Black men to the education system, we can transform the educational landscape.

whose purpose is to support Black male educators, I am surrounded by a council of men who influence me. We use the phrase, "Have a mentor, and be one." Fellowship members are intentionally and purposefully paired with an individual who can best support their goals and aspirations. These pairings are the lifeblood of our organization, creating a foundational relationship serving to motivate our candidates for success.

Males being mentors for each other is the element that will change the educational landscape by providing support to the men who will support

Black students. When BLOC members are mentored by other BLOC members, we see an increase in overall retention of educators in the education field. By supporting Black men in education, we retain them, increase their effectiveness and thus impact thousands more students daily.

Having one Black educator in the life of a Black student increases their chances of graduating from high school and attending college by over 30%.

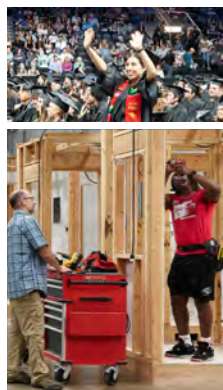
As BLOC partners with the Kansas City, Kansas juvenile justice system, we consistently note one

similarity among all the young men—their lack of network. The young men trapped in our system cannot name 10 adults in their lives who would act as a net when they fall, and who would work to lift them up out of precarious situations. If we work to build systems of radical love around our young people through systems like mentorships, we will undoubtedly be working towards liberation of our communities.

Cornell uses his educational and professional experience to impart a strong understanding of equitable and justice-centered surroundings for schools and leaders through public speaking and consultation with his LLC—Eggshells Inc. He leads workshops and is a keynote speaker for notable conferences in education.



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**MENTOR ME!
I CAN & I WILL**





WHAT THEY SEE IS WHAT THEY'LL BE®

JEFFREY J. DAVIS, IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT
100 BLACK MEN OF GREATER KANSAS CITY

It is not by coincidence that our national organization, The Black 100 Men of America, built its mission around the motto “What They See Is What They’ll Be.”® It serves as a constant reminder to every member of chapters around the world that they must consistently commit themselves to modeling the type of people our children will look up to and emulate.

Mentoring Adds Perspective

As they are growing up, kids try to step into the “shoes” of their parents, but they don’t fit. Time and growth are needed. Having a friendship with a Black male mentor provides the opportunity for storytelling and knowledge sharing. The lessons learned, success stories and failures may help guide boys over time as they grow. Every generation in our community starts from scratch. But there is no need to recreate the wheel when the road has been traveled by many others before them.

The needs of our community are many, and it’s difficult to say one is bigger than another. The case for mentoring Black boys is in plain sight and outweighs any conversation about what issues are more important. The point is we cannot shy away from the needs of Black boys and their families to focus on less important issues. We must fully embrace the responsibility we have to our mentees and our communities.

100 Black Men KC—Four Focus Areas

Mentoring: Our monthly group mentoring sessions expose high school students to mentors from diverse backgrounds to stimulate their educational, social, emotional and creative insights.

Economic Empowerment: Our financial literacy program, Dollars & Sense, is administered in partnership with Northeast Middle School (nems.kcpublicschools.org) in which high school students learn Principles of Saving, Investing, and Wealth Building. This is one example of the ways in which we prepare mentees to realize their highest potential.

Education: Hands-on learning in Science, Technology, Electronics and Math (STEM).

Health & Wellness Initiative: A national adult Take Action for Health initiative (www.takeactionforhealth.org) and NIKE football and multi-sports camp.

It takes a village to develop our children, including a village of MEN—not social media, not video games, not music, not another race or gender and not another non-vested entity. **The 100 Black Men KC is seeking MEN who are ready, willing and able to stand and be counted.**

To learn about program initiatives and the rewards of being a 100 KC member, a mentor or supporter, visit www.100blackmenkc.com.



MENTORING AT KCPS

The KCPS Mentoring program gives students in grades K-12 the opportunity to build a meaningful relationship with a caring adult. Mentors meet with their mentees for 30 minutes, 2-4 times per month during the school day.



LUNCH BUDDIES:

- K-5th grade
- Visit mentee during lunch period 2-4 times per month
- Celebrate and acknowledge effort and success
- A consistent, positive adult figure

SUCCESS MENTORS:

- 6th-9th grade
- Visit mentee during school day 2-4 times per month
- Celebrate and acknowledge academic effort
- Be part of mentee's network of supportive adults

CAREER MENTORS:

- 10th-12th grade
- Visit mentee during school day 2-4 times per month
- Set goals for present and future success
- Promote career and college readiness
- Model responsibility and self-advocacy



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MERRRELL R. BENNEKIN, J.D., CPM
KAPPA ALPHA PSI FRATERNITY, INC.
KANSAS CITY (MO) ALUMNI CHAPTER
KEEPER OF RECORDS



If you're a Black man, consider becoming a mentor or role model for a Black boy. Your guidance and support can make a significant difference in his life, providing positive examples, encouragement and opportunities for growth. Whether through mentorship programs, community organizations or simply reaching out to a young person in your circle, your involvement can help shape a brighter future for him and contribute to building a stronger community.

The Kansas City (MO) Alumni Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. has long been involved in mentoring young men. Investing time, talent and resources to support a young Black male can yield numerous rewards, including:

- **Personal Fulfillment:**

Witnessing the positive impact you have on a young person's life can bring immense satisfaction and fulfillment.

- **Community Building:** By investing in the next generation, you contribute to building a stronger, more resilient community with empowered individuals who can uplift others.
- **Legacy Building:** Your efforts can leave a lasting legacy by inspiring future generations and creating a ripple effect of positive change.
- **Professional Growth:** Mentoring and supporting young Black males can enhance your leadership, communication, and interpersonal skills, which can benefit you personally and professionally.
- **Social Impact:** Your investment helps address systemic issues such as inequality and lack of opportunity, leading to broader societal benefits and a more equitable future.
- **Empowerment:** Providing guidance, resources and encouragement empowers young Black males to reach their full potential, pursue their goals and overcome obstacles.

The Kappa Fraternity is proud of its signature Guide Right Program that helps young men achieve academic success, develop leadership skills and become responsible and

productive members of society. The program participants are involved in sessions centered around the Seven Phases of Guide Right, with a strong emphasis on life skills development and academic support.

The program has also embraced the National Guide Right Committee's Core 4 Focus initiative: College Prep, College Success, Social Action—Community Service and Positive Vision. Partnerships with schools in Kansas City, Kansas allowed us to expand the number of students who are able to take advantage of the Guide Right program, with the following specific areas of focus:

- Tutoring and Academic Support to help mentees improve their grades and academic performance.
- Career Development Opportunities, such as job shadowing, to help mentees explore career paths.
- Guidance and Support to Mentees who are preparing for college, including assistance with college applications, financial aid and college visits.

Investing in the development and well-being of young Black males not only benefits them individually but also strengthens communities and contributes to a more just and inclusive society for all.

COACHING MENTORING SPONSORING

For 12 years, the Bluford Healthcare Leadership Institute (BHLI) has offered an intense professional development program to cultivate a pipeline of competent, underrepresented scholars for leadership roles in healthcare.



BHLI Faculty and Scholar Gyasi C. Chisley, MHA, MBA, former Senior Vice President Clinical Integration and Strategic Initiatives, United Healthcare (on left), speaks with former Morehouse College Scholar, Marque Long, MPH, RTI International

TO ELIMINATE HEALTH DISPARITIES FOR VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

BHLI scholars analyze the broad healthcare landscape and experience internships with executive level healthcare leaders to improve health outcomes over the next two generations.

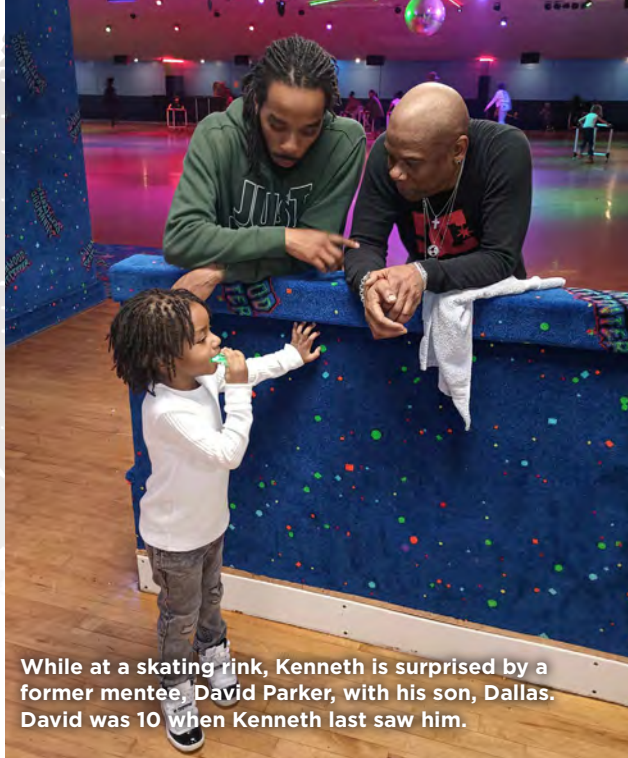
Scholars study issues and policies that impact health disparities through professional development in these areas:

- Ethics and Integrity
- Leadership Styles and Assessment
- Socioeconomic Determinants of Health
- Critical Thinking/Systems Thinking/Conceptual Skills
- Health Law/Public Policy
- Healthcare Administration
- Behavioral Health
- Communication/Interpersonal Skills
- Pharmacy
- Health Disparities
- Public Health
- Nursing Leadership



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While at a skating rink, Kenneth is surprised by a former mentee, David Parker, with his son, Dallas. David was 10 when Kenneth last saw him.

I'VE BEEN CALLED MENTOR MANY TIMES

KENNETH WALKER

As a Black man in this world who is trying to always move forward and be a productive member of society, I have been called a mentor many times, by many people. I can't say that I have ever intentionally set out to mentor any person, but it seems that God's hands have a way of guiding me in the direction of those who could take advantage of the knowledge I have gleaned from life. I hope and pray that somehow, I have helped someone in that manner.

In 1967, I entered second grade as the first Black student at Harry S. Truman Elementary School. I remained the only Black student until the sixth grade when another Black student, a girl, started school there. Before that, I existed in the bliss of ignorance while in the midst of prejudice, racism and emotional abuse from both students and teachers. Things that I never shared with my parents that happened to me on a daily basis, because of the color of my skin, that I thought were normal.

I never had anyone there to help me figure it out. If I can help it, I will help a kid figure it out if that's what they need. Especially a young Black

King, who could probably make it in life if only he had a little help. If I am truly a mentor, that is why I am. The most satisfying feeling in the world is when someone you mentor is successful.

I often wonder why other people see me as being a mentor, so I thought I might educate myself on what a mentor actually is, what they do and the impact they can have on the life of a youth. Here is what I learned:

A mentor is a trusted guide who provides support, advice and encouragement to a less experienced person. They offer their knowledge, skills and experience to help others grow and develop both personally and professionally. Mentorship is a two-way relationship that benefits both the mentor and the mentee.

Young Black boys benefit from having mentors who are Black men for various reasons, including:

- 1. Identity development:** Black boys are often bombarded with negative stereotypes and images of Black men in the media. Having a positive Black male role model can help them develop a strong sense of self-worth and identity.

- 2. Cultural understanding:** Black men can provide young Black boys with a deeper understanding of their culture and history. They can share their experiences and perspectives on race, racism and the challenges faced by Black communities.
- 3. Role modeling:** Black men can demonstrate positive behaviors and values for young Black boys to emulate.
- 4. Building trust:** Black boys may feel more comfortable confiding in and seeking advice from Black men.
- 5. Advocacy:** Black men can advocate for young Black boys and ensure that they have access to opportunities and resources.
- 6. Historical and contemporary context:** Black men can provide young Black boys with a

deeper understanding of the historical and contemporary struggles of Black communities.

It's important to note that not all Black men are the same, and not all young Black boys will benefit from having a Black male mentor. However, for the majority of young Black boys I have encountered over the years, having a positive Black male role model has been a powerful force in their lives.

Kenneth is a senior at UMKC majoring in digital journalism. Kenneth's mentor, Eddie Penrice (deceased) a well-known musician, singer and event and media producer, played a major role in Kenneth's life.



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George with Alpha Scholar at community service project in Ft. Worth, TX



Mentees role play a potential encounter with police.

THE MISSION—HELP BLACK BOYS SUCCEED BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY

GEORGE RAMSEY III

As a young boy growing up in a single-parent home, I was exposed to mentorship early. There were uncles, neighbors, coaches and teachers who made themselves available to grow my confidence and fill a gap that existed for a boy who desperately wanted a father figure in his life. Those early years taught me how to be a supportive and encouraging male role model and prepared me for my own mentoring journey.

I have spent the past 20 years supporting and guiding Black boys from 12 to 18 years of age. As a “Big” with Big Brothers Big Sisters, coach and program leader, I know this is my opportunity to pay it forward. Youth at different stages of their lives need a supportive environment that provides a safe space to develop their skills and confidence. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to mentoring. It is important to be a good listener and allow mentorship to be a reciprocal process that develops trust between the mentee and mentor.

I am the Director of Educational Activities for the Alpha Academy in Fort Worth, TX. I lead bi-monthly mentoring sessions for 63 Black and Hispanic boys that are focused on developing leadership skills and meaningful relationships. Our success is evident, as we receive numerous requests to expand the program from individual mentoring sessions to site-based group mentoring at local schools.

Real Life Issues a Big Part of Mentoring

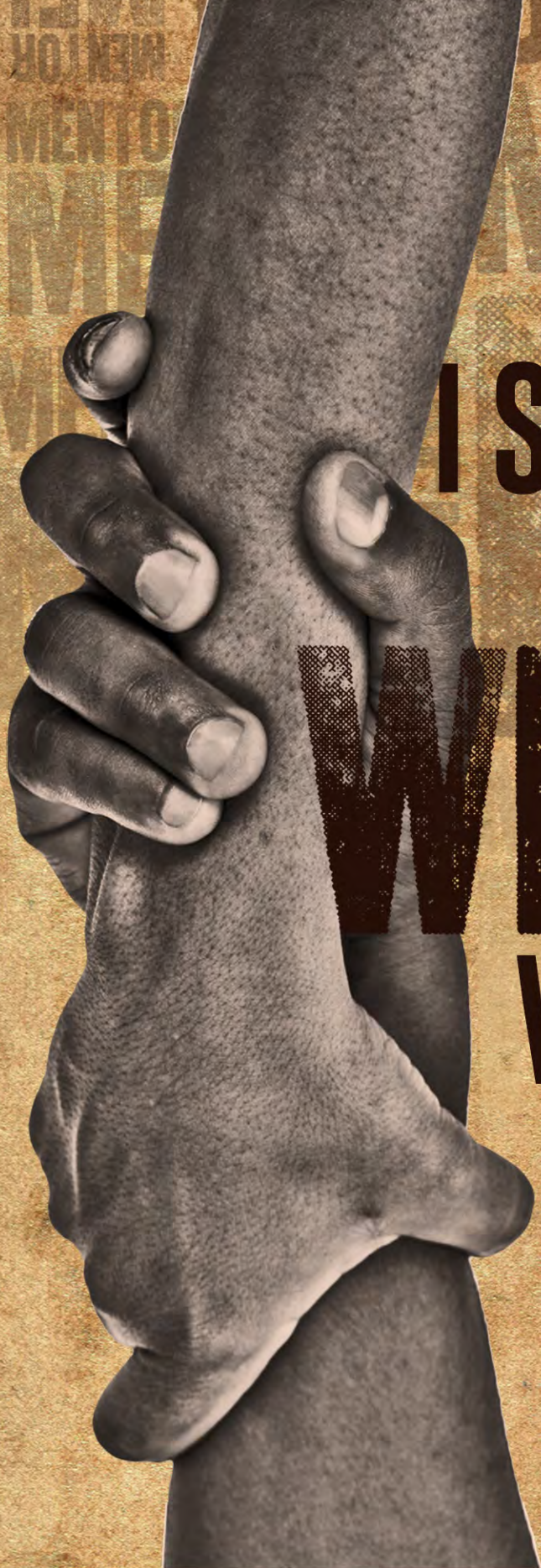
In November 2023, our Alpha Academy scholars

met with members of the Fort Worth (TX) Police Department under the direction of Det. James Dunn and Commander A. Williams, to educate our mentees on a real-life scenario of “What to Do When Stopped by the Police.” They participated in police engagement scenarios, asked questions and learned how to respond to and engage with law enforcement.

I often think about what my life would be like had I not had a village of positive mentors throughout the years.

I often think about what my life would be like had I not had a village of positive mentors throughout the years. I can only hope that I am as available and valuable to young men in my community as so many have been for me. I CAN & I WILL continue to give back by mentoring the next generation of leaders and future mentors.

For more than 20 years George Ramsey has worked in the field of talent acquisition and leader development for government, corporate and nonprofit sectors. Ramsey retired as First Sergeant from the U.S. Army after 30 years. In addition to his Bachelor of Public Administration, Ramsey is completing an MBA in Human Resources Management while simultaneously completing a Doctorate in Organizational Change and Leadership from the University of Southern California.



I SEE BLACK MEN
& BOYS
WINNING!
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Big Brothers Big Sisters®

Mohamed Dia (on left) with
his mentor, Jeremy Schafer

MENTORING IS A “BIG” DEAL

**MOHAMED DIA, ENGINEER & ENTREPRENEUR
BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS KANSAS CITY**

When I was three years old, my family moved to Kansas City from Senegal, West Africa. As the oldest child, I helped my family as we settled into our new lives. Fitting in was difficult. English wasn't my first language, so I had to work twice as hard to adapt to my surroundings. My parents worked extremely hard to support us despite not always having the money, time or understanding of how to become successful. They always wanted the best for me and wanted me to reach my highest potential. This meant finding a way to help me grow, stay out of danger and capitalize on opportunities.

I had dreams of being a doctor, engineer or entrepreneur, and to get there, I needed someone in my life to help me navigate the areas that my parents couldn't. That's what led me to Big Brothers Big Sisters. I knew from the very beginning that I was going to be able to learn from my “Big” (the name they give to mentors). Jeremy was a business owner. He constantly reminded me that progress takes patience and consistency, just like the relationship we formed. He exposed me to a variety of activities and experiences that helped turn me into the man I am today.

Big Brothers Big Sisters Kansas City allowed me to achieve many of the goals I had when I was younger, including my dream of becoming an Engineer. Because of them, I met the president of a large engineering company. That meeting led to an internship, which

turned into a full time job after graduation. Today, I've started my own company as an entrepreneur.

BBBSKC matches kids who want and need a mentor in their life with a caring, adult mentor in a one-to-one friendship. They enroll children starting in second grade and allow them to stay with the program until they are meaningfully employed. Our kids come from all walks of life. Most are growing up in a one-parent home, are living in foster care or have experienced the loss of a close family member.

There are over 250 kids waiting for a Big in the Kansas City area. Of those, 80% are boys of color. Many would like to be matched with someone who looks like them.

I now serve as the President of the Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion team on the Board at BBBSKC because I know how important it is to cultivate potential and help young people—especially those who look like me—know that they are worthy and capable of achieving their dreams. Our team works in the communities of need to recruit more Bigs, but we desperately need more men of color to step up and be a Big. As a former Little Brother myself, I can tell you, the impact you can have on a life can be life-changing.

For more information visit: BBBSKC.org



ELEVATING MENTORING TO PRIORITY STATUS

**DARRYL JONES, CHAIR EMERITUS
BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF EASTERN MISSOURI**

Over the last 20 years, we have witnessed the devastation of the family unit as adult males have been removed from the home via incarceration. There has been a proliferation of single heads of households, grandparents and other surrogates as parents and an upsurge in homelessness as well as a bombardment of messages from media that suggest you are inferior if you don't possess certain material goods. These and other issues have challenged our youth's mental stability.

It is a sad situation when youth are being reared by social media and the "streets." Neither are good substitutes for a structured, nurturing environment.

These issues have elevated mentoring to a priority. The public is at a crossroads, either to get involved in a youth's life now or pay for non-involvement later.

Our youth are screaming for help. They want a positive influence in their lives; they need us; they want to experience being loved, belonging and someone involved in their development.

My "Little" Became a Part of My Life

I became involved with BBBS of Eastern Missouri as a "Big" and eventually served as Chair of the Board of Directors.

As a "Big," I was paired with my "Little," who was a fourth grader. We would talk about schoolwork, activities he liked, historical events that I lived through or read about, but mostly he just wanted to hang out—and that was the beauty of mentoring. I connected with him every week as part of my weekend routine. We would bond over washing cars or cutting grass; going to the grocery store or the cleaners; assisting with community service events or going to Six Flags to ride roller coasters. We would

visit my office so he could learn what it meant to be a citizen contributing to the community.

My Little was introduced to every member of my family, who easily accepted him as one of us. We carved pumpkins together, decorated trees, celebrated birthdays, attended my first WWE event (it was crazy) and again, he just wanted to hang out.

Between his mother and me, we managed to get him out of grade school, matriculate from high school and complete one year of college. However, as he matured, I felt a distance in our relationship. We could not connect as much as I wanted to, but by now, he was 18 years old. I was unable to continue to be an active part of his development, and the streets knew it. The streets kept tugging and tugging until they pulled him in. Sad to say, he died at the youthful age of twenty.

In my experience, most of those wanting a mentor are African American while most of the mentors are white. We need more Black men and women to become mentors so our youth can see and hear their stories of overcoming obstacles and becoming productive contributors to society.

Being a mentor in someone's life is not a guarantee that all will be good, but I contend that if I had not been part of my Little's life, he would have departed us much sooner. I am sad to say I failed, but I tried.

I pray someone upon reading my mentoring journey will accept the challenge and become a mentor.

Darryl Jones is Chair Emeritus, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Eastern Missouri; participant in St. Louis Public Schools Role Model Project; Chair of Board of Trustees, St. Louis University High School (SLUH); Board of Trustees, St. Louis University (SLU); and Past Vice-Chair, Urban League Metro St Louis.

BLACK MEN SPEAK

HEALTH COMMUNITY & HOPE



Robin (left) poses with one of his former team players at the NBA draft.

BEING MENTORED MADE ME THE MAN I AM TODAY

ROBIN LUCAS

My brother Rory and I met our mentor, Mr. Walter Pearson, when we were 11 and 12 years old through the Big Brothers organization. Mr. Pearson would come to pick us up and have talks with us about life, doing right in life, and about being our own boss one day. But the biggest and hardest-hitting conversation he had with us was about the importance of education.

His impact on my brother and me was instrumental in helping us stay focused as we were growing up. This mentoring experience showed us that a Black man cared and had an interest in helping a young Black boy be successful; but more importantly, he drummed into our heads to “do what’s right.”

As I became an adult, my experience with Mr. Pearson sparked an interest in me to also be a mentor. I’m using my knowledge and skills in sports to reach our young Black boys, including some hard conversations about life that every Black male needs to hear.

My big takeaway from Mr. Pearson’s mentoring is the importance of making wise decisions; being accountable, not forgetting where I came from and the value of giving back to another Black kid. This has made me the man I am today. I’ve been in the banking

field for over 40 years and have been coaching grassroots basketball for over 35 years.

I am proud to say we have all done well. My brother, Rory, is a master plumber. He has two daughters and a son. I have three sons. My oldest, Rob Jr., has a Master’s Degree in IT Health; my

I’m convinced that other Black men can give back to our youth who don’t have anyone.

second son, Renaud, has a bachelor’s degree and my youngest son, Rashaad, has a AA degree. All three of my sons have been high school coaches with various teams.

Looking back at my brother’s and my amazing mentoring experience, I’m convinced that other Black men can give back to our youth who don’t have anyone. As Black men, we need to understand that there are a lot of single parents raising young Black males, and they need support. I encourage other Black men to think about how they might be able to help a young boy find his way, much the way I was helped by a caring man.

Mentoring the next generation of STEM scholars.

BLACK MEN SPEAK

HEALTH COMMUNITY & HOPE



PASSING THE TORCH OF MENTORSHIP: A LEGACY OF COMMUNITY SERVICE

WALTER M. PEARSON

FOUNDER, COLLEGE BOUND PARENTING

In the quiet corners of my childhood, I was a spectator to a remarkable narrative woven by my father, Walter Pearson, Sr.—community service, mentorship and the transformative power of love. Although he shouldered the responsibilities of a demanding job, a family of five and a string of side hustles to make ends meet, my father's heart beat to a rhythm of service, especially towards young Black men in our community.

As a child, I vividly recall the doors of our home swinging open to welcome a procession of young faces—bright-eyed teenagers seeking guidance, understanding and a role model. Despite the weight of his own obligations, my father took these young men under his wing. He wasn't just a mentor; he became a friend, a guide and a source of unwavering support.

In the evenings, our basement transformed into a makeshift classroom, music studio or playroom, becoming a haven for discussions that transcended academics. My father believed in the power of character, love and service, and he imparted these values with a generosity that knew no bounds.

He navigated his mentees through the labyrinth of community centers, churches and sporting events,

each excursion a canvas for lessons in discipline, resilience, and the importance of giving back. Many of these young men lacked paternal figures in their lives, and my father, recognizing the void, stood resolutely in the gap.

One particular mentee of my father's, Robin Lucas, stands out—a young man who, despite the odds, rose above circumstances and became a mentor to me.

Over the past three decades, I've had the privilege of guiding, supporting and watching young men metamorphose into pillars of strength and resilience.

This legacy isn't just about individual success stories; it's about creating a ripple effect of positive change in our communities. My father's example taught me that a single act of kindness, a listening ear or a word of encouragement can shape destinies and build bridges to a brighter future.

As we celebrate the transformative journey of mentorship, I extend a call to action, particularly to Black men in our communities. Embrace the role of mentorship, for within your influence lies the power to shape destinies and foster positive change. Let us become the mentors we needed when we were younger, perpetuating a legacy of empowerment that will echo through generations.



THE VILLAGE SAVED ME

DERRICK WILMORE, JR., M.ED.
**HISTORY PROFESSOR, HEAD MEN'S
AND WOMEN'S TRACK & FIELD COACH**
DENMARK TECHNICAL COLLEGE
SOUTH CAROLINA

It's June 2005. I wake up and my mother has swollen lips and a black eye. What's going through my head is, how can I protect my mother? She lies and tells us she fell on the stairs, but even at 12 years old I knew something was fishy. That day, my little sister's father left and never returned. That was the end of my time with a male figure in the house.

The first memory I have as a child is my Pops' van running into our neighbor's house across the street after he got out of the car to get something from the house before we went to church. Me and my sister Shawniece were in the car with him, and Shawntre and Devin were riding with Moms. Pops forgot to put the car in park before he went into the house. Next thing you know, we were rolling backwards in slow mo. Shawniece jumped out of the car first, then I went. I got my Woody doll with me, I need that on my hip at all times. I drop the doll as

I hop out, and as I lay out to pick it up, somehow I lay completely out! The car rolled over my leg and for the rest of my life, I'd exaggerate and tell people how I got run over by a car (I popped right up after it happened). That was my first memory as a child. My second memory was my Pops' death.

As I attended elementary and middle school, I went through a number of different emotions but let's be real, I was a bad

in prison for it. I've been shot at, been in a brawl, did some things that could've completely changed the trajectory of my life.

Those incidents contributed to my lack of discipline and my bad decision making. I would have never made it without the support from people who stepped in after my father's death, but that's what it's all about. It takes a village. My struggle wasn't the worst, but it developed a beast that couldn't

I had uncles and grandfathers who looked out for me, but I always yearned for a father.

kid. I fought every other kid in school, was constantly sent out of class and suspended. I didn't understand why I was so mad, but when I reflected as a 20-something, I began to understand it was because I didn't have a father. I had uncles and grandfathers who looked out for me, but I always yearned for a father. There were times when my anger was so terrible that my mother thought I would end up

be tamed. I have to win, and my people have to win with me. That's why I do what I do today.

Derrick Wilmore, Jr., is a history professor at Denmark Technical College in South Carolina and the Head Track and Field Coach. He is academic advisor for History Club and the male mentorship program, M.I.R.R.O.R. He is the author of Today I Learned, No Offense and The Dark ABCs of History.



MENTORING AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS

HENRY W. WASH
FOUNDER & CEO
HIGH ASPIRATIONS, INC.

Elijah Anderson, Sterling Professor at Yale University, contends, “Countless African American males in metropolitan areas are deprived of meeting their potential...by circumstances that are largely beyond their control.” I can testify to the truth of this statement. As an infant, I was abandoned by my birth mother and father at the age of three months. In elementary school, a teacher stuffed me under a desk and proclaimed I could not learn. Yet I earned a master’s degree from UMKC’s Henry W. Bloch School of Business.

Today in the United States, there is an overrepresentation of African American males in the criminal justice system and the graveyard. Many factors contribute to this bleak outlook. One is that for most African American males, there are few opportunities to connect and bond with Black male role models in their neighborhood, home and school.

High Aspirations (HA) is a Kansas City, Missouri 501(c)(3) mentoring program that has served African American males ages 8

to 18 since 2003. HA’s mission is to raise African American males’ aspirations by initiating innovative ways to improve the quality of their lives spiritually, emotionally, socially and academically. The programs are designed to inspire young men to overcome whatever obstacles they face and pursue an education, the Armed Forces or a trade.

The most consistent need of mentees is time and attention. Accordingly, HA’s programs

from United Way, Greater Kansas City Foundation and Combat. HA receives wide support from Kansas City families and businesses such as JE Dunn and H&R Block and has over 76 program partners.

More mentors are needed to help more young men reach their potential. An ideal mentor is a male at least 23 who can pass a background check. The minimum commitment for a mentor is two years. *Learn more at www.highaspirationskc.org.*

High Aspiration’s young men have improved their GPAs by 17%, and 68% either made the honor roll or improved benchmark scores and grades.

maintain a volunteer mentor to mentee ratio of 1 to 7.

High Aspirations Scores High on Effectiveness

The University of Kansas oversees our program evaluation. HA’s young men have improved their GPAs by 17%, and 68% either made the honor roll or improved benchmark scores and grades. Since its founding, HA has earned agency certification

Henry W. Wash is the founder and Chief Executive Officer of High Aspirations, Inc. He is also the founder of the first Mentoring Campus for African American Males in Kansas City. Henry gives credit for overcoming his circumstances to the mentoring he received from his late mother, Laura Wash, and two prominent Kansas Citians—the late Henry W. Bloch and Thurman N. Mitchell, KCTV5.



BLACK MEN— A POWERFUL ANTIDOTE

**ERIK DICKINSON, CEO AND PRESIDENT
URBAN RANGER CORPS**



The call is loud, the need is pressing and the impact is immeasurable.

In the intricate tapestry of our society, there exists a profound need for mentorship that transcends the ordinary—a need that resonates particularly within the African American community. As an African American male serving as a CEO at a human services nonprofit dedicated to empowering young minds, I am acutely aware of the transformative impact that mentorship can have, especially when it comes to Black men mentoring Black boys.

Our organization, Urban Ranger Corps, stands at the forefront of an essential mission: providing after-school and summer programs that focus on career development and academic support for young African American males aged 12 to 18. While our commitment is

unwavering, the broader call for Black men to step into mentorship roles echoes louder than ever. It is not merely a request; it is a collective plea for guidance, inspiration and resilience in the face of adversities that disproportionately affect our community's youth.

The statistics speak volumes about the challenges faced by young African American men. From disparities in educational opportunities to the alarming rates of incarceration, the hurdles are numerous and formidable. Amid these challenges, the mentorship gap becomes glaringly evident. There is a yearning for positive role models who can impart wisdom, share experiences and instill a sense of purpose in the younger generation.

Mentorship is not just about academic guidance; it is about instilling confidence, nurturing ambition, and fostering a belief in one's own potential. Black men mentoring Black boys is a powerful antidote to the pervasive issues that plague our communities.

I challenge my fellow Black men to recognize the pivotal role they can play in shaping the minds of

this next generation. It is a duty we owe to our community for lives well lived, a responsibility that extends beyond our success to the collective well-being of our people.

To those who may hesitate, are unsure how to contribute or question the impact they can make, I urge you to consider the ripple effect of mentorship. The investment of time and guidance pays dividends not just in the life of one mentee but reverberates through families, neighborhoods and the broader African American community. Your involvement can break the cycle of disadvantage, providing a beacon of hope for those who need it most.

The need for Black men to mentor Black boys is urgent, undeniable and transformative. I implore my brothers to step forward to become the mentors that our community so desperately requires. Together, we can bridge generations, nurture potential and empower young minds to overcome obstacles and reach new heights. It's time to answer the call and make a lasting difference in the lives of those who will shape the future of our community.



MENTORING THROUGH MUSIC FINE TUNES LIVES

JAMES WARD, FOUNDER, CAI
ANGELA WARD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

During my senior year of high school, there was a question in my senior memory book: “Where do you see yourself 10 years from now?” One of my answers was “opening a comprehensive school of music.”

Upon graduating with honors from Florida A&M University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in K-12 Music Education, I moved back to Kansas City and taught in the Kansas City, MO School District, KCKS School District, and in charter schools. While teaching, I noticed the disparity in music resources for certain students. Some schools had large, well-equipped bands and others did not.

My wife Angela and I, driven by our passion to help students who wanted to play an instrument, set out to remove the economic barriers that prevented underprivileged students from receiving a quality music education. Thus, my senior memory book vision was fulfilled. We founded the Comprehensive Arts Institute (CAI) to establish and facilitate summer music camps, performing groups for beginners, intermediate and advanced learners (CAI Jazz Band), and after-school music lessons.

Angela and I have over 30 years of experience as composers, performers and educators. We have facilitated music education workshops at Paseo Academy of Fine and Performing Arts, Bruce R. Watkins Cultural Heritage Center, Satchel Paige Elementary School and Ivanhoe Neighborhood Center, among other venues. We have taught many instruments, including saxophone, guitar and bass, clarinet, tuba, brass, keyboards, drums and percussion.

Mentoring with Passion

Young men go through various stages of psychosocial development. They need someone who can help them put life into perspective so they can develop a healthy sense of self and become productive members of society. Mentoring helps them build confidence and find purpose. CAI’s personal enrichment programs for youth entitled “Who I Am,” is designed to assist young people in crafting and developing a healthy sense of self.

We’ve mentored students ages 7-18 for nearly 22 years. They perform with Youth Band until they reach college age. Many have received scholarships to prominent colleges and universities and have won prestigious music awards. Angela and I believe music education should be accessible to any student who has a desire to have it. Young people can reach their full potential when someone guides their educational, social and emotional learning.

In June of 2012, CAI’s inaugural class performed for Bruce R. Watkins Cultural Heritage Center’s Summer Jazz Camp in Swope Park. They have performed compositions by artists such as George Benson and Herbie Hancock, as well as original compositions for an audience of over 10,000. They also had the privilege of performing with Kansas City jazz artist Oleta Adams and opening for Indie Arie in Johannesburg, South Africa.

CAI is a tax deductible 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. For more information visit www.comprehensivearts-institute.com, or call 816-805-1759.



EMPOWERING YOUTH THROUGH MENTORING

TYRONE TAYLOR
BASILEUS OMICRON XI
OMEGA PSI PHI FRATERNITY INCORPORATED

“I learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did but people will never forget how you made them feel.” These words of the great Maya Angelou, poet and author, are the cornerstone of the relationship between a mentor and mentee.

I have been a mentor for most of my adult life. Putting smiles on young people’s faces while leading them in a positive direction has been part of my personal journey. Youth sports was the instrument that placed me in a position to be a mentor. As youth coaches, we were father figures, confidants, and friends to many of these children.

My fraternity, Omega Psi Phi, has always been a beacon in the mentoring community. Every level of Omega Psi Phi, particularly at the chapter level, is asked to play

an active role in its fatherhood mentoring initiative, whose goal is to bridge the gap created by father absenteeism in the lives of their children and families. Omega Squires is a mentorship program for young Black men that is represented across the country in various forms. The Beta Upsilon Chapter in Omaha has an excellent program mentoring children from elementary to high school levels.

the school. During a career day at Southeast High School, the brothers of Omega Psi Phi taught young men how to tie a tie and dress properly for job interviews.

Over the last two years, the brothers of Omicron XI have participated as role models in the EMBODI program sponsored by Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., whose purpose is to empower males to develop independence. Last year I connected with a young

My mentee has struggled in school; with my help and guidance he improved his behavior.

The four pillars of our program are Scholarship, Fitness, Service and Leadership. Our local chapter, Omicron XI, has various mentoring programs. Brother Ben Suber, through Urban Rangers Kansas City, works with children who participate in volunteer service programs; he also takes youth on camping and fishing trips. Brother Reginald Ramsey, a teacher and coach at Southeast High School, facilitates mentoring programs at

man in the program to provide support when called upon by his mother. My mentee has struggled in school; with my help and guidance, he improved his behavior.

Muhammad Ali once stated that service is the rent you pay for your spot in heaven. The Men of Omega Psi Phi are determined to reserve a spot in heaven through serving as mentors throughout the greater Kansas City area and abroad.

BRIDGING THE UNEMPLOYMENT GAP FOR BLACK MEN IN KANSAS CITY

ERIC RAMBO

**DIRECTOR OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
URBAN LEAGUE OF GREATER KANSAS CITY**



It's a dream many Black men metro-wide grapple with—obtaining economic mobility and equality in the workplace. In fact, the so-called “American Dream” is often deferred in Kansas City as Black men face a variety of factors related to employment disparities, including systemic racism, access to education, and a disproportionately high rate of incarceration. Black men historically have seen their opportunities as bread-winners unleavened at best.

The Urban League of Greater Kansas City continues to knead a mixture of education, training and network opportunities to help Black men obtain and retain employment in the metro. Since 2019, 120 African American males have successfully participated in Project Pathways—a free pre-apprentice construction training program.

Since 2019, 120 African American males have successfully participated in Project Pathways—a free pre-apprentice construction training program.

Approximately 75 percent of graduates go on to find gainful employment with a livable wage, starting at over \$19 per hour.

We help connect Black men with Black contractors. This provides them an opportunity to learn about the construction trades, the racial opportunities within the industry, and how to navigate those spaces. We also help smaller minority contractors with their efforts to build a competent workforce.

Project Pathways partners include JE Dunn Construction, Turner Construction, Crown Construction and Grays Rehabilitation.



Tony Gray, Pastor of Pleasant Green Missionary Baptist Church in conjunction with Grays Rehabilitation has played a key role in employing and educating Black men in our community. He especially has a passion for helping those individuals who have a criminal past. Not only does

he employ these individuals, but he trains them in heating and cooling installation and repair.

For more information about the Urban League of Greater Kansas City's Project Pathways, contact Eric at erambo@ulkc.org, or 816-471-0550.



THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF BLACK MALE MENTORSHIP

CARLTON MCCORMICK
UNIT DIRECTOR, NORTHLAND UNIT
BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF GREATER KANSAS CITY

At the heart of the success of Boys & Girls Club programs is the presence of authentic mentors who serve as positive role models. The ideal mentor is someone relatable, with a positive self-concept and identity that resonates with the youth. We recognize the importance of having positive role models and actively seek individuals who can encourage, motivate and hold youth accountable for making the right choices.

With more than half of Boys & Girls Club members identifying as male, the Clubs have recognized the importance of fostering mentorship and positive role models to guide their young minds towards a brighter future. Among these initiatives, the Passport to Manhood program stands out as a targeted effort to guide boys through their journey to maturity.

The foundation of Boys & Girls Clubs' success lies in the commitment to understanding and meeting the diverse needs of Club members. Through daily interactions, check-ins, and "Club Chats," the Clubs build trust and communication, allowing members to express themselves freely. This holistic approach

addresses not only academic and extracurricular needs but also social and emotional well-being.

Passport to Manhood Program Focuses on Real-life Experiences

The Passport to Manhood program is a cornerstone of the Clubs' character-building initiatives. It provides boys aged 8 to 18 with a structured framework for personal development. Each participant is given a "passport" to symbolize their individual journey toward maturity. The program's 14 sessions are completed over the course of 10 weeks and explores character and manhood topics such as positive self-esteem, values in personal decision making, respecting the differences in others no matter the differences and learning conflict resolution skills.

Answering the Need for Male Role Models

For men who are inspired to make a difference in the lives of young people through Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Kansas City, visit helpkckids.org or call 816-361-3600.



MENTORING WORKS FOR THIS FAMILY

Our *Health Matters™* asked a local mother, Kenyatah, to share thoughts about her son being mentored at a Boys & Girls Club. We also asked her 10-year-old son, Kamarion, who is participating in programs and being mentored, about his experience.

MOTHER, KENYATAH D.

What convinced you that the Boys & Girls Clubs was a good fit for your son?

I used to live across from the Boys & Girls Club when I was younger, so I knew about them and had always enjoyed going. When my children's father was killed a couple of years ago, I told my oldest son Kamarion (who was 8 years old at the time) he would need to be the man of the house and help me with his siblings. I wanted to make sure he could manage his anger and sadness over the loss of his dad. I knew he could really use a Black male mentor in his life, so I signed him up to attend the Club. They have male program managers there that know what our kids need. Boys & Girls Club has been a godsend. They offer everything my son and his

siblings need to maintain stability, accountability and the skills to reach their potential.

When asked if she would recommend the Boys & Girls Club to other single moms, Kenyatah replied, "YES! Because they have amazing programs and treat the kids like their own."

SON, KAMARION

Kamarion is in the fifth grade and is a straight-A student. He loves math and basketball. The program managers really help him.

What do you like most about the programs?

I like it because it feels like home. They help me to be a better reader. They teach me about good hygiene, like taking baths and how to tie a tie; how to control anger by taking 5 to 7 deep breaths to calm down; not doing vaping, don't drink and drive because you can get hurt or hurt someone else.

It looks to me like Kenyatah and Kamarion are in good hands. Mentoring is good for this family. The future looks bright.



Hosea L. Haywood III, President & Owner,
Computerized Auto Search

I WAS A MENTEE FIRST, THEN A MENTOR

**DONALD L. MAXWELL, PRESIDENT
MAXWELL CONSULTANTS AND ASSOCIATES LLC**

Over the last 40 years as an entrepreneur, businessperson and community activist, I have mentored countless young men and women. I have imparted my knowledge and shared business strategies that opened doors for young people eager to build careers or learn best practices for starting their own business.

When I was a sixth grader at Sanford B. Ladd Elementary School, the principal sent me to the YMCA for fighting, as an act of discipline. I was dismissed from school earlier than the rest of the students to report to Mr. Macey, the executive director of the Linwood YMCA, who was strict and didn't take no stuff. I didn't like Mr. Macey. I felt mistreated because he made me clean the restrooms, cut the grass, and wash windows. But once I proved

myself worthy, he placed me in charge of the YMCA candy sales.

That's when the light bulb went on. I was great at selling candy. Mr. Macey shared a lot about responsibility and accountability and started giving me other duties that raised my self-esteem. I felt important, and my attitude changed.

Mr. Macey became my counselor and advisor. Just being around him helped me win. For 20 years, Mr. Macey followed my progress. He was my mentor, then my friend until the day he died.

I Was Chosen to Mentor

I made a commitment to Hosea Haywood's mother to watch over him if anything ever happened to her. I agreed to it, not knowing that she would unexpectedly pass away while Hosea was in high school. That was the beginning

of my mentor relationship. I spent lots of time counseling him about life and keeping him focused on attending Lincoln University in Jefferson City, MO. Over the years we talked about everything—his marriage, raising children and his innovative idea for starting Kansas City's first online car buying dealership. He accomplished it—Computerized Auto Search has been in operation for three decades. Now our talks are about finance, marketing, locations and everything else. I'm proud of what he has achieved. There is no greater satisfaction than being that person someone says they "have been looking for."

Black men in America must create bonds with younger men and boys. We must work together and depend on each other, or we will never move from poverty into the mainstream of economic opportunity.

Maxwell has owned and operated multiple enterprises, including multi-unit residential complexes and commercial and institutional properties. Over the twenty years he served as president of Community Development Corporation of Kansas City, it created, funded, or partnered to create 75 businesses, leveraged over \$100 million for business and social development and helped create more than 3,000 jobs for area residents.



Emmet Pierson

Donald Maxwell has had many valuable mentor and mentee relationships. Read more online at kcourhealthmatters.com about his mentor, Adolphus Mooney, owner of the popular Mooney's Soul Food Restaurant at 31st & Prospect in the '70s, as well as his extraordinary mentee relationship with Emmet Pierson, president of Community Builders Development Corporation (located at the Swope Park Health Campus), and Clyde McQueen, Executive Director of the Full Employment Council of Kansas City, Missouri.

OTHER MENTORS INCLUDE:

Everett Lee, Dixie Express
Rev. Wallace F. Hartsfield, Metropolitan Baptist Church
Bubble Klice, Coaches Council
Alvin Brooks, Director of Human Relations, City of Kansas City

OTHER MENTEES INCLUDE:

Myron McCant, Kiddie Depot
Derrick Collins
Don Lee, Penn Valley
Chris Donohue, MIF Housing
Veeweiser Dixon, Wing Lovers USA
Mike Smith, Linwood Goodyear



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THE POWER OF FINANCIAL LITERACY MENTORSHIP

H. DAVID WHALEN
FINANCIAL ADVISOR

To the saying, “It takes a village to raise a child,” I like to add, “even more to raise a financially savvy young man.”

Parents and mentors must teach our young people, especially young men, how to make, save, spend and budget their earnings, because those same young men will get married, have children and carry the responsibility of being the head of their household. That means they must earn and manage money with wisdom, expertise and common sense, as the family will rely on them for safety and security.

Basic money management is the saving, spending, investing and borrowing of money. It is a lifelong skill to learn, practice and use daily. To manage money effectively, youth must understand the language of money, the tools that are available and goal setting.

The Language of Money

Banks, financial institutions and individuals use terms to explain the use of money. Some of these are Net Worth, Debt to Income Ratio, and the Rule of 72. It is important to teach this information, as well as the five components that make up a credit score. APY (annual percentage yield) and APR (annual percentage rate) are important terms to know.

Budgeting

The most important tool to help manage money is a budget. It reveals how much money is coming

in, going out and to whom it is going. It is also a tool to control debt.

Goals

Goals are financial benchmarks that help you achieve your objectives. What do you want to accomplish? If you don't know where you're going, you surely won't get there.

Young folks need to know that they must save money, not spend it all.

We must help our young people by encouraging them to start a “side hustle,” no matter their age. In order to learn how to manage money they need to have some. Kids could have a lemonade stand, cut grass, shovel snow, sell Girl Scout cookies, do chores for a senior neighbor or help a senior with their computer or phone—something to generate cash in hand. Kids must get used to having money to learn how to make decisions about spending and saving it.

Young folks need to know that they must save money, not spend it all. We must provide opportunities and experiences so it becomes second nature to live within their means, minimize debt, save more and purchase assets that will grow in value over their lifetime.

H. David Whalen has been providing customized financial advice for more than 19 years. His mission is to help clients pursue their personal and financial goals. Whalen is a Financial Advisor with Equity Wealth Partners in Independence, MO. www.equitywp.com





AFTER-SCHOOL ACADEMIC ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

**DR. JESSE BARNES, ED.D., EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
GRACE UNITED COMMUNITY MINISTRIES**

In my career I have worked with children for over 25 years. In my role as Executive Director of Grace United Community Ministries-Aim for Success Educational Program, I have seen boys and girls grow academically and mature into empowered youth.

Grace United Community Ministries' Aim for Success is an academic enrichment after-school program that provides academic support for children in Kansas City, Missouri including Kansas City Public Schools and one charter school. Our program is located in a culturally rich, yet economically fragile community. We provide meals and tutoring in reading and mathematics; we also take the time to visit the schools and learn more about the children through mentoring. Our students have outings to sports games and activities on weekends. Children receive transportation to and from the program, and each day children receive a full nutritious meal and weekly "snack packs."

Studies have compared the weekly educational learning provided in standard U.S. classrooms to the educational enrichment provided by weekly after-school programs. In both settings, students retain only about 20% of the information presented. To strengthen the challenging transition from early childhood to young adulthood, children need additional hours of academic enrichment outside of the standard classroom.

I work with immigrant children from Africa, Asia, Central America, and other parts of the world. I believe in the African adage, "it takes a village." Mentoring provides accountability, support and nurturing to build successful and emotionally balanced adults. Many of our students are new Americans, and most of the children come from large families of five children or more. Our program begins in preschool and continues to work with students through middle school. I have seen students who at the beginning of the school year speak very little English and by the end of the school year are fluent.

We not only provide academic enrichment but clothing. The entire rubber soles had come off the bottom of one student's shoes, and we ensured that he had more than one pair of new sneakers.

Mentoring takes time, patience, and hope, but ultimately it continues a powerful circle of life that supports children and youth to live their best lives.

The neighborhood surrounding Grace United is low-income and has suffered from deteriorating housing and high crime over the past several decades. Through our educational and recreational partnership programs as well as our Board's commitment to developing the property into a safe, attractive, functional community asset, we are working to help revitalize and transform the community.

Grace United Community Ministries provides outreach services to families in historic Northeast Kansas City. We work with families to help them break the cycle of poverty and live purposeful lives. For information, call 816-231-5745 or visit graceunitedkc.org.

St. Paul Saturdays mentors
and mentees on outing at
St. Louis African Art Festival.



BUILDING MEN IS BETTER THAN MENDING BOYS

DR. ALAN K. GREEN
ST. PAUL SATURDAYS, ST. LOUIS, MO



In the mid-1980s, as the host of a local community TV program, You Can Make It, I met Dr. William Harrison, the founder of St. Paul Saturdays Mentoring program. Later, when I became a St. Louis police officer, Dr. Harrison invited me to speak with the young men on how to interact with the police. In the early 1990s I began taking my three sons, ages 5, 8 and 9. Now my grandsons, ages 7 and 12, are attending.

St. Paul Saturdays, located in St. Louis, MO, was conceived in response to the ever-present need in the African American community for our men to accept responsibility for the positive growth and development of our young men. The program focuses on developing superior leadership skills, academic achievements, spiritual and cultural growth and personal responsibility. Members learn that, ultimately, each one is responsible for his own destiny.

Sessions are held every Saturday from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., and mentors spend an average of 20 hours per month with mentees. Mentors make school and home visits to check on students. When a mentee graduates from the program, we continue to reach out while they are in trade school or college.

Many of the young men who come into the program don't have a father in the household. All of them, regardless of their family situation, need

support, encouragement, push-back against decision making that is not constructive and direction.

Families who are interested in St. Paul Saturdays provide self-assessments of their young men, after which our mentors conduct an assessment. Our board reviews the report cards of the mentees each grading period. Over the years, young men who have graduated from the program have had a lot of success.

A small volunteer base of men and women keeps this program energized. It is the work of many people, all connected, all seeking something better for young Black males.

Are You Interested in Becoming a Mentor?

The ideal mentor is a person with a big heart who feels it is their responsibility to show boys how to choose to grow into intelligent, responsible young men with a healthy sense of self-esteem and self-worth. A person who feels it is their responsibility to mentor young men and build them to be leaders in our community without getting recognition or publicity. You must be committed to the cause, willing to work for free and willing to listen when needed. If this describes you, consider becoming a mentor today. Your community needs you.

To learn more about St. Paul Saturdays, visit Stpaulsaturdays.com.



Pastor Frazier's sons in the ministry recently honored him for his mentorship and support.

From left to right:
Pastors Anthony Fletcher, James Reed,
Kevin McNeil, Jerome Toliver,
Scott Thomas and John Brooks.

THE ART AND HEART OF MENTORING

REV. JESSE FRAZIER, SR. PASTOR EMERITUS, EBENEZER BAPTIST CHURCH

Many years ago, I was hired for a position at High View School for Boys. I had just finished my military obligation to our country in November of 1969, which included a tour of duty in Vietnam. This new job was the perfect opportunity for me to share my values with the youth as well as offer a high level of structure to their lives in a sincere, consistent and encouraging way.

Mentoring is far more than saying the right things to those we are hoping to impact; equally important is modeling behavior. The payoff for my work at High View has come many years since then, when former students share how their lives were affected by one-on-one conversations many years ago that are still paying dividends today.

It is important to take advantage of opportunities to pour into the lives of the present generation to help them shape the values of generations to come. You can get involved in mentoring today's youth in Big Brothers Big Sisters programs, volunteering at local elementary schools or making yourself available to the youth in local churches.

One of the greatest joys I had as pastor of Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Church was our annual youth trips. It was important for our youth to experience places outside of Kansas City. They have been all over the U.S., including New York City, the White House and the Grand Canyon. They earned their own money for the trips by working at Starlight Theatre, the Chiefs and Royals games and at Bartle Hall. They had to be doing well at home and in school and be actively involved in the church. They were required to write a paper about their

experiences once we returned to the city. Through preparing for and taking their annual trips, our children learned to understand the importance of working with others, how to follow instructions, how to be obedient to those in authority and how to make and budget money.

Over the last ten years, mentoring has taken on a different expression in my spiritual experience. The Lord has blessed me to be a "father" to twelve men who are the Pastors of local assemblies, and the grandfather to two men who are serving as pastors. In our conversations we discuss meeting the needs of our personal and spiritual families, vision casting, how to create nurturing environments where we are serving, and the importance of integrity, financial stewardship and serving with humility. I glory in being able to pass on my 43 years of evangelism experience and 30 years of pastoral experience. This is mentoring personified.



Left to right: Dr. Edward Anderson, Dr. Carlos Grant, Farell Thomas and Damon Qualls.

MENTORING BOLD LEADERS TO NURTURE TOMORROW'S LEADERS

**DR. CARLOS C. GRANT
AND DR. EDWARD ANDERSON
BOLD LEADERSHIP NETWORK
GREENVILLE, SC**

In our shared experiences, Dr. Anderson and I have discovered the profound impact of sharing life stories of triumph over adversity to build connections with others.

I was raised in Columbia, South Carolina by a single, teenage mother and during my childhood navigated the complexities of an absent father. The absence of a relationship with my father and the

other supportive figures in his life.

Both of our journeys underscore the transformative potential of mentorship and the profound impact that educators can have on shaping the lives of young people facing adversity. When children grow up in poverty, mentoring can play a role in breaking the cycle of disadvantage and fostering a path towards success.

his growth if it had not been for

the support experienced during that moment had been missing from their collective journeys. On the heels of the murders of George Floyd and Ahmaud Arbury and a global pandemic, the group of educators continued to meet informally to share personal experiences and professional advice on navigating leadership during those critical months. It became clear to the group that their safe space was too good not to share.

Now as a 501c3 nonprofit, BOLD Leadership Network has grown into an organization that mentors, educates, elevates, collaborates and advocates to produce more BOLD leaders who are not afraid to have courageous conversations, make investments in the growth of themselves and others, and are fearless in creating innovative solutions to address inequity.

While BOLD focuses on adults needing mentors, we recognize that the earlier a person receives strong guidance, the better. BOLD's vision is to have BOLD leaders positively impact every community. By emphasizing Black leaders in education, the organization takes a targeted approach to address long-standing disparities.

To learn more, visit:

www.boldleadershipnetwork.org

Mentorship is a tool for guiding young Black boys through a system that may not recognize their unique challenges.

challenges of single parenthood highlighted the importance of strong male role models in my life. Recognizing the significance of such influences, my mother surrounded me with supportive figures who played pivotal roles in shaping my character and values.

Similarly, Dr. Anderson faced challenges growing up that mirrored the struggles of many young individuals in difficult circumstances. He was also born to a teenage mother and was raised by his grandmother. After his grandmother's death, the trauma that ensued would have buckled

As educational leaders of large institutions in Greenville, our journeys in education have been influenced by a shared belief in the potential of young minds and the crucial role of mentors in guiding individuals towards service. Inspired by mentors who encouraged us to serve, we advocate for the cultivation of educational leaders from the next generation.

In the spring of 2020, a group of Black male principals and assistant principals from upstate South Carolina came together to celebrate the success of one of the men. During the event, it became apparent that

LINC fifth grade chess champion.



MENTORING THROUGH CHESS I TEACH STUDENTS HOW TO THINK!

ZEBEDEE FORTMAN II
HALL OF FAME CHESS INSTRUCTOR

Playing chess requires critical thinking, strategic planning and problem-solving skills. As a result, regular practice can improve your cognitive function, helping you to become more mentally sharp and alert. In fact, studies have shown that chess players tend to have better memory, attention span and overall brain function than those who do not play.

Most people have heard that school teaches reading, writing and arithmetic. There is another very important thing to learn: “how to think.” I have been teaching chess for over 50 years, but what I really do is teach students how to think. As Blaise Pascal, the inventor of Pascaline, the first mechanical calculator, said, “Chess is the gymnasium for the mind.”

Let me share with you an example of what I’m talking about. In the first class that I taught, I asked the students how many squares there were on the chess board. The students shouted out various numbers, most of them incorrect. Why were most of the answers incorrect? Because most students in school are taught memorization and regurgitation. This type of thinking leads to shouting out numbers in the hope that one of them might be correct. To students who have been taught this way, the most important thing is to guess or remember the correct answer.

Next I asked the students, “If you don’t know the answer, how can you find out?” Now they had to problem solve to get the answer. One student may know their time tables and say $8 \times 8 = 64$. And I’ll

Chess is the gymnasium for the mind.” Blaise Pascal

say that’s great, but what if I don’t know my times tables? Another student may say I can add the eight columns ($8 + 8 + 8 + 8 + 8 + 8 + 8 + 8 = 64$). Again, great. But if I don’t even know how to add, how can I find the answer? One student will say I can count the squares individually to reach 64.

This is their first of many experiences of how to think, rather than being rewarded for remembering an answer. It is just one of many ways that I mentor, using chess to teach students how to think.

Zebedee (Zeb) Fortman is the only African American in Missouri’s Chess Hall of Fame. In the 1970s and 1980s, Zeb Fortman rose quickly as a champion in the chess world. Zeb has been playing and teaching chess at Candidate Master level for 30 years. Fortman currently teaches chess at Dobbs Elementary School and George Washington Carver Elementary School.



BECOMING A MAN

GARRETT M. WEBSTER, SR.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
KANSAS CITY YOUTH GUIDANCE

City office opened in 2020. Through our evidenced-based Becoming a Man (BAM) program, we provide social-emotional and cognitive behavioral therapy and mentoring to young men grades 6-12. We make therapy cool... in school. The programs are currently delivered in Hickman Mills C1, Center, and Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools. We work with over 330 young men in BAM, ages 12-18. The males work on core values, including integrity, accountability, self-determination, positive anger expression, respect for womanhood and visionary goal setting.

In BAM, one-on-one mentoring allows the student to confide in a caring adult who looks like them. In the BAM circle (group mentoring), students see there are other young men with the same life challenges and feelings. The group allows space for the students to hold each other accountable, encourage one another and challenge each other to be better men.

As a young man I experienced many Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). These traumas ranged from my parents' divorce when I was age 12, moving

six times between seventh and twelfth grades, experiencing being without electricity, gas and water, living in a shelter and living with an alcoholic step-parent. I was blessed to have a caring mother and many other caring adults in my life to help me.

“We make therapy cool...in school.”

Like me, our young men come with some life experiences that have made them strong and some experiences that show up as challenges. Many young men don't have a male figure in their home. Public schools have very few Black male teaching/administrative staff members. These challenge areas affect the way they think, feel and behave. We've learned that when we help young men examine how they think, feel and behave, they can identify their triggers and make safer decisions.

An ideal Becoming a Man counselor is a man who can relate to youth and can create an environment where there is fun, safety, and respect.

To learn more about Kansas City Youth Guidance, visit www.youth-guidance.org.

The Black family has been fragmented by decades of systematic oppression, financial disinvestment and racial injustice. The saying is “Hurt people hurt people.” How true that is in Kansas City. We have seen increased numbers of non-fatal shootings and homicides. In 2023, nearly 70% of homicide victims were Black males, and nearly 60% of homicide suspects were Black males. We need more Black men trained in the social work and counseling fields to help our young Black men. Social-emotional well-being is the foundation of education and community well-being.

Since 1924, Youth Guidance has implemented school-based programs that enable children to overcome obstacles. Our Kansas



THE CHALLENGES AND REWARDS OF MENTORING

PATRICK DANLEY, CEO BEYOND THE CONVICTION & BTC BUILDING BRIGHTER FUTURES

In my professional career, I've started mentoring programs at the Full Employment Council - KCMO, Restart Veterans Mentoring Program, the KCMO Public School District and at BTC Building Brighter Futures. I'm affiliated with the Men of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, where we do a mentoring program as well. I have always led or mentored men, women and youth to provide resources, knowledge and one-on-one hand holding to help them make better decisions.

I acquired my values and insights in my youth as a member of Spruce Saint Mathews Baptist Church. A Deacon recognized I wasn't a bad kid, but if steered in the wrong direction, I might take the wrong path. His mentoring and guidance helped me through youth bullying, emotional management, social interactions with other young men and girls, hygiene, grooming and how to talk and carry myself like a man. His mentoring was crucial to my development.

As a mentor, my Dad was great. I wanted to mirror the accountability he had in raising us, the pride, the confidence, the love and care he showed to my mother—which I transferred to loving and dating women—and his hustle and drive. All were and are priceless.

Make no mistake, along the way you might encounter burnout, especially if you don't get the results you

expected. I share with other mentors that sometimes a mentoring relationship doesn't turn out the way we envision. Some mentees talk about changing and moving ahead but choose a different path, one that does not bode well for their future. There's always a mentee that will need us, so pour all you have into every mentee. You will help someone, and that will be your greatest reward. It may be years in the future when you hear the words, "Thank you for caring."

I've been both a mentee and a mentor, and the value is there. It starts from someone demonstrating mentoring with you. That is why we pay it forward.

So drive, mirroring positive integrity, passion, willingness, vetting, testing and meeting people where they are at. Help guide and take them to where they want to be. It takes time and relationship building, but you can truly be a stepping stone in a positive direction.

Patrick Danley is founder and CEO of Beyond the Conviction & BTC Building Brighter Futures, Designated Workforce Solutions & Workforce Preparatory Technical Center (Kansas City, MO). He is currently Dean of Climate & Culture for the Kansas City Public School system at Banneker Elementary and spearheads the Mentoring Initiative Program for students.



KEEPING IT REAL

OUR HEALTH MATTERS

INTERVIEW WITH PAT CLARKE

I have no doubt that anyone who knows Pat Clarke knows he doesn't pull any punches. Pat is very comfortable "in his own skin." That's probably because, as he tells it, before he was born, his mother, Juanita, "asked God to make her son a preacher." At an early age Pat proved he was special. His mother was quite the motivator, nurturing her son into a leader. She took him to the neighborhood park and taught him how to pitch, and the next summer he won the state championship at ten years old. His mama always preferred him to be first. She told Pat often, "You have to be first. Nobody ever remembers second."

"I became fearless with the understanding of what my mama had prayed for. She always told me I was a leader! I try to live up to that reputation by being a protector of the families in my neighborhood. Everybody who knows me knows that I demand respect. I'm just 'keeping it real,'" Clarke said.

I asked Pat, "What do you think young Black boys need and want?" He said without hesitation, "They want a father!"

On the topic of being mentored as a kid, Pat shared that there were always men around him: his father, who worked two jobs to care for the family; his pastor; the deacons of his church; his uncles; and many neighborhood men who looked after and kept him under control.

Pat is in tune with his community and knows how to uproot unacceptable behavior and situations

in his urban neighborhood. He is a mentor to some of the community's hard to reach and control young men. As a certified mediator, Pat is a community liaison between law enforcement and people on the street who challenge social norms and pose threats to others. He has been a contracted mediator for the Kansas City, Missouri Police Department for many years.

I asked Pat, "What do you think young Black boys need and want?" He said without hesitation, "They want a father! They want someone who will spend time with them, listen to them, take them fishing, show them how to fix and build things. They want good jobs and homes. I guess in some ways I'm looked up to as a father. I treat all the kids around me like they are mine. I don't mince words; I tell them what they need to hear, and they respect me. We have to show boys how to be men. I want to save lives."

It's no surprise that Pat has a park named after him directly across the street from his home in the Oak Park Homes Association neighborhood where he grew up.

What does the future hold? He and a partner, Forest Tyson, Jr., are planning to build new townhomes in the neighborhood. They also have blueprints to develop a youth entertainment district on the east side.

Pat and his wife Gwendolyn have been married for 32 years and have five children.

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A sepia-toned photograph of two men from behind, embracing each other. The man on the left has short, dark, curly hair and is wearing a light-colored sweater. The man on the right is balding and wearing a dark, textured sweater. They are both looking down, and the background is a soft, out-of-focus pattern of light and dark spots.

*Thank You for
Your Support!*