THE FOUNTAIN FUND

PHILLY SPRING 2025 NEWSLETTER

CLIENT PARTNER SPOTLIGHT – REGGIE JENKINS

As a military kid and a Navy vet, **Reggie Jenkins** has lived all over the world. He was born in a small town called Pine Tops, North Carolina, but he's also experienced big cities like Okinawa, Los Angeles, and New York. Prior to incarceration, he worked for more than a decade helping address homelessness and AIDS through advocacy and outreach in Manhattan. These efforts brought Reggie the Commissioner's Award – two years in a row! Even still, the transition to Philadelphia was filled with uncertainty.

Reggie needed to create a new place to call home: land a job, get an apartment, find community, build friendships and so much more. It was vast.

A turning point came when he reminded himself, "Just be yourself, talk to people, be genuinely, *authentically you*, and let God guide you." And that's what he did.

Through a connection at the Office of Veteran's Affairs, Reggie found out about the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) and enrolled in their Emerging Leaders Program. Shortly thereafter, he was hired as Senior Community Intervention Specialist, a role specifically designed and created for his unique skill set and inspiring life story.

In his role with CEO, Reggie brings his caring heart and natural networking skills to life. The Philadelphia reentry community is lucky to have him in their midst!

Reggie's exciting new job demanded trustworthy transportation. And that's where a $13,300 auto loan from the Fountain Fund came in. Not only is this loan helping him build credit, reinforce his personal accountability goals and fulfill the responsibilities of his new role, it's also allowing him to do what he does best … ***help other people***.

ON HIS WAY TO HOME OWNERSHIP

*Thanks to his full-time job and credit building success, Reggie is planting the seeds to purchase his first home! He discovered the **Philly First Home Program** through a supportive conversation with the Fountain Fund team. Sharing knowledge. Building bridges. Rising to a brighter tomorrow.*

NEWS FROM HEADQUARTERS – SHARING THE STAGE WITH BRYAN STEVENSON

Martize Tolbert, Bryan Stevenson and Erika Viccellio

On Friday, April 11, our agency was honored to share the stage at Monticello with criminal justice icon **Bryan Stevenson**. Guests gathered on the West Lawn to celebrate Founder's Day and award Stevenson with the **2025 Thomas Jefferson Foundation Medal in Citizen Leadership**. The ceremony also included the presentation of the **2025 Citizen Service Award** to **Martize Tolbert** on behalf of The Fountain Fund.

Stevenson is a widely acclaimed public interest lawyer who has dedicated his career to helping the poor, the incarcerated and the condemned. Through a powerful keynote address, he reminded listeners of Jefferson's deeply held belief that honesty is the first chapter in the book of wisdom. He eloquently shared, "We deny ourselves the beauty of justice when we refuse to tell the truth." And he thoughtfully encouraged, "We can all be citizen leaders by committing to being truthtellers, even when it's inconvenient, even when it's uncomfortable." He continued, "I believe there is something better waiting for us. Something that feels more like freedom."

For Stevenson, receiving the award, at this particular moment in time, is a call to action. "A challenge not to sit down, but to stand up. A challenge not to be quiet, but to keep speaking. A challenge to be a truthteller for the kind of just world that we all so desperately need."

PROGRAM PARTNER SPOTLIGHT – CEO

The Fountain Fund and the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) have created strong referral pathways in both Philadelphia and New Orleans. In fact, in Philadelphia, our agency is fortunate to share office space with this impactful nonprofit! CEO is a nationwide agency that works to reduce recidivism and increase employment. As shared on their website, "We provide people returning from prison immediate paid employment, skills training, and ongoing career support. … CEO guarantees every participant who completes a brief paid orientation up to four days a week of transitional work on a crew and daily pay – a critical asset during an important time. In addition to work and daily pay, CEO provides a robust set of wraparound vocational support services. Once participants find full-time positions, CEO continues working with them for a year to ensure they have the support to grow in their careers."

MICHAEL BUTLER, SITE DIRECTOR, BECOMES ADJUNCT PROFESSOR

The Fountain Fund congratulates Mike Butler, Philadelphia Site Director, for becoming a University of Pennsylvania Adjunct Professor. Mike is currently co-teaching a course called "Social Impact Entrepreneurship" through PREP-WORKS, a partnership between the University of Pennsylvania's Social Policy and Practice Department and the Wharton School. This eight-week course brings business education to returning citizens! Participants attend a group course, receive one-on-one business plan advising from Wharton MBAs, develop a viable business plan and receive a certificate from Wharton. **Congratulations Mike! You inspire.**

OUR NATIONAL BOARD HELPS US RISE TO A WHOLE NEW LEVEL

Each February, our Board of Directors convenes in Charlottesville to welcome new members, reflect on the previous year, and think strategically about the road ahead. In our fast-moving world, it's impossible to overstate the value of this simple act of gathering. *Of being in the same room* … slowing down, engaging in complex questions, and thinking collectively about how best to fulfill our mission. This year, Arbor Rising team members joined us from New York to co-facilitate a discussion about the Fountain Fund's theory of change model – an essential compass that will guide decision-making as we grow. The board also reflected upon stories emerging from internal program data that reveal how our nation's current socio-economic and political volatility is leading to increased struggle for the clients and communities we serve. Insights gleaned through conversations like these ensure that our lending and financial literacy programs are as responsive and impactful as possible.

WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Felicia Rinier
Senior Director Strategic Partnerships, Comcast

Margaret Hall
Co-Founder, GreenLight Fund

PHILADELPHIA FACTS

MAKING A DIFFERENCE
100% "Have hope for the future."
100% "Improved understanding of credit."

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

- *"I'm thankful for the opportunity to be able to do what I love and provide for myself and my family in a positive way."*
- *"When you see people at the Fountain Fund, it invigorates you. It makes you keep going. I was burning out. You guys recharged me."*

Leek Smak Food Truck serves up delish! Look for Leek in Philly.

ACTIVE LOAN PORTFOLIO
As of February 28, 2025, Philadelphia's active loan portfolio included 82 loans valued at $574,972.

OTHER SERVICES
Financial Literacy Trainings
Certification Offerings
Housing Referrals
Links to other Services

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EXAMPLES OF PHILADELPHIA LOANS

- Housing: First, Last & Security
- Obtain a Driver's License
- Vehicle Repair & Purchase
- Business Start-Up & Equipment
- Tuition

Scan to learn more!