

ADVANCEMENT

Our Mission is to serve adults in the Cleaborn and Foote Community with knowledge, resources, and skills to be economically self-sufficient through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.



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Dear Friends:

God's word says; "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks" - 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.

Prayer Changes Lives

Friends, rejoice! Our Lord continues to answer prayer! I recently received a call that was an answer to prayer. My friend Curtis Hines called and said, "I'm going to marry Lashanda!" "Great! I'll be there. How can I help?"

Our friendship, of eight years, started around his desire to own a business and find a job. And now, full of joy, I helped them prepare for their wedding.

Finally Tuesday arrived and I joined Ken Bennett (Curtis' longtime friend of 18 years), John Brooks (Curtis' Advance mentor for two years), Curtis' and Lashanda's mothers, and their youngest son. God was putting a family together that morning - Curtis, Lashanda, Jalin, and James Hines!

Pray for Growth in Christ

Please pray that this family will grow in their love of Christ. Pray also that Jalin and James come to faith in Christ. Also, give thanks for John Cowherd who still calls Curtis regularly and asks Curtis, "Are you coming to Church this week?"

Advance Has Helped Curtis Grow

Recently Curtis noted that, "Advance has helped me grow in tremendous ways as far as training me to take responsibility - like working to provide for my family, saving money, and caring for the community.

I had so many bills and a little debt but those were all things I thought was keeping me from getting married. I had so many talks with Steve; my mentor, John Brooks; and John Cowherd about getting married. They encouraged me that I should do as God would want me to. Finally, we couldn't wait another day not being married.

"It felt good doing what God wanted me to and having guys like Steve Nash, Ken Bennett, and John Brooks there at the court house encouraging and supporting us. Thanks Advance for Everything!"

Important News for Advance

Friends, this news is very important to Advance. Our community is 98% female-headed households. Curtis' marriage is a much needed witness to this community and testifies to his commitment, responsibility, and God's love. This positively affects his boys' academic, emotional, physical, and spiritual development as well. More marriages in Cleaborn and Foote will help stabilize our community.

I'm grateful Curtis and Lashanda have God's best. Be encouraged for God is at work. Please keep praying!

Thanks for investing in His Kingdom,

Steve Nash

Executive Director



Jobs for Life - "A Few Good Men"

On May 17, 2004, three thousand of Black America's elite, in tuxedos and gowns, gathered at Constitution Hall in Washington, D. C. The featured speaker for the anniversary gala was the famed entertainer Bill Cosby. His speech challenged Black people to take a hard look at poor parenting and the cultural rot preventing too many Black children from throwing off the veil of ignorance covering them, a situation rooted in twenty-first century problems of poverty, disproportionate fatherlessness, bad schools, high rates of unemployment, and lives wasted in jails.

ENOUGH, by Juan Williams

Highlights from Bill Cosby's Speech

The following are excerpts from Cosby's talk that night pulled from Juan Williams' book, *ENOUGH*

- People putting their clothes on backwards-isn't that a sign of something going on wrong?... People with their hats on backwards, pants down around the crack...
- Everybody knows it's important to speak English except these knuckleheads. You can't land a plane with 'Why you ain't...'
- Five or six different children-same woman, eight, ten different husbands or whatever....

These Comments are Offensive

As a Black male, these comments are very offensive to me. They are piercing, because in a lot of cases they are true. I resent Cosby hanging out our dirty laundry in public. African Americans are very sensitive to racial profiling, and a discomforted of not being looked upon or respected as a different way of life. It bothers all of us to be judged publicly, even when it's justified. When it comes to our shortcoming we pretend not to see the pink elephant.

I Talked the Slang

As a Black male growing up in Memphis, I talk Memphis slang, and I wore the latest clothes. I wanted to be identified with my community. I wanted the fulfillment and belonging of being in the "IN Crowd." But, today, there is a deeper problem with black culture, than our unorthodox, and sometimes-disrespectful dress style, or our immoral sexual lifestyle, which every culture has struggled with.

Struggle with Literacy

As a product of Memphis City Schools, I continue to struggle with literacy, which is foundational for economic stability. Illiteracy is still keeping people in our community from jobs and economic freedom. So in a way, Cosby's words are needed, even if they do hurt. Cosby's words should shake us and wake us up to the danger of being slothful, of not taking advantage of the opportunities to learn to plan and interact in a culturally diverse society.

Like the Marines, Advance is looking for a "FEW GOOD MEN."

This current class was chosen out of 52 people, our largest orientation ever! As Proverbs 24:30 says: "A little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man." We must learn if we want to work and live successfully.

Advance Memphis Part of Solution

At Advance Memphis, we are part of the solution by teaching and instructing job readiness, financial literacy, and GED tutoring grounded in God's truth. The problem of today is not Hip-Hop or the hood... IT IS SIN, the same thing we all struggle with in spite of the generation or neighborhood we grew up in.

Active Learners Needed

We want our participants to be more active learners. We seek "A few good men and women", who need the support of tutors, volunteers, and employers, working together in this community. We want to increase our participants' potential to be better prepared in this class by:



“For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

II Peter 1:5-8

Receiving Financial Freedom training so that they can manage the income they receive.

Expanding the class to four weeks, and giving students a chance to work after lunch and earn income while finishing up classes on how to work and budget.

Requiring students to be drug tested 1) to qualify for employment in the afternoon, 2) to graduate, and 3) to receive assistance in job placement.

Exciting Changes

Advance Memphis is excited about these changes. They will allow us more time to teach the importance of producing quality work and setting vocational goals. We intend to provide our participants with the skills they need to continue to learn and to move toward economic stability.

“A few good men” - By God’s mercy, that’s our only chance!

Thanks for praying and serving!

Rod Williams

Jobs For Life Coordinator

Financial Freedom

Advance Combines Jobs For Life and Financial Freedom

I am excited about this new development! Rod Williams, our Jobs for Life Coordinator, and I had discussed how to include financial budgeting in his class. Now, instead of having a one or two hour session on "What do I do with my paycheck," we have fully meshed the two classes together over a four-week period.

The Financial Freedom class formally met once a week for two hours over an eight-week period. But now I get to teach about an hour every day of the week! This provides participants with four extra hours of class time, leading to more in-house time to apply the material.

More Consistent contact with Students

Having more consistent contact with the participants -rather than an entire week between each class- will lead to students being more dedicated in completing their assignments. We also have time set aside for individual sessions during the last week to review each person's financial and career plan. New dedication will allow participants to leave with a realistic plan to reach their goals of owning a home, obtaining a job with benefits, returning to school, investing part of their income, or even saving for a vacation. Sound like some of your own goals? We all have similar dreams – to be successful, to achieve something, to live a financially secure life.

...we continually stress the relationship between education and a paycheck, attitude and job stability, values and financial security, faith and hope for the future.

Creating More Community Resources

At Advance Memphis, we focus on increasing knowledge and creating a wider resource base for community residents. This change will lead to more opportunity in our community, a place that has been neglected for decades.

Even so, the desires of the human heart have not changed. Only the motivation and hope have waned. However, not everyone from this community has been given over to a nihilistic mentality, or a feeling of eternal hopelessness. If this were the case, no one would be attending our classes except to meet some Department of Human Services or Memphis Housing Authority requirements for financial assistance and housing. The folks who attend our classes will kindle a fire in the hearts of others to hope and dream and live out their full potential.

Community Dreams Realized

Our community has important dreams that are slowly being realized. Through these classes, we continually stress the relationship between education and a paycheck, attitude and job stability, values and financial security, faith and hope for the future. We are dreaming big along with our community that this place, full of God's image bearers who possess intrinsic value, worth, and dignity, will be transformed into a fully productive and economically stable community.

Ann Brainerd

Financial Freedom/IDA Coordinator

Celebrations!

Daymond Isom and Lorraine Baugh recently bought cars with their IDA savings.

Four students graduated on May 10. This time, we held graduation on the night of the last class. It made for a late night, but everyone seemed to enjoy the fellowship.



SOUCT - (STREETS OF UNION FOR COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION)

SOUCT - We Have a Vision!

Downtown is Changing

After participating in "Memphis in May" activities, I observed how much downtown has changed. With new homes, condos, restaurants, the FedEx Forum, and the Cannon Center,, downtown has become a tourist site for Memphis.

Vision for Cleaborn and Foote

However, just a 10 minute walk up Vance Avenue from downtown sits Cleaborn and Foote Homes Community. As I walk to work daily I find myself visualizing the change that could be made to Cleaborn and Foote Homes Community. In my vision, I see the family oriented community that once stood here.



"Thanks to the residents for helping keep my future lot clean," stated LaTonya

Rebuilding Our Community

Without a vision of change, we cannot rebuild our community. We must share this vision with all of our community residents, especially those who have been replaced by the closing of several Memphis Housing Authority Housing Projects. Many of these people have been moved to different parts of the city including Cleaborn and Foote Homes, where they may find it hard to grasp the vision of a rebuilt community. I continue to stress the importance of rebuilding by speaking to our SOUCT and A.L.L. Steps Groups and others throughout the community.

Change is Scary

But still I recognize that for many people, change is still scary. For many of us, it is easier to stay in a familiar setting, even if it is destructive. As Gary Gore stated in his book "Navigating Change", "Most people do not change until the pain of not changing is greater than the pain of changing."

Change is exciting

During our most recent SOUCT and A.L.L. Steps Meetings (the monthly dinner for our graduates), current and former residents were excited to discuss possible homeownership in the community. Several have taken steps to make this discussion a reality. People like Nichole Wilkins, Glenda Farmer, Robert Johnson and I have chosen lots in the community where we would love to have our homes built.

Reasons to Live Here

I asked these individuals their reasons for wanting to live in the community. Nichole stated that besides being a good investment, she wants to see Cleaborn and Foote Homes flourish again as it did in the past. Glenda responded that she wants to continue to live in the community where her roots lie. When I asked Robert Johnson the same question, he stated, "I want to see the community go back to the old school (a flourishing time), and if by moving back in the neighborhood, we can get the ball rolling, then, that is what I will do."

Change Needs a Voice

These select members of our A.L.L. Steps and SOUCT Groups have become a voice of encouragement to current and former residents who may be afraid of change. Hearing residents show so much enthusiasm about home ownership gives me hope and optimism that we can rebuild our community with the love and family structure that it once had.

We can build a better future for our children and their children to follow. "Return to your fortress, O prisoners of hope; even now I announce that I will restore twice as much to you." Zechariah 9:12

LaTonya Farmer

A.L.L. Steps/SOUCT Coordinator

THANKFUL FOR TUTORS

As I have mentioned before, I am extremely thankful for our core group of tutors dedicated to serving this community in the midst of dwindling and sporadic attendance. We spent a recent evening brainstorming ways to encourage attendance while having a deeper impact in the participants' lives.

GOING A MILE DEEP

One tutor, who is extremely passionate about education, brought up the importance of us going a mile deep rather than just a mile wide. His point was that even though each tutor is teaching a different subject, there are common threads that can be developed in each class. The focus is not so much on memorizing, but learning different concepts that will not only help in obtaining the GED, but in future endeavors as well.

IMPROVE ADULT LITERACY

A major component in the works is improving adult literacy. We have had many requests from participants' who want to improve their reading skills, but we currently lack the material and resources to do that. Thanks to our growing network of friends and organizations, we have met two ladies from Midsouth Reads who are willing to help us develop this area of the program. I am anxious to implement this as it is needed to improve the success of those lagging behind in this area. The literacy test they are proposing will assess not only reading level, but also comprehension ability – another important thing for us to know if we desire to serve everyone holistically.

A COMPLETE ASSESSMENT

Our hope is that we will have everyone complete a literacy test. If they are reading at an 8th grade level or above, they will then take a GED practice test to assess what areas they need help in. If they fall below that level, they will be required to attend literacy classes before taking the practice test. By doing these two things initially, including a meeting to discuss the scores, participants should be better prepared for actual tutoring. This process will give us a good idea who is serious and who is just "saying" they want to do it.

GOOD NEWS FOR GED PROGRAM

Two more news items to note: Residents living in MHA Housing must attend a certain number of school or training hours each week in order to remain in public housing if they are not employed fulltime. The old rule stating a resident had to attend MHA-qualified organizations is no longer active. This means that as the word spreads that people can still earn credit coming to Advance Memphis, our number of participants is likely to grow. The key is getting the word out through relationships. In addition to this news, a lady from the Memphis City School Board has informed us that they will come to our location to deliver the Official Practice Test when we have at least five people ready!

As for now, the GED Program is taking a June sabbatical. This will give our faithful tutors a break and also relieve some of my own stress while we restructure our program.

Dear Friends & Supporters,

As they say on *The Price is Right*, "COME ON DOWN"! If you haven't come down to Advance in a while, I would like to encourage you to experience all that is going on in the lives of people in the Cleaborn and Foote Community through Advance. It is really remarkable.

We are so thankful for your commitment and I want to ask you to refresh that commitment during this time of growth and progress. We are going to particularly need it in the midst of upcoming capital campaigns by other non-profits and churches. Please consider bringing new potential donors and volunteers down this month to experience all of the activity!

Also, DEBT IS DOWN! We only have \$15,800K left in debt on our newly renovated building. Let's get it down to \$0.00!

As always, if you have any questions at all about the ministry, please do not hesitate to call me directly at 901-289-6400. Keep praying and keep donating! Please send any donations to P.O. Box 2201 Memphis, Tennessee 38101. Feel free to visit our website at www.advancememphis.org for the latest happenings.

Stuart Harris, Chairman of the Board

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