Welcome to Urban Connection, the Akron Urban League’s new Quarterly Newsletter.

We are excited about our first publication to connect with you and we hope you find the information impactful and relevant.

Having joined the AUL team on September 3, 2019, I am now in my 8th month as the new CEO of your Akron Urban League and it has been an amazing journey thus far. So much has happened in such a short period of time and we are proud to tell you all about it in this newsletter.

We have appreciated the continued commitment the entire community has shown to us and I am looking forward to sharing updates with you to demonstrate our understanding about how important it is to serve our constituents with passion, compassion and excellence. Our reputation is our most treasured asset and the foundation on which we must operate. Everyone knows that the only way to protect and improve your reputation is to be transparent, exceed expectations, meet commitments, innovate in program deliverables and demonstrate sustained excellence...without compromise.

Of course, like all of you, we have been impacted greatly by COVID-19 but have continued to stay open and press forward with serving our community, which is more critical now than ever. The needs are great and we stand ready to serve. We have gone virtual – providing information, counseling, case management, training, appointments, job fairs, minority business support services and programs via Zoom, over the phone, and social media. Our AUL Young Professionals and Guild Auxiliaries remain strong and engaged. As COVID-19 continues to introduce challenges and change, the AUL will strive to react and pivot with wisdom and insight in order to make the best decisions possible for our organization and for all of those we serve.

I encourage everyone to be open to others’ ideas and beliefs, respectful of our differences and may we see what is truly important and what truly unites us, focusing on that, and working towards banishing road blocks of ego and fear, seeking change where there are disparities and staying focused on what is really important. We are sincerely thankful for this opportunity to share this publication about the work of an organization that has served the Greater Akron community for 95 years.

Yours in the Movement,

Teresa R. LeGrair
President and CEO
On January 20th, we held our first event of the year, the Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Breakfast Celebration. The event’s presenting sponsors were Cleveland Clinic Akron General and Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio. Supporting Sponsors of the breakfast included Omnova Solutions Foundation, The University of Akron, Huntington Bank, State & Federal Communications and Summa Health. Over 350 people braved the cold to celebrate the life and legacy of Dr. King. They were able to take in the sounds of the Theron Brown Trio and gather words of inspiration from our keynote speaker, Dr. Carl Allamby, Emergency Medicine Resident Physician at Cleveland Clinic Akron General.

Dr. Allamby’s first career was not as a doctor. In his former career as a business owner and automotive technician, Carl was an ASE Certified Master Technician and Engine Performance Specialist. He ran two locations of his auto repair and used car sales facilities that employed many people from the local community and served the local population for 25 years. Dr. Allamby traded in his toolbox for a stethoscope to begin a new career as a medical professional. Dr. Carl Allamby’s success story has been featured in many newspapers, and by TV news outlets locally and nationally, appearing on CBS Evening News with Steve Hartman, NPR’s Morning Edition with Scott Simon and The Kelly Clarkson Show.

Not one person left uninspired by our speaker, because he represents an unconventional example of dedication, perseverance, focus and hard work. His journey screams... IT’S NEVER TOO LATE TO PURSUE YOUR DREAMS!
The Ohio State University Extension of Summit County is happy to have moved into its newly constructed offices in the Akron Urban League building at 440 Vernon Odom Blvd. in Akron.

“As a land-grant university, we serve the entire County of Summit with programming in 4-H, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Community Nutrition and more,” according to Jackie Krieger, OSU Ext. 4-H Educator. “Having these two dynamic entities housed in the same building will be a major asset to the neighborhood and all of our community partners as OSU Ext. pursues our mission of creating opportunities for people to explore how science-based knowledge can improve social, economic and environmental conditions.”

“We are so excited and pleased to have OSU Extension utilize space within the Akron Urban League building (formerly the President’s Hall), and we look forward to forming a strong collaborative partnership with the OSU team,” said Teresa LeCrair, President and CEO of the Akron Urban League.

On Friday, March 6, 2020, OSU Extension hosted an open house for the public to tour the beautiful space and learn what 4-H, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Master Gardeners, EFNEP and SNAP-Ed are doing in the community and to explore what they have to offer in the way of evidence and research-based education.
AUL CONTINUES TO EVOLVE

The Akron Urban League has been steaming ahead in 2020, adding key leadership and staff to continue growing the Akron Urban League in both capacity and proficiency. After months of careful consideration, the Akron Urban League is pleased to announce the development of the newly created position of Vice President, Programs and Operations, which will be filled by Allyson V. Lee, beginning May 4, 2020.

Allyson’s experience spans 25 years in non-profit management and leadership. She brings extensive program operations, planning, monitoring, compliance, and budgetary experience; and excels at motivating and coaching teams and individual performances. A graduate of The University of Akron, Allyson earned both graduate and undergraduate degrees in sociology, with minors in family development. Allyson has worked in the areas of social services, public housing, human resources, labor relations and early childhood education (Head Start, Early Head Start and Child Care), working with poor to low income children birth to age five and their families.

Other Staff Additions
In addition to Allyson, the Akron Urban League has added John M. Baranek, CPA to the team as the newest Chief Financial Officer. John spent the past 25 years as the Finance Director for the City of Stow. He holds both graduate and undergraduate degrees in Business Administration from St. Edwards University (Austin, Texas).

In February, Kimberly Fleischman came aboard as the Director of Development. Kim is an experienced fund-raiser with demonstrated success working in human services, education and arts organizations. Skilled in philanthropy, management, marketing strategy, and social media. A graduate of Denison University with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree, Kim earned a Masters of Science in Education from Bank Street College/Parson School of Design in New York City.

Hope Mills has taken over the role of Ignite Program Coordinator. A Kentucky native, Hope holds a bachelor’s degree in Strategic Communication from Morehead State University. She has over 4 years of experience as a program coordinator at Morehead State University, as well as 3 years of experience as an international student mentor.

Angenita Daniels joined the staff in March as a Youth Support Specialist. She will be providing educational resources, opportunities and mentor the youth in our BOSS program. Angenita holds a bachelor’s degree in Social Work from Youngstown State University.

Board Additions
AUL welcomes the addition of three new board members beginning May 1, 2020. The new members include:

- Todd Bertsch
  Owner/President
  E-volve Creative Group.

- Matt Soful
  Business Development Manager
  CBIZ

- Tanya Arthur
  Senior Vice President, CIO
  Summa Health

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Please Consider the Akron Urban League for #GivingTuesdayNow

#GivingTuesdayNow is a new global day of giving and unity that will take place on May 5, 2020 – in addition to the regularly scheduled Dec 1, 2020 #GivingTuesday – as an emergency response to the unprecedented need caused by COVID-19. The day is designed to drive an influx of generosity, citizen engagement, business and philanthropy activation, and support for communities and nonprofits around the world.

At a time when we are all experiencing the pandemic, generosity is what brings people of all races, faiths, and political views together across the globe. Generosity gives everyone power to make a positive change in the lives of others and is a fundamental value anyone can act on. It’s a day for everyone around the world to stand together and give back in all ways, no matter who or where we are.

The Akron Urban League is asking that you consider supporting our organization during this time and on May 5 for #GivingTuesdayNow. We are continually providing our programming to clients during this pandemic and your support is what keeps these programs running, even when we cannot physically be together.

Donations can be made at akronurbanleague.org/givingtuesdaynow