



Episcopal  
Community  
Services

# An Inside Look

UPDATES FROM EPISCOPAL  
COMMUNITY SERVICES

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We remain committed to taking a public stand against oppressive policies and the cultural ways of life that prevent people from achieving their definitions of success.

Episcopal Community Services has been on the frontlines providing vital programming and services to ensure safety and stability for 150 years. As human rights, safety and stability are jeopardized by systemic injustices that deprive people of choice and opportunity in the first place.

The disproportionate effects of COVID-19 on communities of color—and our national reckoning on race—have shone a bright light on why empowerment and action are critical.

Targeted advocacy is needed to help change policies that are negatively affecting people and families in our programs. And it is essential that we provide our staff with the most up to date training and educational opportunities, and pair them with the tools needed to empower themselves and those we serve.

As we reflect on the 150 years of historic work at ECS, we can say with certainty that we have continued to evolve with the changing needs of individuals, children, and families in Philadelphia.

The underlying philosophy of our work is to support our participants with their personal goals while engaging their communities in an empowerment process to change broken systems.

In these pages, you will read about how we approach this work, the progress we've made, what's ahead, and ways in which you can take action, too.

Thank you for being in this with us.

Peace,

*Victoria Bennett*

**Victoria Bennett, MHS**  
Chief Inclusion and Advocacy Officer

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WE WILL NOT SIT IDLY BY

Episcopal Community Services condemns all forms of racism and the structural oppression of Black people.

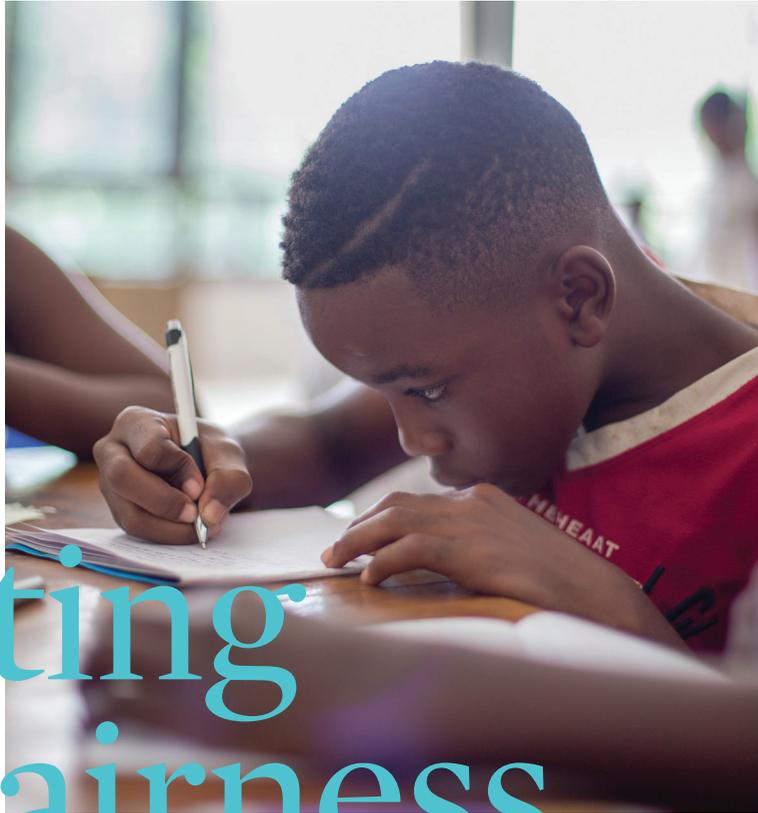
We are committed to fighting for change in all systems that practice acts of discrimination—intentional, violent, or unconscious—so that access to opportunity is fair and equitable in our community and beyond. We will work fiercely to make that aspiration a reality, and we fearlessly accept the consequences of opposing views. Only by working together can we hope to move forward.



150  
YEARS

#ECSPHILLY

# Fighting for Fairness



A global pandemic.  
National racial reckoning.  
Financial distress.  
We are experiencing  
three crises all at once.

And yet, systemic health, economic, and social inequities are not new conditions. Rather, current events have set pre-existing ones ablaze. Institutional racism and systems of oppression have affected poor communities and communities of color for centuries.

**How will we fight together for a fairer Philadelphia, right now, when systemic racism and inequity are prevalent in every cornerstone of this nation?**

Episcopal Community Services has a laser-sharp mission to challenge and reduce poverty on an individual and systems level.

In alignment with our strategy to promote upward economic mobility, our Inclusion and Advocacy initiatives help forge a more inclusive and equitable world.

The causes and effects of inequities, complex on their own, are entwined and tangled. Unaffordable quality healthcare. Predatory lending. Food insecurity. Low-wage paying jobs. Police brutality. A school to prison pipeline. Families in our programs are counting on us to create positive change that lasts.

Whether working with people or policies, achieving realistic goals that ladder up to a bigger one begets success: small victories create momentum and lead to a movement.

ECS leads with two issues: Fighting for a living wage and dismantling the poverty-trap called the benefits cliff, where increased income leads to public benefits ineligibility, thus lowering a person's/family's discretionary income.

Inclusion and Advocacy efforts at ECS have contributed to chipping away at injustices at the local, state, and national levels.

**July 2020:** We issued a call to action for the U.S. Senate to pass the HEROES Act, which includes many provisions that would benefit our participants, low-income communities, and even the frontline staff of St. Barnabas Mission emergency shelter.

**January 2020:** Our team created mobile advocacy kits so that congregants can bring these issues—and solutions—to their communities of worship.

**December 2019:** Stacks of postcards were signed, sealed, and delivered to Senators Casey (D-PA) and Toomey (R-PA) when we urged them to raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour. We also supported the ABLE Age Adjustment Act to help more people with disabilities save while still maintaining access to their public benefits.

Aside from the issues we lead, ECS is building partnerships with others who share our values. We work hand-in-hand with allies like Philabundance and Habitat for Humanity, already leading in spheres of their own.

**We take the best care of others when we take care of ourselves.**

Inclusion training topics and educational discussions are regularly organized to embrace diversity among staff and create spaces to learn from the

experiences of others. Some of our conversations have been around race, gender, unconscious biases, and intergenerational collaboration.

As participants are supported by staff while pursuing benefits and services, commonly known as case advocacy, our team listens and watches for trends. When issues are encountered regularly, it may signal a need to address policy decisions at the systems level.

Autonomous culture, professional leadership development, and personal workshops for holistic care all empower our team to create positive experiences for others.

It is one example of how we live out our values.

## Values in Action

A light is turned toward the deepest problems within this country. And there is no turning away from it. The world we want to see is one where the path to prosperity is available to all—without class, color, or creed interfering with opportunities for achievement.

**Let us act.** We welcome you to join our movement by visiting [ecsphilly.org/advocate](https://ecsphilly.org/advocate). Or, if you have any questions about how to get involved, contact [victoriab@ecsphilly.org](mailto:victoriab@ecsphilly.org). And remember: Voting is one of the best ways you can advocate for the people and families we serve. ♥

“The world we want to see is one where the path to prosperity is available to all—without class, color, or creed interfering with opportunities for achievement.”



# See you at the Forum

This year, the Forum on Justice & Opportunity will be an immersive, week-long online experience. Featuring local and national thought-leaders, join us any or all days for daily hour-long virtual sessions at noon, and an additional closing session on Friday.

MONDAY,  
10.26.2020  
— THROUGH —  
FRIDAY,  
10.30.2020



## DAY ONE

How do human services in Philadelphia address the root causes of poverty and access to opportunity, which at the core have a long history of racism?

**Featuring:** Vai Sikahema, NBC10; Jamila Harris-Morrison, ACHIEVEability; John L. Jackson, Jr., Ph.D., Annenberg School for Communication; Omar Woodard, GreenLight Fund Philadelphia; Victoria R. Bennett, MHS, Episcopal Community Services

## DAY TWO

Culture—and the culture of poverty—impedes upward economic mobility. Learn about family stability and how to identify the barriers. You will learn of actions to take to eliminate barriers for others.

**Featuring:** Keva White, LCADC, LSW, VIP Community Services, Inc.

## DAY THREE

How can we use data to drive change? This panel will focus on the social determinants of health and how to address them. The Scattergood Foundation will draw on the data presented in their sponsored research paper, “Place Matters,” and highlight the use of data in the RISE Partnership, an initiative to help improve the outcomes of nonprofits in the region.

**Featuring:** Aminata Diallo, MS, MSSP, The Scattergood Foundation; Samantha Matlin, Ph.D., The Scattergood Foundation

## DAY FOUR

How can we help those under a current flawed system? Learn about the Cliff Effect, a dynamic that occurs when a slight increase in a worker’s income results in the sudden loss of public benefits, which is worth much more than the income increase itself.

**Featuring:** Karen Schoellkopf, The Leap Fund

## DAY FIVE – PT. 1

How do we work together to address un- and under-employment to ensure racial equity during the economic recovery? Government and nonprofit leaders will engage in a panel discussion.

**Featuring:** Ashley Putnam, Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia; Sheila Ireland, PA Department of Labor and Industry; Michael O’Bryan, The Village of Arts and Humanities; Arley Styer, MSS, MLSP, Episcopal Community Services

## DAY FIVE – PT. 2

What are the next steps for collective action that can provide racial equity during the economic recovery? After recapping the week’s line-up, you will reflect upon what you learned, what inspired you most, and plan for how you can help challenge poverty.

**Featuring:** Vai Sikahema, NBC10; Sidney R. Hargro, Philanthropy Network Greater Philadelphia; Joe Pyle, MA, President, The Scattergood Foundation; David E. Griffith, Episcopal Community Services

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# DO YOU GET THE MESSAGE?

You already receive mail from us, but why not get updates about our news, events, and advocacy work electronically?

Several invitations and communications were sent only to those for whom we have active email addresses—and this will inevitably continue as the pandemic runs its course. Subscribe to our email newsletter at [ecsphilly.org](https://ecsphilly.org) and follow us on social media. We have lots more to share with you.

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## Spreading the Gospel

So, what exactly does ECS do? That's often asked by people we meet. And we've been meeting a lot of people lately.

By way of a growing network of participant ambassadors, an informational Behind the Scenes Zoom series, or interest after the recent article in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, more and more people want to know about our work.

The answer is simple: ECS is a coaching organization. We coach people in MindSet, the five-year program that supports people in all aspects of life. And we coach outside of MindSet through more short-term services. All are connected to family stability, wellbeing, education and training, financial management, and career management.

To understand coaching, think of the collaboration between a guidance counselor and a college-bound high schooler. To get into college and later graduate, the counselor will coach to help them identify their strengths, areas for growth, and all

their options to consider. But they won't do the work, take tests, or visit college open houses for them.

Like them, our team of coaches empowers people to realize their abilities. And then live them out.

Take it from Aladaya and Meeka, recently featured in the *Inquirer*. Their coaches not only help them see brighter futures but also ways to get there. Strides in paying off student loans, earning a certain certificate, or depositing into a savings account: these things contribute to lasting stability.

The two are also members of our Speakers Bureau that is made up of program participants who volunteer as spokespeople. They spread the gospel of our work, and they advocate for themselves and others.

Stephen, also a member, shared his story with stakeholders in our Behind the Scenes series (now on YouTube). With his coach, he worked out a goal action plan to put his bachelor's degree in behavioral science to use.

First-hand experiences help us uncover the things we have in common. It tightens bonds and builds connections. We are grateful for this outreach done within our community and beyond.

If you are interested in helping spread the story of our work, please reach out. Email [info@ecsphilly.org](mailto:info@ecsphilly.org) to get connected to the team. ♥

# Generosity is Genetic



## For Leni Windle of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, generosity runs in the family.

To invest in the greater good was instilled in Leni and her siblings while growing up.

Liberal and culturally Jewish, but not by religion, her parents led by example the values of humility and generosity.

“If you had more than what you needed of something, give it away—somebody needs it more than you,” Leni said.

Leni recalls a time she and a friend were walking down the street. A man panhandling solicited the two for a few bucks. Without hesitation, but to her friend’s surprise, Leni reached into her pocket to oblige to the man’s request.

“I don’t need it,” she thought to herself, though unsure of how he would spend it. “It’s a subtle thing to give without any restrictions ... it was now his freewill to spend it. Who am I to judge?” she said.

Leni and her husband Alan began being more intentional with their philanthropy and together made a gift to ECS with the same outlook.

When she inherited a modest amount of money from her mother who passed away five years ago, they were in a position where they neither planned for nor needed it.

A part went into an individual retirement account (IRA), and they agreed that some would go to charity. The effects of COVID propelled them to give quickly, but wisely, learning more about the impact the gift could have if made to ECS.

The gift from the Windles will support people building stable futures for themselves and their families, teens and adults, specifically.

As a former high school guidance counselor, perhaps being of service to others with fewer assets and support comes second nature.

“I give because it’s what people should do if they can,” she said of her stance. “The privilege I have is an accident of fate. ♥

PHILLY STUDENTS NEED YOU



**We turn to you, knowing your generosity will shine through.**

You can directly support students learning from community-based Access Centers, who are supported by our team dedicated to educational enrichment. Here’s how you can help families and students find success in virtual learning:

### **Hunger impacts a child’s ability to learn.**

Donate \$50 toward groceries for families in need. Type “Groceries” in the comments section when you make a gift at [ecsphilly.org/donate](https://ecsphilly.org/donate).

### **Health and safety remain priorities.**

Donate one or more items from our Amazon Wish List. Masks and hand sanitizer join the list of must-haves like notebooks, crayons, and pencils.

### **Families are facing financial hardships.**

Donate \$25 or more to support their ever-changing needs during this time of crisis. Type “Help” in the comments section when you make a gift at [ecsphilly.org/donate](https://ecsphilly.org/donate).



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JAMES BALDWIN

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“Not everything that is  
faced can be changed,  
but nothing can be  
changed until it is faced.”