

PEOPLE  FIRST



EMPOWERED BY
URBAN STRATEGIES, INC.

YEAR



TIDEWATER GARDENS IMPACT REPORT



July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023

THE CITY OF
NORFOLK




USI | URBAN STRATEGIES, INC.
Families at the Center of Results

BRINSHORE



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from Mayor Kenneth Cooper Alexander, Ph.D.....	1
Letter from Councilwoman Danica J. Royster and Councilman John Paige	2
Letter from NRHA Interim Executive Director Michael Clark.....	3
Letter from Urban Strategies, Inc., President & CEO Esther Shin.....	4
About People First ^{USI} and the Year Four Impact Report	5
Resident Spotlight: Nettie Bond	6
Partner Profile: The Up Center	7
Year Four by the Numbers	8-9
Housing Stability: Stronger Together.....	10
Education: Head of the Class	11
Economic Mobility: The Making of a Merchant Marine.....	12
Health & Wellness: Waist Not, Want Not.....	13
Resident Spotlight: Shawnetta Dennis.....	14
Year Four People First ^{USI} Partners	15
Resident Spotlight: Natalie Lino.....	16
Year Four in Photos	17
Looking Ahead: Year Five Results and Outcomes	Back cover



Knida Randall, center, with her son Quory Randall and daughter Syri/Asia McAllister



"As we move forward, we eagerly anticipate the return of former Tidewater Gardens residents to the new community known as Kindred, where they will find a welcoming and supportive environment."

– Mayor Kenneth Alexander

PEOPLE FIRST^{US} TEAM

Esther Shin, President

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Executive Vice President

Alicia Walter, Vice President

Tyronda Minter, Vice President,
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Thomasine Norfleet,
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Kashira Wilson,
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Kimi Smith, Lead Mobility Specialist

Chamika Johnson, Education Specialist

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Jayla Carrington, Outreach Specialist

Natalie Lino, Outreach Specialist

Pamela Blount, Family Support Specialist

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Aaron White, Family Support Specialist

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NORFOLK REDEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING AUTHORITY (NRHA)

Michael Clark, Interim Executive Director

Scott Pontz, Chief Financial Officer

Kimberly Thomas, Chief Community
Engagement Officer

FROM MAYOR ALEXANDER

DEAR RESIDENTS AND FRIENDS:

As we conclude year four of the St. Paul's transformation project in our great city, I am pleased to address you with immense pride and gratitude. Our guiding principle, People First, has been instrumental in driving community development and economic resilience, and it is heartening to witness the remarkable progress we have achieved with the unwavering determination of our residents, complemented by the invaluable assistance of Urban Strategies, Inc.

In our FY 2023 annual report, we celebrate numerous milestones that reflect the positive impact of our collective efforts. It brings me joy to share some of the highlights:

1. Housing: Through concerted efforts, residents have successfully relocated to neighborhoods of opportunity, offering them enhanced living conditions and new opportunities.
2. Income growth: I am delighted to report that the average household income has shown a substantial increase, signifying improved economic prospects for our families.
3. Health insurance: Ensuring the well-being of our community has been a priority, and I am proud to announce that 95% of adults and 100% of children now have access to essential health insurance coverage.
4. Education: Our commitment to education has yielded significant results as we witness a remarkable number of individuals who have graduated from high school or college. Their achievements inspire us all.

Furthermore, the completion of our first two buildings, Reunion, a senior-living building featuring 72 apartment homes, and Origin Circle, a multi-family-living complex offering 120 apartment homes, stands as a testament to our dedication to providing quality housing options for all.

As we move forward, we eagerly anticipate the return of former Tidewater Gardens residents to the new community known as Kindred, where they will find a welcoming and supportive environment.

None of this progress would have been possible without the continued commitment and support of the Norfolk City Council, which has maintained its \$3M yearly commitment to funding the People First Empowered by USI program. The success stories of our residents provide ample evidence of the program's effectiveness and the positive impact it has had on their lives.

I would also like to express my heartfelt appreciation to the citizens of our city who volunteer their time and talents as members of the St. Paul's area Advisory Committee (SPAC). This year, I had the privilege of appointing Councilman John "JP" Paige, representing Ward 4, as co-chair of SPAC. He works alongside Councilwoman Danica Royster and their dual leadership ensures that every decision made during the transformation process remains grounded in prioritizing the needs and well-being of our people. To them, the committee members, Urban Strategies, Inc., and the NHRA and City of Norfolk staff, we extend our sincere thanks for exemplary leadership and guidance.

Our city takes immense pride in the transformation of the Tidewater Gardens St. Paul's community, which is evolving into a vibrant neighborhood where individuals of diverse backgrounds, ages, incomes, and cultures can not only coexist but also thrive. Together, we have demonstrated the true spirit of community, making Norfolk a place we are all proud to call home.

Sincerely,



KENNETH COOPER ALEXANDER, PH.D.
Mayor



FROM COUNCILMEMBERS ROYSTER AND PAIGE



DEAR RESIDENTS, STAKEHOLDERS, COLLEAGUES AND FRIENDS:

We bring you greetings on behalf of the St. Paul's area Advisory Committee (SPAC)! We are a group of 18 dedicated and diverse citizens appointed by Mayor Kenneth Alexander to "promote leadership and work collaboratively with residents, City Council, the City of Norfolk, and Norfolk Redevelopment & Housing Authority (NRHA) on the revitalization of the St. Paul's area."

It is exciting to see the first two new apartment homes being built in the former Tidewater Gardens area of the St. Paul's community. It is even more exciting to watch our families continue to thrive and succeed in the areas of housing stability, economic mobility, healthcare and education as they await the opportunity to move back into their neighborhood now known as Kindred! Our mission has never wavered – People First in all that we do.



Thanks to the determination, tenacity and grit of our residents, along with the guidance and assistance of People First Empowered by Urban Strategies, Inc. (USI), we are proud to announce continued improvement in key outcomes, especially in economic mobility. When the transformation project started, the average annual household income of Tidewater Gardens residents working full-time was \$11,900; today, that income is \$24,029. For households with persons working part-time, the average annual income is \$15,761.

You will find more details about the work of People First Empowered by USI within this fourth-year report. Celebrate with us the achievements of our residents and be inspired by the personal stories of triumph over adversity.

And a bit of news concerning the leadership of SPAC – we have a new co-chair! Ward 4 Councilman John "JP" Paige was appointed co-chair of SPAC and immediately focused his expertise on continuing to ensure diversity, equity and inclusion in the contracting process. This year, we've held minority- and women-owned vendor fairs to engage small-business contractors on available opportunities as well as focus groups to determine ways to eliminate barriers in the bidding process.

In the very near future, residents will begin to move back into Kindred, and People First Empowered by USI will be with them every step of the way. And SPAC will be there also, offering guidance and direction, always remembering People First!

Yours in service,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Danica J. Royster". The signature is fluid and cursive.

COUNCILWOMAN DANICA ROYSTER
Superward 7 Co-Chair
St. Paul's Advisory Committee

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "JP". The signature is stylized and cursive.

COUNCILMAN JOHN "JP" PAIGE
Ward 4 Co-Chair
St. Paul's Advisory Committee



FROM NRHA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CLARK

DEAR NORFOLK COMMUNITY:

After serving more than 37 years with the Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority (NRHA), I can truly say we have embraced a new era in how we transform communities. The Tidewater Gardens initiative is a sterling example that replacing outdated units with modern housing and neighborhood amenities is only successful when you put people first.

We've come a long way in the last four years, from announcing the plan to transform Tidewater Gardens and beginning the first relocations, to becoming a national model for how to create new affordable housing developments while respecting and welcoming people who lived there before.

Perhaps, that's why "Kindred" is such a perfect name for what was formerly known as Tidewater Gardens. It will be a place where individuals with a kindred sense of family and community can live, work, and enjoy nature.

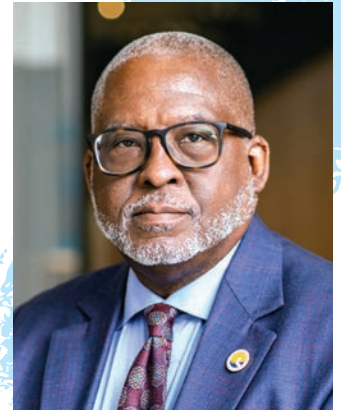
Thanks to our committed partners, the City of Norfolk; Urban Strategies, Inc.; and the People First^{USI} team of family support specialists, we have made providing support to former Tidewater Gardens residents in the areas of education, health and wellness, economic mobility, and housing stability as much of a priority as we have on building a quality development.

After reading what we accomplished in our Year Four Impact Report, I hope you will agree.

Yours in community,



MICHAEL CLARK
Interim Executive Director
Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority



FROM USI PRESIDENT/CEO SHIN



USI | URBAN STRATEGIES, INC.
Families at the Center of Results

DEAR FRIENDS OF USI:

As a national non-profit leader for the past 45 years, we have seen communities across the country thrive with intentional and intense family supportive services, collaborative private and community partners, and strong community leadership.

For Norfolk residents of the newly named Origin Circle and Reunion Senior Living communities at Kindred, these changes are a welcomed promise made possible through highly aligned partnerships and high-action commitments of resilient residents, dedicated members of the People First Empowered by USI team, our critical partners, and stakeholders throughout the Hampton Roads peninsula.

Over this year, PFUSI has strengthened our relationships as citizens, neighbors, and partners while addressing some of the deeply rooted challenges affecting families within our shared community. Our data-driven and equity-centered work has seen 96.4 percent of the 611 original, eligible Tidewater Gardens families remain engaged with the People First^{USI} services, and the increased average income of households that is now \$24,029, up from the \$21,037 reported in the year-three report.

As we study year four with our partners, we remain boldly committed to promoting investment and scalable innovations for the people of Kindred to continually move families forward along their pathways toward their desired success.

We are proud to present this report to the Norfolk community to celebrate the gains and critical collaboration necessary to support stable and thriving Virginians.

Your partner,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Esther Shin'.

ESTHER SHIN
President & CEO
Urban Strategies, Inc.



The People First^{USI} team of Year Four, left to right: Aaron White, Jayla Carrington, Amber Swain, Kashira Wilson, Thomasine Norfleet, Meisha Calloway, Nicole Brown, Dominique Hoskins, Chamika Johnson, Brittney Anderson, Kimi Smith, Natalie Lino, Aimee Barrett-Battle (former member), Marcus Clarke and Pam Blount. Not pictured: Brittany Sutton, Gabrielle "Gabi" Robinson, Brandi Bailey and Matthew Vinson.

ABOUT PEOPLE FIRST^{USI}

Since 2019, the Norfolk-based team of People First Empowered by Urban Strategies Inc. (People First^{USI}) has worked closely with Tidewater Gardens residents to support and prioritize their housing choices and follow through on other commitments during the community transformation.

The People First^{USI} initiative was developed by the City of Norfolk and Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority (NRHA) in collaboration with residents. The City hired USI for its expertise in implementing neighborhood and human-service programs in communities undergoing transitions like that in St. Paul's. Partnering with residents, the City, NRHA, the St. Paul's Advisory Committee, and a vast network of social service, business, education, corporate, and nonprofit providers, People First^{USI} connects residents to supportive economic, housing, education and health-related resources.

Now, with the successful relocation of all Tidewater Gardens residents to make way for construction of the new Kindred community, People First^{USI} specialists have assured families "we are HERE 4U" as they organize community-engagement



events, oversee individual and family-focused goal-setting, assist former residents in overcoming daily challenges, and remain connected to individuals and families they have come to know over the years.

This past year, People First^{USI} and partners organized programs and

workshops to help prepare families for future success. Courses were offered on healthy eating, how to repair credit and establish a household budget, first-time homebuyer education, and tenant rights and responsibilities when renting from private landlords, to name a few topics.

The City and NRHA are committed to keeping people first. The City is investing \$3 million a year to continue changing lives through the vital work of the People First^{USI} initiative.

YEAR FOUR SEES FAMILY RELOCATIONS COMPLETED

What started as a vision and promise to keep the well-being of families at the heart of the Tidewater Gardens transformation has become a reality as our fourth year of working with the community comes to a close. The City of Norfolk partnered with Urban Strategies, Inc., to implement People First^{USI} to carry out the shared mission, and has it ever.

At the beginning of 2023, a major milestone was accomplished with the relocation of all remaining households impacted by the redevelopment of Tidewater Gardens. Of the 611 original households, People First^{USI} has engaged with or provided direct support to 592 of the households.

As this report highlights, in year four, former Tidewater Gardens residents continued to advance in each of the four priority areas with the support of People First^{USI} and its vast network of business, non-profit and civic-minded partners. For example, more than 76% of residents age 18 to 64 have wage income, compared to 47% before the program began. In addition, 97% of residents had health insurance by the end of year four, and more than 50% of preschoolers were enrolled in early-childhood education programs. More than 40% of households relocated to single- or multi-family homes in neighborhoods with a poverty rate of less than 20%, and

more than 90% relocated to neighborhoods with a poverty rate of less than 40%.

The family success stories in year four underscore the valuable work of People First^{USI} and the commitment of the City and Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority (NRHA) to the people affected by one of the most transformative public housing redevelopments in modern history. The new community, named Kindred, will offer affordable, contemporary living in a mixed-income environment that is welcoming and inclusive of individuals from diverse backgrounds.

Although all of the former Tidewater Gardens residents have now moved, People First^{USI} will continue to engage with them until Kindred is completed and everyone who wants to come back to the new community has returned. To date, 54% have indicated they will move back. Whatever decision a household makes, the People First^{USI} team will work tirelessly with the city, the NRHA, and its partners to help strengthen and stabilize families so that they thrive for years to come.

Putting people first in the midst of a transformation is essential.

Moving on Up



Nettie Bond is living a life most people only dream of: She is debt-free.

The exact moment her debt dropped to zero is etched in her mind: January 3, 2023, the day she paid off her last bill in the amount of \$81.93. Ms. Bond had been paying \$25 per month through a bill-consolidation plan, which was all she could afford on a

monthly basis. But she was determined to begin the year not owing anything to anyone.

"I said, I don't care if I don't have any money left at all. I paid the whole \$81.93 in full," said Ms. Bond.

Although her outstanding debt was less than \$1,000, living on a fixed income didn't give the former Tidewater Gardens resident much money to pay outstanding medical bills, past-due utility bills, and back rent. At the encouragement of her People First^{USI} family support specialist, Ms. Bond worked with a financial agent at The Up Center to consolidate her bills, pay the debt, and build credit.

Ms. Bond, 62, had lived in Tidewater Gardens for 11 years before moving out in September 2021, when construction began to redevelop the community. When she went to The Up Center for financial advice, she learned that some of the \$1,000 she thought she owed had been erased after seven years. That dropped her debt to \$595.93, which she planned to pay off in \$25 monthly increments.

"Sometimes, if I had a little extra, I paid \$50," Ms. Bond said.

When she accomplished her goal of paying off her bills, Ms. Bond and her counselor at The Up Center contacted the three major credit bureaus to update her credit score. She also managed to save \$300 for emergencies. Now Ms. Bond is ready to tackle another goal of getting her GED, something she's wanted to do since she dropped out of high school in 10th grade.

"My mom was going through difficult times and was working two jobs, so I had to stay home to help take care of my sisters and brothers," said Ms. Bond, referring to her four siblings.

She also wants to purchase her first car. "While I'm sitting here waiting for my transcript, I'm studying for my driver's license. I've got a bus ticket, but I'm getting me a car," she said with excitement. "I know how to be responsible and independent and pay my bills like I'm supposed to."

Putting a Focus on Finances

Nettie Bond is one of nearly 100 former Tidewater Gardens residents who obtained financial and housing education and counseling support from The Up Center, a nonprofit formed as Norfolk United Charities in 1883 – 140 years ago – to help impoverished Norfolk residents improve their quality of life. Over the decades, the organization was restructured and renamed until it was branded, in 2008, as The Up Center.

In July 2020, The Up Center partnered with People First Empowered by Urban Strategies, Inc., to help Tidewater Gardens families who were being relocated during the neighborhood redevelopment become creditworthy. The purpose of the partnership is to assist Tidewater Gardens residents with improving their long-term financial stability and transition to permanent housing. So far, 94 former Tidewater Gardens residents have participated.

Program participants receive valuable information about their rights and responsibilities as renters, many of whom secured private versus public housing in neighborhoods of choice as a result of the redevelopment. The Up Center helps mediate landlord/tenant disputes over fair-housing issues, for example, a service Tidewater Gardens residents have benefitted from.

“When People First has someone who is having trouble paying their rent or they’re having issues with their landlord, we work with them to find a resolution that benefits the client,” said Ms. Tritch.

Participants also obtain tips on creating a realistic budget so they can stay current on their rent and other household expenses. Residents are encouraged to improve their credit by paying off debts and, eventually, opening savings accounts and secured credit cards to raise their FICO scores.

Individuals attend one-on-one counseling sessions and workshops at The Up Center’s Norfolk offices. The Up Center also offers a 16-week course for first-time homebuyers, as residents become eligible to purchase.



In January 2023, the center began offering anyone who completes the course a \$250 incentive to stay in the program. The money is not given to the participant; instead, the center sends it directly to the designated creditor. To date, two Tidewater Gardens residents have earned the incentive for completing the program.

“Our goal is to get them through the program in four months,” said Tiffany Tritch, program manager for The Up Center’s Housing and Financial Counseling department. “The ultimate goal is to get them mortgage-ready. We saw a lot of interest in people wanting to build wealth. The best way to build wealth is through homeownership so we wanted to help with that.”

YEAR FOUR BY THE NUMBERS

Data based on People First^{USI} enrolled and assessed population.

PEOPLE FIRST^{USI} ENGAGEMENT

By the end of Year Four, 592, or 96.8%, of the original 611 eligible Tidewater Gardens households had engaged with People First^{USI}.

96.8%
ENGAGED
with People First^{USI}

Housing Stability



100% OF THE ORIGINAL
611 HOUSEHOLDS

are relocated from Tidewater Gardens. Also, 100% of households enrolled with People First^{USI} are eligible for the RIGHT TO RETURN. Since Year One, among the former residents:

31%

relocated to a Neighborhood of Opportunity as defined by HUD (<40% poverty and <62% minority concentration)

91%

relocated to a neighborhood with <40% poverty but >62% minority concentration

54%

**SAY THEY
WILL RETURN**
to the newly named
Kindred community

42%

relocated to a neighborhood with <20% poverty

23%

relocated to other
NRHA public housing

Education



47%
(61 of 147)

of resident children ages 0-5 participated in center-based or formal home-learning programs

77%
(121 of 157)

of eligible resident children are receiving early-childhood-development screening

53%
(37 of 71)

of children ages 0-3 were enrolled in early-learning programs for the 2022-23 school year

91%
(21 of 23)

of People First^{USI}-enrolled high school seniors graduated



Economic Mobility

	Baseline	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	% over Y3
Percent of residents ages 18-64 with wage income (employed)	47% (152 of 323)	74% (199 of 269)	73% (255 of 349)	73% (297 of 407)	76% (323 of 425)	8.75%
Average annual wage income	\$14,177	\$18,005	\$18,826	\$21,037	\$24,029	14.22%
Full-time employment (30+ hours)	N/A	71.20%	77%	80.50%	81.4%	1.12%
Of-age/able-bodied unemployed	89%	25%	27%	27%	26%	-3.7%
Of-age/able-bodied <30 hours	N/A	29.80%	27%	27.30%	26.4%	-3.3%



Health & Wellness



85%
(499 of 589)

of adult residents secured a healthcare provider they regularly go to for care

97%
(573 of 589)

of adult residents obtained health insurance

100%
(763 of 763)

of children have health insurance

93%
(232 of 250)

of individuals with chronic health conditions connected with services to manage the conditions



Stronger Together

When Victoria Almond moved into an apartment in a neighborhood she selected after living in Tidewater Gardens for 10 years, she had no idea she'd have to dodge raindrops.

"The rain was literally coming in the window. I had to have a bucket because the rain was coming in," recalled Ms. Almond, who moved to the complex in 2021 while the Tidewater Gardens redevelopment was underway.

Caring for her three young grandnieces — ages 4, 5 and 6 — who she's had custody of since they were born, left little time for Ms. Almond to haggle with the landlord about making the necessary repairs to the roof. Frustrated, she decided not to renew the lease even though she dreaded looking for another apartment.

The setback had a silver lining.

After Ms. Almond reached out to the People First^{USI} team to explain her dilemma, family-support specialists stepped in to help out. They worked with her to identify single-family homes that would accommodate a family of four and that were close to schools and childcare. They met with the landlord at a home Ms. Almond qualified for and liked, and who would accept a housing choice voucher from the Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority (NRHA).

Throughout the Tidewater Gardens relocation process, the Lead Mobility and Family Support staff at People First^{USI} have developed relationships with local landlords and property owners to eliminate barriers and trepidation some of them might have about renting to people with vouchers. The team persuaded Ms. Almond's landlord to install new kitchen appliances before she moved in. The landlord also installed new floors and a washer and dryer.

People First^{USI} specialists reviewed the lease agreement with Ms. Almond to ensure she read and understood the fine print. The City and NRHA paid for her moving expenses.

Today Ms. Almond, 58, lives with her three girls in a comfortable three-bedroom, two-story home with a fenced backyard in a neighborhood she personally selected because of the amenities.

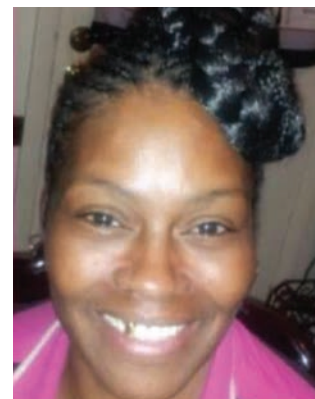
"It's my dream home. I live on a very quiet street and there's a park a block away. It's perfect," said Ms.

Almond, who's lived there for three months. "People First took a lot of pressure off of me having to move. I don't know how I would have done it without their help."

Whether she stays there or returns to the new Kindred community when it opens for occupancy remains to be seen. Ms. Almond has a bad back that has made her disabled; walking up and down stairs several times a day to keep up with youngsters could eventually take its toll. At Kindred, she would qualify for a unit with one floor.

"I guess it depends on how my body does here with the stairs," she said, "but I love my house."

The City and NRHA's right-to-return policy enables Ms. Almond and other relocated Tidewater Gardens residents to return to the new community when it's completed. People First^{USI} will assist her with whatever decision she makes.





Head of the Class

If success was a person, her name might be 18-year-old Ty'Jenya Pinkney, the oldest of eight children who lived for years in Tidewater Gardens with her mother and siblings.

Ty'Jenya recently received a full, four-year scholarship from the Posse Foundation to attend William & Mary in Williamsburg based on sweat, hard work, and exceptional academic achievements. She will enroll as an undergraduate this fall before going on to medical school, where she plans to become a pharmacist or pediatrician.

"At first I didn't believe it. I thought they were playing," said Ms. Pinkney, recalling her surprise when her school counselor informed her on a Zoom call that she had been accepted at William & Mary and awarded a scholarship.

When she realized it wasn't a joke, happy tears flowed from her eyes and those of her mom, Tinesha Pinkney, 38. Ty'Jenya will be the first in her family to attend college. Her Posse scholarship will cover tuition, housing, and supplies. Tuition and fees for in-state students such as Ty'Jenya start at \$23,970 a year at William & Mary. Even though the school is about one hour from home, Ty'Jenya will live on campus.

"The only thing I'll have to pay for is my meals," Ty'Jenya said happily.

Founded in 1989, the Posse Foundation supports outstanding students from diverse backgrounds who are often overlooked by Ivy League schools. Posse scholars are placed in groups of 10 and receive mentoring and support throughout their college years. Scholars have a 90% graduation rate, a success attributed to having students in small groups, forming bonds and sharing experiences. The program grooms future leaders and has awarded more than \$2 billion in scholarships to 12,000 students at 63 participating colleges and universities. William & Mary and the University of Virginia are the participating schools in Virginia. Of Posse scholars, 57% are families' first-generation college students like Ty'Jenya.

Ty'Jenya started taking college courses in 11th grade at Virginia Beach Technical and Career Center (VOTECH) while attending Norview High School. Pharmacy technician training at VOTECH let her experience what pharmacy work is like.



Tinesha Pinkney, left, and her daughter Ty'Jenya

"I got to work in a real, live clinical hospital and was able to label prescriptions. I was like, I really like this," she said.

People First^{USI} family-support specialists helped Ty'Jenya move into her dorm. Her mother's van was broken, so the team packed one of their vans with Ty'Jenya's belongings and drove her to college. They also helped fill her room with essentials.

Ty'Jenya's graduation and scholarship aren't all her family is celebrating. Her mother is still singing praises for People First^{USI} about the five-bedroom home she and the children moved into after leaving Tidewater Gardens. It's located in what the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development designates as a Neighborhood of Opportunity, one without a large concentration of people living in poverty.

"People First helped us find a place to live, they paid the deposit on the home, and they hired movers to help us move," said Ms. Pinkney. "It's such a blessing."



The Making of a Merchant Marine



Yonyea Evans is on course to do great things. Two years ago, he was a 21-year-old juggling two jobs to support his mother, twin sister, and himself. Although he acted as the head of household in their Tidewater Gardens apartment, he was drifting, always looking for a better job when his 5 a.m. to 1 p.m. shift at Dunkin' Donuts ended and before he reported to work at Walmart.

Things soon changed for the better. When the family moved to Hampton Boulevard near Naval Station Norfolk, a new opportunity opened for Mr. Evans.

Brittany Sutton, a People First^{USI} workforce specialist was already working intensely with Yukeeta Evans, Mr. Evans' mother, to help her find employment in the health care industry. After completing the "Thriving Tuesdays" program offered by People First^{USI} to assist residents in their job search, Ms. Evans did indeed secure a job. With his mother working, Mr. Evans was able to carve out time to obtain a Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) card required for workers who need access to restricted areas at maritime facilities and vessels.

Having the TWIC card was the first step on Mr. Evans' path to becoming a seaman in the Merchant Marines, a position Ms. Sutton told him about and encouraged him to apply for.

"I was just trying to do something with my life. The merchant seaman opportunity came along, and I read some research about it and decided to go ahead," said Mr. Evans.

Ms. Sutton introduced him to an instructor at the Mid-Atlantic Maritime Academy in Norfolk, the vocational training center for merchant mariners. After completing a 160-hour course that taught him the basics about the duties and responsibilities of a seaman, Mr. Evans passed the exam that followed and graduated on May 9. In the audience cheering him on were his mother, Yukeeta Evans, and Ms. Sutton.

"I'm glad she came," Mr. Evans said of Ms. Sutton. "I couldn't thank her enough for helping me get this position. I'm so grateful for everything she has done."

Mr. Evans went on to an internship at Nauticus, the City's maritime discovery center, where he received 80 hours of training on the battleship USS Wisconsin. As soon as he gets a work assignment, he'll be ready to set sail.

"I'm looking forward to this new experience," said Mr. Evans, now 23. "My intentions for doing this are bigger than me. I just want to do good and help my family and support myself."

His mother named him after an artist in the popular R&B group "Boyz II Men," and Mr. Evans believes he's finally living up to the name by finding a career path that will open new horizons.

"My mom is so proud; she can't stop talking about it," he said.



Waist Not, Want Not

A good diet is hard to find, and even harder to choose from if the smorgasbord of weight-loss plans on the market is any indication. From Keto to Atkins, from Flexitarian to Volumetrics and Small Change, there's something for every appetite. But the temptation to cheat is often only a meal away.

That's why the research team at Eastern Virginia Medical School in Norfolk prefers to use the words "portion control" in a study the school is conducting in collaboration with WelFore Health, co-founded by Ed and Ann-Marie Stephens.

"The goal of the program is to help people change their diet while still eating culturally relevant food and flavors so they can both lose weight and improve their metabolic health," said Jordan Pettaway, a research associate at the school.

The study is open to African Americans between the ages of 25 to 55. The first phase of the pilot began in November 2022; the second phase is scheduled to begin in September 2023.

Through WelFore's partnership with People First^{USI}, former Tidewater Gardens residents were given an opportunity to participate. To date, four have enrolled.

Healthy eating is one of many aspects of the People First^{USI} health and wellness initiative, and health and wellness is just one priority area of assistance for impacted families. The others are housing stability, economic mobility, and education.

The WelFore-led study consists of health screenings, online resources, and in-person cooking demonstrations. Participants keep food diaries and talk to nutritionists about food choices, meal plans, and shopping lists. Each person is given a divided plate to take the guesswork out of meal portions.

The research team won't have results from the study until Phase 2 is completed; so far, participants are sticking with it.

"We've gotten a lot of feedback that people like the tools to control how much they eat. They also like writing in a food diary," said Mr. Pettaway.



On Her Own



When Shawnetta Dennis received a letter from the Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority (NRHA) notifying her that she was no longer eligible to live in Tidewater Gardens, she wanted to jump for joy. The letter confirmed what she already knew: Her income was too high to remain in public housing.

After moving to the community in the St. Paul's quadrant 15 years ago with her three sons, Ms. Dennis accomplished her goal of earning a bachelor's degree in accounting and business management from Norfolk State University in May 2022. She did it after earning two associate degrees while her children were in school, and being awarded a two-year scholarship to attend Norfolk State.

Graduating from college at age 50 was a big deal for Ms. Dennis. Graduating from college the same day as her youngest son, Maleik Watkins, 23, was an even bigger deal. The fact that she outranked him academically was huge.

"I graduated with higher honors than him," Ms. Dennis said, laughing. "I graduated one week and I moved out of Tidewater Gardens the next week."

Ms. Dennis initially moved to Tidewater Gardens when her children were young and she was struggling to make ends meet. The rent was affordable and the location was near schools, swimming and karate classes, which her sons enjoyed. But there were drawbacks.

"The flooding was really bad," she remembers, which happened whenever it rained hard. "We had break-ins and people stole food from the freezer."

And then there were the gunshots. "I was so scared," Ms. Dennis said.

After earning her associate degrees, Ms. Dennis got a job at ADP. She was promoted earlier this year to a leadership role.

Finding a place to live in today's real estate market proved challenging. But with the help of People First^{USI} and \$2,800 from NRHA for moving expenses, Ms. Dennis eventually selected a two-bedroom, one-bath home with a shed and a yard in a neighborhood that is just 10 minutes from her job.

Ms. Dennis couldn't be happier and believes her life has come full-circle. "For me, Tidewater Gardens was a place to get on your feet," she said. "It shouldn't be a place to live permanently."

People First^{USI} collaborates with its network of partners to help families move from just surviving to thriving. One of the priorities in the area of housing and economic stability is to provide residents like Ms. Dennis who no longer need public housing assistance with resources for asserting their tenant rights, building credit, and purchasing a home.

YEAR FOUR PARTNERS



Bank On Hampton Roads

Basilica of Saint Mary of the Immaculate Conception

Boys & Girls Clubs of Southeast Virginia

Brinshore Development

Children's Health Investment Program (CHIP) of South Hampton Roads

City of Norfolk Community Services Board

City of Norfolk Department of Housing and Community Development

City of Norfolk Department of Human Services

City of Norfolk Department of Parks and Recreation

Dollar Bank

EVMS (Minus 9 to 5)

Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore

Gethsemane Community Fellowship

Greater Hampton Roads Diaper Bank

Hampton Roads Community Health Center

Hampton Roads Transit

Hunton YMCA

Kaleidoscope Counseling & Case Management, LLC

Legal Aid Society of Eastern Virginia

Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Program

Next Steps To Success

Norfolk Public Library

Norfolk Public Health

Norfolk Public Schools

Norfolk Redevelopment & Housing Authority (NRHA)

Norfolk State University

Norfolk Works/Norfolk Department of Economic Development

NRHA HomeNet Homeownership Center

Old Dominion University: Institute for Innovation & Entrepreneurship

Peoples Pharmacy, LLC

PMI Virginia/CENTURY 21 Nachman Realty

Teens with a Purpose

The Franklin Johnston Group

The Planning Council

The Salvation Army

The Up Center

Tidewater Community College

St. Paul's Advisory Committee (SPAC)

Seven Venues

Shands Therapeutic Solutions, LLC

Silver Care, LLC

Southside Boys & Girls Club

STOP, Inc.

United Way of South Hampton Roads

Virginia Zoo

Welfore Health

WIC Program / City of Norfolk Public Health

YMCA South Hampton Roads

YWCA South Hampton Roads

RESIDENT SPOTLIGHT

'Blessed and Highly Favored'

Years ago, when Natalie Lino's life was spiraling out of control, the odds of her stopping the downward trajectory were as low as her winning the lottery.

Using drugs and harboring an illegal boarder resulted in Ms. Lino being evicted from Tidewater Gardens, where she had lived for nine years. The drug addiction led to homelessness. Her husband was sent to prison. She had nowhere to go, except to a shelter. Ms. Lino hit rock bottom, but she eventually cleaned up her act and moved back to Tidewater Gardens in 2013 with two of her five children.

Living in the four-bedroom unit brought a sense of stability to Ms. Lino and her family. "This time I was substance-abuse-free," she said proudly.

In 2021, during the Tidewater Gardens community redevelopment, the People First Empowered by Urban Strategies team helped Ms. Lino and her children move into a three-bedroom townhouse in a neighborhood of her choosing. The unit is subsidized with a housing choice voucher (HCV) from the Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority (NRHA).

Ms. Lino was a familiar face at People First^{USI} offices, where she visited regularly to get information, educational and economic support services, and other resources. Brittany Sutton, a workforce specialist at People First^{USI}, told Ms. Lino about a job opening at Urban Strategies that involved working with other Tidewater Gardens families on relocation and family support initiatives.

Ms. Lino applied for the position and was hired in February 2023. She is now officially an outreach specialist at People First^{USI}. Her job is to make sure former residents know about current events and construction updates for the new community, which has been renamed Kindred.

"God is really blessing me," said Ms. Lino, who gets emotional when reminiscing about how far she's come.

The blessings didn't stop there.



Natalie Lino, far left, shows her Thriving Tuesday completion certificate. She is joined, left to right, by former Tidewater Gardens resident Zycura English, People First^{USI} Workforce Specialist Brittany Sutton, and former Tidewater Gardens residents Toinetta Hayes and Reginald Clary, also Thriving Tuesday graduates.

Thomasine Norfleet, Ms. Lino's supervisor and associate project manager, asked Ms. Lino if she would be interested in serving on the board of directors for the Hampton Roads Community Health Center, which has partnered with USI to provide health, wellness, and mental health services to Tidewater Gardens families impacted by the redevelopment. Ms. Lino was skeptical, but she applied anyway and went to the next board meeting when new members would be elected.

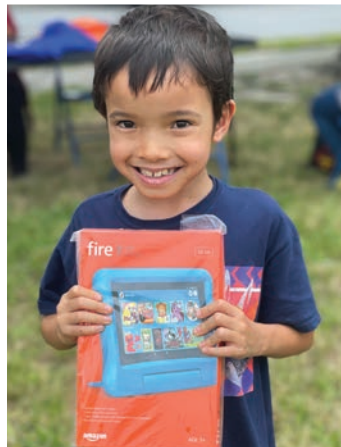
"With me coming from the person I used to be, when I went in there I made sure I looked my best," Ms. Lino said. "There was so much power in that room. Everyone had initials from A to Z behind their names. They were either a lawyer or a doctor and then there was me. Just a blessed and highly favored woman by the man upstairs."

Her nomination to the board was readily approved.

"My life, oh my Lord, my life has changed," said Ms. Lino, who is preparing for yet another lifestyle change. When Origin Circle at Kindred opens, she plans to move back with her youngest child, who is 12.

"I will definitely move back to the new community," she said. "I was the first one who put in an application at Origin Circle."

YEAR FOUR IN PICTURES



LOOKING AHEAD: YEAR FIVE RESULTS AND OUTCOMES

Year Five will give People First Empowered by USI the opportunity to meet former Tidewater Gardens residents where they are, whether as residents of the new Kindred community or in other communities they have selected as home. We will continue to provide supportive services as the core of our commitment to assist families as needed.



HOUSING: To ensure that all former Tidewater Gardens residents remain stably housed, People First^{USI} will:

- Welcome and support the families returning to the redeveloped site.
- Continue to support the Tidewater Gardens families who have chosen not to return.
- Provide additional workshops on housekeeping tips to increase housing stability.
- Strengthen families' capacity to optimize their housing choice vouchers.



HEALTH & WELLNESS: To optimize residents' quality of life, we will continue to:

- Focus on increasing the number of residents participating in annual preventive health screenings.
- Address chronic health conditions and connect individuals to services to appropriately manage those conditions.
- Support families in obtaining health insurance.
- Support, educate, and connect families to innovative programs and resources for self-care to help build safety in their surroundings, mastery in their lives, and connection to others.



EDUCATION: We will continue working with our families and education partners on our aligned goals to ensure that all children are kindergarten-ready, proficient in core academics, and graduating on time, college or career-ready. We will:

- Increase parents' capacity to support their children's educational needs through school participation.
- Build support networks for children returning to schools in the redeveloped site.
- Create programming to support the ongoing learning loss due to the pandemic.
- Create activities for parents to support and lead their children's education and two-generational programming.
- Focus on early-learning enrollment to increase the number of children safely enrolled in high-quality early-learning programs.
- Increase programming for out-of-school activities.



ECONOMIC MOBILITY: We will build on successes to date to help:

- Increase the earning capacity for employed residents with wage income and full-time employment.
- Collaborate with partners to increase homeownership opportunities for former Tidewater Gardens families.
- Increase educational or on-the-job training opportunities for former Tidewater Gardens families.
- Increase entrepreneurial opportunities for former Tidewater Gardens families.

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