



For immediate release
December 14, 2020
Contact: Kimberly Allen
kimberly@904ward.org
(904) 710-4984

904WARD to expand, increase racial equity initiatives

Building on five years of volunteer work, more than \$1 million in local philanthropy will support a dedicated executive and expand initiatives aimed at ending racism in Jacksonville

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — 904WARD, a community organization advancing racial equity in Jacksonville since 2015, announced today that it will be significantly expanding its work over the next three years and hiring its first staff.

The nonprofit has a new strategic plan to advance its mission to create racial healing and equity through deep conversations and learning, trusting relationships, and collective action. The plan is backed by more than \$1 million in investment over three years, and includes the hiring of its first Chief Executive Officer, and subsequent administrative and program staff.

Dr. Kimberly A. Allen, who has served as 904WARD's Board Chair since 2018, will start her role as CEO on January 2. Dr. Allen is a Jacksonville native and active community member who lives here with her husband of 10 years and three children, has worked in academia, education, and most recently corporate philanthropy at Florida Blue as a researcher and advocate for Black youth, and is a small business owner. Tracy Tousey, the current Vice Chair, will step in as the interim Board Chair until the position is filled.

"Jacksonville is an amazing city with so much potential, and I know that if we work together as a community, we can end racism in our city so that everyone can thrive," Allen said. "Thanks to the incredible commitment and contributions of volunteers, donors, and partners, there is more momentum than ever to make that vision a reality."

"I cannot think of any individual better suited to lead this vital work," Tousey said. "I know I speak for the entire Board of Directors in knowing that Dr. Allen's vision for 904WARD, commitment to the community, and knack for making sure every voice is heard will make our community a better place for everyone."

"These donors were willing to make a multi-year investment in 904WARD's future because of what it has been able to achieve in the past five years," noted Nina Waters, president of The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida. "Their investment endorses 904WARD's strategy of consistent

engagement and authentic discussion, using creative and thoughtful ways to include a wide range of voices. These donors recognize that Jacksonville must be a more inclusive community and that 904WARD is perfectly positioned to lead this work.”

They include:

- Gary & Nancy Chartrand
- The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida
- Jessie Ball duPont Fund
- Delores Barr Weaver
- J. Wayne Weaver
- Weaver Family Endowed Advised Fund I
- DuBow Family
- Linda Watkins through the Catherine M. Drompp Fund
- Jim & Ellen Wiss
- Ted & Lauren Rueger
- John & Julia Taylor
- The Delores Barr Weaver TCF Staff Giving Fund

Background

904WARD began in 2015 with a small, diverse group of friends who came together to talk openly, challenge and support each other, and take action together to build a more inclusive Jacksonville. Over a lunch table, they grieved the unjust deaths of people of color, shared instances of racism they had experienced, learned to address their own biases, and identified ways to make a difference. The number of volunteers grew steadily with their work, and it now comprises a network of thousands of individuals from Jacksonville’s private, public, and nonprofit sectors who are committed to creating a community of inclusion for all. Since then, 904WARD’s diverse corps of volunteers have mobilized to:

- Launch the Jacksonville Community Remembrance Project, a partnership with the Equal Justice Initiative (led by Bryan Stevenson, criminal justice reformer and author of *Just Mercy*) to truthfully acknowledge and remember the city and the country’s history of racial terror lynching. More than 170 volunteers are working together to connect the past with the present through soil collection ceremonies and historical markers in the belief that history is vital to community healing and reconciliation. **The next Soil Collection Ceremony is in commemoration of Eugene Burnam and will be held virtually on Sunday, January 3 at 3 p.m.**
- Create The Race Cards, which have served as a tool for thousands of people to experience the brave, honest dialogue created in the early days of 904WARD. Volunteers, wanting to help others have productive, authentic discussions about race, developed the Race Cards, a deck of conversation-starting cards prompting participants to share personal experiences with racism, discuss topics like protests and Black Lives Matter, and visualize their own role in racial equity. Started through crowdsourcing on social media and strategic partnerships, it has been sustained by countless volunteer facilitators across the city. More than 2,000 decks have been distributed throughout the community and sold across the nation to other communities interested in how 904WARD works in Jacksonville.

- Hold events bringing together hundreds of people — virtually and in person — to discuss issues of racial justice and search for solutions.

The organization obtained 501(c)3 status in 2017.

Over the next five years, 904WARD will continue partnering with local organizations to achieve four key goals:

- Continue engaging a wide swath of the community in thoughtful dialogue about race and racial injustice in the greater Jacksonville community and beyond, bringing individuals together who might otherwise never have met together for conversation and action.
- Work to ensure that Black, Indigenous and Leaders of Color in Jacksonville are trusted, respected, and reflective of its population.
- Pursue truth & reconciliation about the history of race relations in Jacksonville, with an understanding that it is ongoing and evolving.
- Advocate for the policies and priorities that will make Jacksonville a diverse, inclusive, and equitable community.

A host of initiatives — including digitizing and updating the Race Cards, hosting events around Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and publishing a report to the community on racial disparities and solutions, and more — will focus on working with the community to advocate for changes that improve outcomes for Black, Indigenous and People of Color.

###

About 904WARD

904WARD creates racial healing and equity through deep conversations and learning, trusting relationships, and collective action. Our vision is an end to racism in Jacksonville so all people thrive. To learn more and sign up to get involved, visit 904ward.org.