



OUR ORGANIZATION

The National CARES Mentoring Movement is a pioneering, community-mobilization initiative that directly addresses the life-shredding effects of intergenerational Black poverty and lays a blueprint for community recovery. Anchored by a 58 U.S-city affiliate network, we are the nation's recognized leader in the recruitment, training and engagement of African American mentors, and the only organization providing holistic programming on a national scale to undergird and advance impoverished Black children by providing them with the emotional, social, academic and career-readiness support they must have to become self-sustaining, successful contributors to our society.

MISSION AND HISTORY

Founded in 2006 in the wake of Hurricane Katrina as Essence CARES while Susan L. Taylor was chief editor of *Essence* magazine, it is the mission of National CARES Mentoring Movement to transform the lives of Black children by inspiring, recruiting and mobilizing masses of caring Black men and women to mentor and nourish, challenge and champion them. Compelled to do more than just write about the predictable destinies of impoverished Black children, in 2008, after 27 years as its chief editor, Susan Taylor handed the reins to the next generation at Essence Communications to concentrate fully on building the National CARES Mentoring Movement. To date, we have recruited more than 150,000 mentors who are serving, or have served, more than 200,000 children.

To meet the demand for more mentors, and to nurture masses of Black children in crisis, we developed the first and only national structure dedicated specifically to recruit and train African American mentors. Our healing framework, ***A New Way Forward: Healing What's Hurting Black America***, is the guiding philosophy and curriculum that leads all of our work. Developed by a brain trust of 60 policy, advocacy, public health, wellness and faith leaders, the 148-page manual delineates principles and practices that help African Americans heal our depression and self-denial, rarely recognized, but internalized over generations, and foster physical, mental, spiritual, financial and relational wellbeing. As our brain trust elder Harry Belafonte stated, "We will never be able to fix what most affects our children until we fix what most affects us."



Local CARES affiliate leaders from 58-U.S. cities lead the work on the ground.

OUR PROGRAMS

Recognizing that the traditional one-to-one mentoring model will never reach the multitudes of young people who need a mentor, we designed **THE RISINGS**, two group-mentoring models:

Programming for Children

THE RISING: ELEVATING EDUCATION, EXPECTATIONS AND SELF-ESTEEM: a program that supports the development and healing of middle and high-school students both in school and community settings.

THE HBCU RISING: A CAMPUS-PUBLIC SCHOOLS LITERACY AND STEM MENTORING INITIATIVE: a three-tiered group-mentoring model in which corporate volunteers in STEM-related professions coach college students from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), who then mentor middle school students during the school day in their math and science classes, as well as after school.

THE RISINGS propel young people impeded by poverty to rise above their current circumstances by recognizing their inherent worth and embracing their innate power to soar.

Additionally, to ensure that children have caring and flourishing adults in their lives, we created programming to fortify and bolster parents, caregivers and community members:

Programming for Adults

UNIVERSITY FOR PARENTS: a workforce-readiness program that is anchored in CARES' culturally grounded and healing-centered wellness approach. The program leverages community partnerships to provide family members with the resources and opportunities that they need to become self-sustaining.

COMMUNITY WELLNESS AND WEALTH-BUILDING CIRCLES: healing-centered community gatherings that are guided by our wellness protocols and reinforce our culturally anchored trainings. The program is offered to adults by our 58 U.S. affiliates with the goal of supporting our communities to rebuild their villages.

Our curriculum-based, group-mentoring and training initiatives are built to support the multitudes of children in need and provide access to a wide constellation of culturally competent and healing-centered supportive services to families and communities, delivered by our growing number of partner organizations. The goal is to replicate nationally each component of this blueprint for community recovery—**THE RISINGS**, the **UNIVERSITY FOR PARENTS**, and **COMMUNITY WELLNESS CIRCLES**—across our 58 local Affiliate cities, the Historically Black Colleges and Universities network, and beyond.

THE RISING: Elevating Education, Expectations and Self-Esteem



Our national group-mentoring RISING program builds a critical, positive consciousness in our young, fostering their desire and ability to change their contexts and communities. Our 32-week interactive curriculum addresses the complex issues impacting children on the margins. It shines the light on their innate intelligence as our program facilitators and mentors carefully guide them, with sensitivity and established trust, to those secret places where pain bridles hope. The RISING's culturally sensitive curriculum supports children struggling in poverty in creating the bright futures they are longing for and deserve. With devoted local community partners, The RISING buttresses any extremely vulnerable children and their families with vital wrap-around services and supports.

Our consciousness-shifting program is currently implemented at a range of public schools and juvenile detention centers. THE RISING is embedded at middle schools, high schools and juvenile detention centers across eight cities: Chicago, Detroit, Fort Lauderdale, Miami, Newark, Seattle, Oakland and Sacramento.

THE RISING's curriculum is rooted in prevention and provides principles, practices and coping mechanisms designed to provide young people with the tools that they need to become successful adults. Working hand-in-hand with school administrators, educators and parents, THE RISING instills in our young a deep sense of racial pride, self-worth, confidence and hope for the future. The healing-centered model engages communities and surrounds young people with caring adults. Our goal is that our children are fortified, able to overcome societal obstacles and fulfill their potential. THE RISING consists of two key elements: large-group auditorium sessions and Wellness Mentoring Circles. The auditorium sessions cover a wide range of topics and have a strong focus on workforce readiness. Wellness Mentoring Circles are single-gender-identified healing sessions facilitated by trained professionals and supported by mentors. Young people work closely with our psychologists and mentors to heal traumas, so they are emotionally healthy and able to succeed socially, academically and in life.



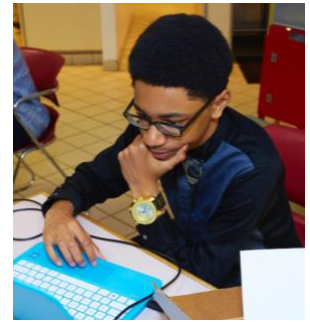
While our focus is on Black children and mentors, National CARES turns away no child in need or qualified adult, and our programs are easily adapted to other cultural contexts

THE HBCU RISING: A Community Schools-Campus STEM Initiative



The HBCU Rising aims to fill the pipeline of jobs which use STEM skills, for which the representation of African American participation is by far the lowest of any ethnic or racial group. The three-tiered mentoring program uses corporate volunteers in STEM-related professions to coach college students from historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), who in turn, mentor middle and elementary school students, both in their classrooms and afterschool.

The program helps to nourish and propel toward social and economic mobility some of our nation's most marginalized children and college students, instilling critical-thinking skills, discipline, self-confidence, and a love for learning. The college students largely share the same cultural and economic backgrounds of their younger mentees, and most often hail from similar neighborhoods. Through cherished relationships, the younger mentees work directly with mentors who embody the success that the program is designed to inspire.



THE UNIVERSITY FOR PARENTS: A Job- and Life-Readiness Initiative

A year-round workforce readiness and healing initiative that helps struggling parents to advance by providing them with the skills and confidence that they need to advocate for themselves, their children and community, the goal of the program is to enable parents to become economically stable.



Our free program engages over 70 local partners in order to provide wrap-around services that extend workforce, psychosocial, academic and consumer support to impoverished parents. To ensure that parents can fully participate in the classes we provide quality childcare and healthy meals to the families. The classes focus on the building blocks for a high-quality life with an emphasis on positive parenting, workforce readiness and conflict-resolution skills. Professional facilitators lead Wellness Mentoring Circles to give parents the space to share their stories and process the traumas that they have experienced throughout their lives.

Creating a culture of self-care and wellness improves the participants ability to nurture their families and participate in their communities.

AFFILIATE DEVELOPMENT Program Description

Our work is only possible because of our local CARES affiliate leaders, a volunteer army of caring and committed adults who recruit, train and deploy loving mentors. We support and strengthen the leadership capacity of this network through monthly group teleconferences, weekly one-on-one support calls, dedicated staff support and annual all-affiliate training conference.

United by our principles and mission, our leaders across 58 U.S. cities effectively recruit adults to serve as mentors and deploy them to schools and youth-support organizations that are in need of Black volunteers to provide one to one mentoring. Cultural competency is embedded in all affiliate activities. In cities with our group mentoring programs, affiliate leaders are critical to engaging community partners to enable wraparound support and provide CARES-trained, loving mentors to serve.

Because of our local presence and leadership, National CARES is able to support communities and adults through **COMMUNITY WELLNESS AND WEALTH-BUILDING CIRCLES (Community Circles)**. COMMUNITY CIRCLES provide a compassionate place for reflection and connection, where our mentors and other community leaders can learn to relieve the debilitating stress too many of us shroud in silence. Anchored by our culturally relevant curriculum, COMMUNITY CIRCLES provide adults with health and wellness support and best practices in community and mentor engagement. The COMMUNITY CIRCLES create a pipeline of healthy, caring adults who are emotionally, physically, and financially stable, which allows them to love and guide our children to total wellbeing. In circle, we build mutuality and trust and honor our spirituality and faith. The curriculum has a strong focus on growing economic independence in Black communities, encouraging civic engagement and support for strengthening local Black institutions.

FORWARD! An App to Close the Gap

National CARES is also developing a learning app. This platform, presented through a culturally specific lens, will focus on healing trauma, cultivating literacy skills, STEM education and workforce development. This digital curriculum, designed for the middle and high school students we serve in schools across the country, specifically honors the rich heritage and phenomenal accomplishments of our children's ancestors and role models, those who excelled despite experiencing structural barriers throughout history.

For many students, their phone is their means of connecting to the internet and the vast store of the world's knowledge. Using a mobile-phone compatible app will allow all students to access the lessons and activities via their personal devices. The goals for this innovative initiative are three-fold: 1) to fire students' imaginations; 2) to remedy the lack of public schools' curricula that is relevant to them; 3) to build foundational literacy and math skills, and a love for learning that prepares them to participate fully in the national marketplace and global economy.

VOLUNTEERS ARE THE HEART OF OUR MOVEMENT

Ways to Volunteer

- Serve on the leadership team of an existing local affiliate
- Open a new affiliate to serve more children
- Invest in as little as one hour a week to mentor
- Donate to the movement
- Volunteer your skills to local and national team

Volunteers are the heart of the National CARES community recovery effort. From our founder Susan L. Taylor's service as a full-time volunteer CEO from 2005 to 2015, to our 58 affiliate leaders in cities throughout the nation, to the tens of thousands of mentors who commit their time to our children, National CARES is fueled by our volunteers' passion and love. Volunteers make it possible for us to support, transform and elevate vulnerable young people and their families.

CONCLUSION

National CARES is dedicated to changing the landscape for under-served communities and the children and families who live there. We are seeking partnerships with community-focused organizations and agencies that believe life-transforming change is possible. While our focus is on African Americans, we turn away no child in need or qualified adult, and our mentor-training and group-mentoring programs can be adapted easily for other cultural contexts. Our evidence-based and long-term strategies are designed to uplift impoverished children and families, helping them to shift their consciousness, so they can become self-sufficient and transform their lives, their households, and their communities.