

CLEVELAND Foundation

Celebrating African-American Philanthropy

CREATING OPPORTUNITY IN THE COMMUNITY ONE GIFT AT A TIME

The African-American Philanthropy Committee (AAPC) of the Cleveland Foundation was created in 1993 to promote awareness and education about the benefits of wealth and community preservation through philanthropy. The committee convenes a Philanthropy Summit once every two years to raise the visibility of African-American philanthropy in the region and to honor local African-American philanthropists. With an upcoming Summit in April 2020 and a slate of related fall 2019 events, we feature several past and current Summit co-chairs.

Connie & Kevin Johnson

Connie and Kevin Johnson are so proud to be graduates of Cleveland public schools that they named their Cleveland Foundation donor-advised fund the Glenwood Fund, a combination of Kevin's alma mater, Glenville High School, and Connie's Collinwood High School. Since 2009, the couple has directed the fund to benefit education.

"In the African-American community, we didn't historically use the word 'philanthropy,'" Connie says, referring to growing up in a tradition of making church offerings and helping neighbors. "But philanthropy is exactly what we were doing."

More than 30 years after graduation, Kevin and Connie are successful entrepreneurs with careers dedicated to serving the elderly. Their Visiting Angels business, part of a national franchise, helps older adults live as independently as possible in their own homes. Kevin is a director with Fairhill Partners, a 9.5-acre campus that houses more than 35 businesses, many of which support seniors, including Visiting Angels.

"Giving is a heart issue, and the things that we've done over the years, separately and now collectively, just came naturally," Connie said. "You don't have to be Oprah to give. Each of us can make an impact."

Connie is a past AAPC co-chair and also a current Cleveland Foundation board member. The couple are recipients of the foundation's 2015 Goff Philanthropic Service Award and say they turned to the foundation to achieve impact and build a legacy.

"We were recognized for some of the service that we've been able to do, but we're nowhere near done," Kevin said.

"We have so much more that we want to accomplish."

In 2012, Kevin worked with the foundation to set up a scholarship fund to honor his



brother who died in 2008. The Lamont S. Johnson scholarship is awarded to an undergraduate student majoring in speech pathology at Cleveland State University.

"We wanted something that would be there, year in and year out, to help people," Kevin said.

Ronald V. Johnson, Jr., Esq.

Time, talent and treasure are part of Ron Johnson's philanthropy, and he wants to bring others along too.

"For me, philanthropy really is just the idea of doing more: giving more of your own resources to help the greater community," he said. "It's just a broad definition, but really the whole premise is the fact that there's this sense of duty to contribute to the greater good."

Johnson is senior vice president and associate general counsel in the KeyBank Law Group, where he leads the Consumer Lending and Business Banking Practice.

"I am an attorney, and I do feel that

there are certain people who have gifts and talents that really are duty-bound to give back," he said. "Even in the legal profession, lawyers are encouraged to give back. Usually it's in the context of pro-bono activities or helping further justice."

Johnson takes pro-bono cases through Legal Aid, mentors students and directs his charitable giving toward education-related causes. He is co-chairing next year's AAPC Summit: "2020 Vision: Disrupting the Cultural Landscape Through Philanthropy."

"My work with the Cleveland Foundation and the AAPC is really about highlighting and promoting the charitable nature of African Americans in Northeast Ohio, encouraging people to do more with their resources, and dispelling the myth that you have to be super wealthy to be a philanthropist."

Philanthropic strategy is also important to Johnson.

"The term 'disruptive' is often used in a business context, but it's the same with philanthropy: How can we use our resources to effectuate change?" Johnson said. "It's an edgier Summit theme, and we're trying to get some new voices in the room to talk about philanthropy."

Justin & Andrean Horton

A sense of history and purpose drives the philanthropy and community involvement of Justin and Andrean Horton. The couple is passionate about supporting young people through educational opportunities that prepare them for life. Justin is a wealth advisor and founding partner at Stratos Wealth Partners, and Andrean is executive vice president, chief legal officer & secretary for Myers Industries. They also chose the Cleveland Foundation as a philanthropic partner.



"We define philanthropy as giving something of yourself to help people or a cause," Justin said. "Sometimes, philanthropy is deeply personal and involves your direct involvement with others. Other times, philanthropy involves supporting organizations with missions that are important to you."

As a past AAPC Summit co-chair, Justin advocates for the event.

"The play on 2020 means there is clarity of vision," he said. "Disrupting the cultural landscape through philanthropy is the way any of us can help make changes to our society. As with past Summits, look for some thought provoking conversation and education. We hope it gets participants closer to fulfilling their personal philanthropic mission."

Cleveland is counting on more people to get involved, say the Hortons.

"Philanthropists will have to play a role to help solve some of our region's most pressing issues," Andrean said. "Issues such as concentrated poverty, joblessness and poor educational options need our collective energy so we can move society forward."

For the couple, it's important to keep the spotlight on how African-American donors are part of this philanthropic energy.

"Knowing history is important, and



African-American philanthropists aren't always mentioned when the conversation is being had," Andrean said. "Knowing the rich history of African-American philanthropists may motivate others to give, and regardless, the stories of those that have given shouldn't be lost."

Dr. Ellen Burts-Cooper

Giving began at a formative age for Dr. Ellen Burts-Cooper. In graduate school, she mentored local high school students and helped them buy books.

"I had a compelling reason to give because someone gave to me," Dr. Burts-Cooper said, referencing the scholarships that funded her education.



She began her own scholarship in her 30s and aligned with the Cleveland Foundation for support. Today, the Bagby, Palmer Memorial Scholarship, named for her mother and her husband's mother, helps Cleveland students attend college.

Dr. Burts-Cooper runs her own business, Improve Consulting and Training Group, which has seven core team members serving more than 80 clients in numerous industries across the country. For Dr. Burts-Cooper, there are many parallels between starting a business and being philanthropic.

"You want to be creative about how you give, and you also want to make sure that your dollars create ripple effects with their impact," she said. "People want to know that their giving is going to be far-reaching."

Dr. Burts-Cooper is co-chairing the 2020 AAPC Summit and is also a member of the Our Hope, Our Future Giving Circle, which has a fund at the Cleveland Foundation.

"Oftentimes, African-American philanthropy is not as visible, and I want people to be aware that giving happens at every level, and it happens among every community," Dr. Burts-Cooper said.

For more on the advantages of working with the Cleveland Foundation, contact our Advancement Team:

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UPCOMING EVENTS SUPPORTED BY THE CLEVELAND FOUNDATION

The Soul of Philanthropy: Reframed and Exhibited

Sept. 6 – Dec. 6, 2019
Western Reserve Historical Society
A multimedia re-imagining of the book "Giving Back" by author Valaida Fullwood and photographer Charles W. Thomas. The exhibit conveys and celebrates traditions of giving time, talent and treasure in the African-American community. TSOPcle.com #TSOPCLE

seenUNseen

Sept. 20 – Nov. 16, 2019
Artists Archives of the Western Reserve and The Sculpture Center
A collection of the works of some of the top African-American artists dating back more than a century. On loan from the collection of longtime postal worker Kerry Davis, these objects are on public display for the first time outside Atlanta. ArtistsArchives.org

84th Annual Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards

Sept. 26, 2019
KeyBank State Theatre
Presented by the Cleveland Foundation and chaired by Henry Louis Gates Jr., the Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards are the only national juried prize for works that confront racism and contribute to our understanding of the rich diversity of human cultures. Anisfield-Wolf.org #AWBA2019

Cleveland Book Week

Sept. 18 – 28, 2019
A series of special events to celebrate past and present Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards winners. ClevelandFoundation.org/BookWeek #CBW2019

Cleveland Foundation African-American Philanthropy Summit

April 2020
"2020 Vision: Disrupting the Cultural Landscape Through Philanthropy"