

Greenville Mentoring



Collaborative

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Retired NFL Player Levon Kirkland joins Greenville Mentoring Collaborative's Campaign to Fill Gaps for Boys of Color

Greenville, South Carolina (JULY 29th, 2022) - — Greenville Mentoring Collaborative, a network of mentoring service providers and other stakeholders working together to support youth, will host a community cookout and fireside chat with Levon Kirkland on Saturday, August 20th at 5pm. The Community Cookout will launch a campaign to fill the need for mentors, specifically for boys of color.

The collaborative effort began in 2018 when Greenville County Juvenile Detention Facility Coordinator, Mark Calligaris, couldn't find sustainable support to provide mentoring to the over 300 youth coming out of Greenville's juvenile detention center each year. Alecia Brewster, a community mentoring advocate, helped to launch the collaborative after learning about the critical need for more mentors and traveling to Colorado where she learned about Mentor Colorado's work to bolster the mentoring infrastructure across the state.

"I believe that our youth deserve to have the same opportunities to access quality mentoring relationships as youth in other parts of the country. As a former teacher and a mom, I know that young people flourish when their social and emotional needs are met and when they can envision a brighter future. As a collective movement, Greenville's mentoring organizations are better positioned to meet the needs of our young people today and in the future." said Alecia Brewster.

In the first year, 35 Greenville Mentoring Collaborative partners worked with Emily Williams, a licensed professional counselor and USC Upstate Adjunct professor, to write a [white paper about the state of Greenville's mentoring programs](#). The study found that only 2% of Greenville youth were in a formal mentoring relationship compared to the 8% national average. The report cites program enrollment restrictions, funding instability and mentor attrition as the major barriers limiting the community from meeting the community's mentoring needs.

[A nationally representative survey and report](#) produced by the [National Mentoring Partnership](#), confirms that mentoring is an effective way to improve outcomes for students in need of additional

support. Youth with mentors are more likely than their peers to: graduate from high school, continue their education after high school and become gainfully employed. [National Studies](#) also show a critical need for mentors to serve African American male youth.

Like national trends, Greenville Mentoring Collaborative partners have a disproportionate number of African American male youth on waiting lists to be matched with a mentor. "Far too many black boys and young men struggle to get the support they need to grow up to be healthy adults. In my opinion, black male mentors in particular are in a unique position to support young people in breaking down the barriers preventing them from achieving a successful future. As it stands however, there are nearly always more black boys who need mentoring than there are black males to do it. "Through focused efforts, the collaborative is seeking to change that narrative", states Samuel Bellamy, a member of the Greenville Mentoring Collaborative and a National Mentoring Partnership Technical Assistance Consultant.

All are welcome to attend Greenville Mentoring Collaborative's upcoming cookout. They are asking for community support to identify men who have an open mind and willingness to engage in conversations about the unique challenges African American men and boys face to become mentors. Former NFL Football player and SC Football Hall of Fame Vice President, Levon Kirkland will participate in an informal fireside chat about the power of mentoring relationships along with Southside Christian School's Two-time State Champion Football Coach Derrick Sullivan and former Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Upstate Executive Director, Lamont Sullivan. "I have personally benefited from mentoring, both as a mentee and a mentor. I am who I am today because of the process of mentorship. I am connected to this great work forever and I encourage everyone to get involved," states Lamont Sullivan.

The event will take place on Saturday, August 20th from 5pm – 8pm at Upstate Circle of Friends, located at 29 Ridgeway Drive in Greenville. In addition to a free cookout, the event will feature mental health resources and a community mentoring fair for community members to learn how to become a mentor or mentee and how to advocate for local mentoring organizations. Reserve your tickets on [Eventbrite.com](#).

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ABOUT GREENVILLE MENTORING COLLABORATIVE

Greenville Mentoring Collaborative works across sectors to amplify the mentoring movement and to support existing and emerging youth mentoring organizations by expanding the capacity of organizations to provide high quality mentoring and by advocating for funding of mentoring organizations that advance equity and economic mobility for all Greenville area youth.

Our vision is that every Greenville youth has access to a mentor and that Greenville County is the state wide leader in youth mentoring.

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For additional information about the Greenville Mentoring Collaborative, please visit gvlmentoring.org or email gvlmentoring@gmail.com.