

# 2022-2023 ANNUAL REPORT



Village of  
**PROMISE**<sup>®</sup>  
A Family Advancement Center





# NOTE FROM CEO

DANA M. GILLIS



Dear Friends and Supporters of the Village of Promise,

I hope this letter finds you in good health and high spirits. As we end one fiscal year and begin another, I am honored to share a glimpse into our goal of 'transforming lives, one family at a time.' Your profound support has enabled us to bring our mission to life in ways that have touched the lives of countless individuals in the community we serve. Our incredible achievements this year include...

- Adopting a new strategic plan in July 2022.
- Creating a Health Services Program, in partnership with HEALS, Inc., and WellStone, Inc., to provide an on-site clinic for students and families to access mental health and general healthcare.
- Holding our annual One Table Huntsville event, which was a candidate for Outdoor Event of the Year.
- Building closer relationships with the Northwoods community through a Family Advancement-led, door-knocking campaign.
- Establishing a Healthy Eating Program that provides our preschool scholars with two meals and a snack every school day.
- Re-establishing the Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools® VoP summer reading program for area students.
- Completing the Outdoor STEAM Learning Lab and Garden with a ribbon-cutting event to honor community partners that made the project possible.
- Holding two successful Speaker Series events: Manny Scott (August 2022) and Leland Melvin (May 2023).
- Establishing a new corporate partnership program.
- Initiating community outreach programs like Valentine's Night Out and Donuts for Dads to recognize and reward VoP families on special occasions.
- Designation as a contender for Nonprofit Organization of the Year for the Chamber's 2023 Small Business Awards.

Our commitment to helping families we serve overcome generational poverty remains unwavering. Your belief in our mission empowers us to make a meaningful impact, and your partnership inspires us to push the boundaries of what we can collaboratively achieve. I want to express my deepest gratitude for your support. I am excited about the possibilities and positive change we can create - Together!

With heartfelt appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dana M. Gillis". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Dana M. Gillis  
Chief Executive Officer  
Village of Promise®

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#### Here are a few ways you can continue to support our mission:

*Financial contributions:* Your donations sustain our programs and allow us to innovate and adapt to changing needs.

*Advocacy:* Use your voice to raise awareness about our cause and champion the issues we address.

*Engagement:* Attend our events, participate in our initiatives, and spread the word about our work within your network.

*Collaboration:* We would love to explore collaborative opportunities if you have ideas for partnerships or projects.

# OUR STORY

*The Village of Promise story started nearly 70 years ago.*

Bobby Bradley and Gloria Batts were young girls growing up in a neighborhood in Northwest Huntsville where families supported one another. At the time, it was one of only a few neighborhoods in Huntsville where African Americans owned their own homes, and most households were two-parent families. Parents had hopes and dreams for their children and consequently, children had hopes and dreams for themselves.

While Bobby and Gloria were in elementary school in 1956, Catholic nuns and priests, belonging to the Society of the Divine Savior, came from Wisconsin to start a mission school for African American children in their neighborhood. The mission of the church was to bring quality education to this minority area in Huntsville. With the opening of St. Joseph's Mission School, children in the neighborhood had access to a Christian, high-quality education, which was key to Bobby and Gloria's success. Parents in the neighborhood were supportive and believed that education was the key to success in the segregated society of that time. As Huntsville grew over time, the neighborhood changed, and Bobby and Gloria saw that change. Crime and poverty crept in and the city began to spread out.

As an adult, Gloria saw in her professional career the downward spiral that children and families were experiencing. Bobby was first involved at Lincoln Village Ministry in Huntsville, and through this connection, Bobby and Gloria visited the home of a single mother who was living without running water, electricity, furnishings, or food in the cabinets. The shocking reality of this visit inspired Bobby and Gloria to do something to disrupt the cycle of poverty in Huntsville. Rooted in the loving and educated environment in which they were raised, an idea was born to build back the Huntsville community and interrupt the cycle of poverty where they could.



Bobby and Gloria connected with The Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) in Harlem, NY and were able to use the HCZ as a template and become students of their model. In 2009, an interest group of 9-10 community leaders met to help develop the framework and determine the viability of a nonprofit organization to address education and generational poverty.

***Early in the formation process, it was decided that VoP would replicate the four basic principles of HCZ: identify and focus on a target neighborhood, implement best-practice programs with proven success, partner with others in the community, and show progress towards goals by collecting data and producing metrics.***

Through community connections, Bobby was introduced to strategic planning consultant Ian Symmonds. Mr. Symmonds generously worked with the organization to identify neighborhood statistics via census data to determine the target neighborhood.

At the time it was chosen, 48% of the people living in the neighborhood, in which VoP decided to focus, were below the poverty level, which was the highest in Huntsville. This neighborhood also contained a continuum of schools, which was part of the initial strategy: University Place Elementary School, Ed White Middle School, and Butler High School. The neighborhood of focus was originally defined by the boundaries of Holmes Avenue, Oakwood Avenue, Sparkman Drive, and Pulaski Pike. All programming was held in public schools that served the families living within the neighborhood.



The initial goal of VoP was to break the cycle of generational poverty one neighborhood at a time. To do this, the organization's strategy was to build a pipeline of services from cradle to college/career, focusing on the following four areas as the guiding strategy for the organization: Education, Health, Social Services, and Housing. VoP initially focused on education to optimize its community impact. The organization worked with partners in the community to fulfill any additional needs identified as barriers to success for the scholars and families.

With the solid groundwork having been laid, VoP was incorporated and launched in January 2011, received 501(c)3 status in May 2011, and held its first major event in September 2011 in order to raise funds for the organization. Geoffrey Canada, then CEO of HCV, spoke to a sold-out crowd in the Von Braun Center North Hall to impress upon Huntsville residents the positive impact that quality education and long-term holistic support can have on reducing generational poverty. With funding and awareness in place, the employees and volunteers at VoP immediately began to get to know teachers, parents, and children in the neighborhood. An after-school tutoring program at University Place Elementary School was launched in September 2011.

In 2015, Village of Promise moved into the Northwoods public housing community, in the VoP target neighborhood, and began providing all programs in in the Cavalry Hill building.

As efforts matured, the mission was expanded to include a multi-generational approach to addressing the needs of the families in the community served by VoP. As such, the programs offered by VoP have evolved as well starting with tutoring in University Place and Montview Elementary Schools. VoP now conducts Infant, Toddler, and Pre-K classes in the facility in Northwoods community. Family and adult education classes have also expanded to include GED, English as a Second Language (ESL), and life skills training. A complete family onboarding process has been defined, which includes the creation of a Family Advancement Plan to set family goals and potentially connect families with partner organizations in Huntsville that specialize in services that VoP does not offer. In 2022, the VoP board underwent an extensive strategic planning initiative to provide direction for the next five years and refocus the mission of the organization based on the needs of the families served.

With the support of the City of Huntsville and Madison County, numerous local companies and organizations, generous donors, countless volunteers, dedicated staff, a board of directors, and an advisory council, Village of Promise continues to evolve to meet the needs of families and strives to drive toward its original goal of eradicating generational poverty in Huntsville.

***Empowering families to break the cycle of poverty, Village of Promise uses a targeted, multigenerational approach that provides age-based and need-related programming so families can conquer challenges, achieve dreams, and contribute to their community.***

# Serving Families, Serving Hope.



Empowering others through education and social services. Advancing families out of poverty.

# GROWING AT THE VILLAGE

NEW PROGRAMS AND EXPANSIONS

Village of Promise strives to make changes that will continually propel the organization forward. In August 2021, VoP board members took the initiative and began working with HigherEchelon to produce the Village of Promise Strategic Plan, which was adopted in July 2022. The new plan includes VoP's mission, vision, values, strategic priorities, strategy statement, and metrics across all areas of VoP.

## STRATEGIC PLAN

Village of  
**PROMISE**  
A Family Advancement Center



## 2022-2023 ACHIEVEMENTS

- **New Strategic Plan**
- **Health Services Program**
- **One Table Huntsville**
- **Closer Community Relationships**
- **Healthy Eating Program**
- **Children's Defense Fund Freedom School®**
- **Outdoor STEAM Learning Lab and Garden**
- **Two Speaker Series Events**
- **New Corporate Partnership Program**
- **Community Outreach Programs**
- **Professional Development Program**

# 2022-2023 HIGHLIGHTS

## FREEDOM SCHOOL



CDF Freedom Schools® programming returned to VoP in 2023! The six-week literacy-focused summer program serves children with the greatest needs in hopes of reducing summer learning loss. The overarching theme of the program is “I can make a difference in myself, family, community, country and world with hope, education and action.”

## OUTDOOR LEARNING LAB



Opening in April of 2023, thanks to two Leadership Greater Huntsville classes and local supporters, the project that began in 2019 will now benefit future generations through hands-on learning in an outdoor setting where students learn and grow while families make lasting memories.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



In July 2022, CEO Dana Gillis created the VoP Professional Development Program. The program’s aim is to provide staff with professional development opportunities - including learning opportunities, team communication preferences and dynamics, and the opportunity to participate in professional organizations.

## HEALTH SERVICES



The Village of Promise Health Services Program kicked off in January of 2023 - thanks to funding provided by Compass Society. The onsite medical clinic acts as the first level of engagement and intervention for the medical and mental health needs of VoP scholars and families. VoP program partners are HEALS, Inc. and Wellstone, Inc.



# OUR WHY

# 1 in 5

Children in America live in poverty - making them the poorest age group in the country.

*nccp.org*



## 30 Million Words

By age 3, there is a 30-million-word gap between children from the wealthiest and poorest families.

*-naeyc.org*

## \$1 Trillion Per Year

Cost-measurement analysis indicates that the annual aggregate cost of U.S child poverty is 1.0298 trillion representing 5.4070 of the gross domestic product.



*McLaughlin, Michael and Mark Rank. 2018. "Estimating the Economic Cost of Childhood Poverty in the United States." Social Work Research 42(2): 73*

**Eliminating these inequities** requires early intervention. At **Village of Promise**, our focus is on areas of Cognitive, Language, Physical, and Social-Emotional Development that allow scholars in poverty to begin school on a level playing field with children from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. Simultaneously, we **empower** our adults through education and resource connection, providing a future filled with **hope and dignity**.



# OUR IMPACT

## SNAPSHOT OF 2022

**400+**  
VOLUNTEERS

### SCHOLARS

ENROLLED IN PROMISE PREPARATORY  **57**

FREEDOM SCHOOL  **50**

### INFANT UNIVERSITY

**24** PARTICIPANTS

### NEXT STEPS PARTICIPANTS

GED AND ADULT LITERACY

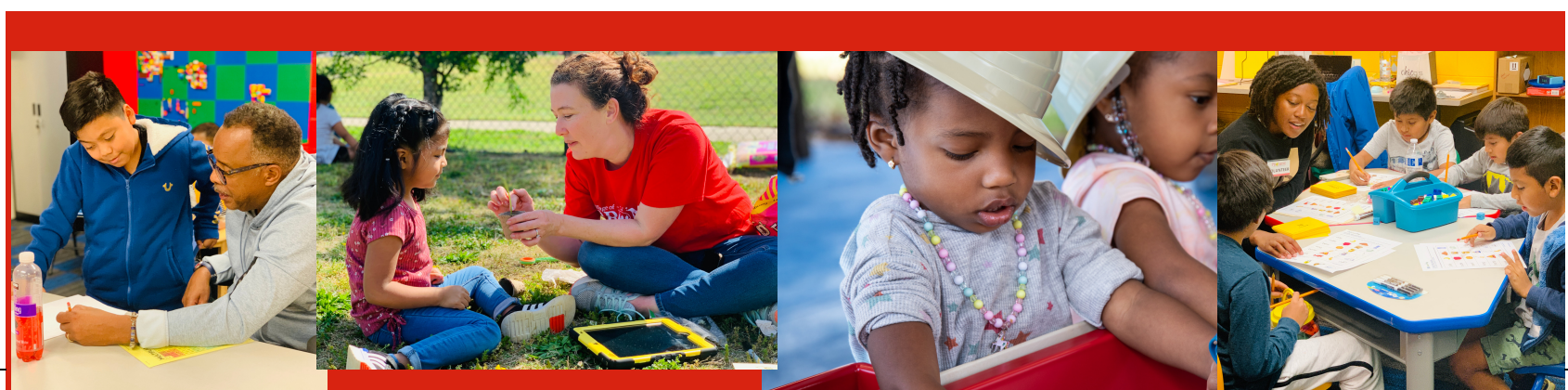
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### FAMILY CONNECTIONS

FAMILIES PARTICIPANTS **27**

NUMBER OF SERVE DAYS **7**

HEALTHY EATING PROGRAM **30,940** MEALS SERVED



OUR PROGRAMS

# PROMISE PREPARATORY

## EARLY CHILDHOOD

- Infant (6 weeks - 18 mo)
- Toddler 1 (18 mo - 2 1/2 years)
- Toddler 2 (2 1/2 - 4 years)
- PreK 4 (two classes)



## FREEDOM SCHOOL

A six-week summer program that uses The Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools Integrated Reading Curriculum which provides culturally relevant books and hands-on enrichment activities.



## PROMISE READING ACADEMY

An after-school phonics-based program, with instructors trained in Orton Gillingham methods designed to work with children who struggle with Dyslexia. Residents of Northwoods receive the tutoring for free.



OUR PROGRAMS  
**PROMISE  
INSTITUTE**

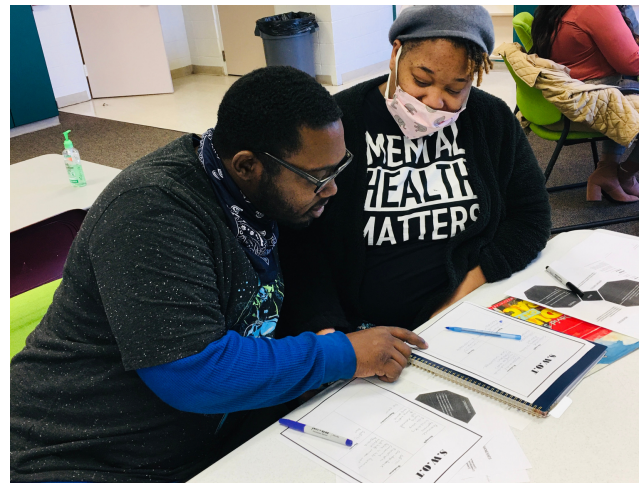
**INFANT UNIVERSITY**

An eight-class course that covers infant, child, and maternal health care, immunizations, safety, health hazards, and other subjects for parents/expectant parents of children ages 0 to 4.



**FAMILY CONNECTIONS**

A multi-generational family literacy program that promotes strengthening the family unit through Parent Time Workshops, Parent and Child Time Together (PACT), Family Mentoring, and Family Service Learning Components.



**NEXT STEPS**

Provides instruction and coursework for adult literacy and adults preparing to take the General Equivalency Diploma (GED) exam



# EMPLOYEE HIGHLIGHT



## **Regina Miller**

***Regina Miller has served on staff with Village of Promise for six years!***

Miller is a graduate of Faulkner University and holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration. Her current role at Village of Promise is Facilities Management and Volunteer Coordinator. Miller has performed multiple roles at VoP in the administration arena. She boasts many years of customer service and office management experience. Miller has earned several training certificates in areas such as customer service, communication with the public & media, and basic human development. She is currently an active volunteer for the Women's Catalyst Center, where she donates her time and talent as a business coach - her passion for small businesses lies within brand development and marketing. Miller was recently selected to be part of Leadership Greater Huntsville's Management Academy Class 14, which she noted will equip her with the knowledge to make effective decisions, influence change around her, and make her a better leader and employee.

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***“Over the years, my love for public service work has become more than a career, it's a calling. As a local citizen, I love my city. I love being a part of making a difference in the community. I am often inspired by the creative ways I can empower others.” - Regina Miller***

# TESTIMONIAL

I moved from New York in August of 2021, and I was looking for a preschool for my daughter, that was four at the time. So, I went online looking for different schools, I registered for Village of Promise, and they called me back. What I love about Village of Promise is that it is not only about the students, and it is not only about making sure the students are okay, it's about the whole family. It is a Family Advancement program, so they try to get the families involved. I informed the Family Advancement Specialist that I just had moved here, and I was looking for a job, so they put me in the Workforce Development program. I worked with Elton Akins, and he asked me things like what type of job are you looking for, what is your major, did I graduate from college, and things like that. He recommended for me to join Village of Promise and enroll in the Infant University and the Family Connections programs.

I think I was successful because of the support, and I hadn't received this much support living in New York, so that was a big plus for me. Village of Promise wants you to advance, to be better and grow, to go after your goals, and go for your dreams. At the Village, I was constantly asked: are you okay, and is there anything needed? I enjoyed going through the different programs that help families learn skills like cooking, healthy eating, budgeting, and things to better our lives and not just focus so much on our children alone but the family unit. At Village of Promise, you don't have to be afraid or ashamed or feel like you're being judged, because there's no judgment, we treat everyone equally, and we try to help the best way that we can.



**ORAJAH SCOTLAND**

# FUNDRAISER

## SEPTEMBER 2022



Torch Technologies hosted its annual golf tournament on September 16, 2022. Thanks to the combined generosity of our previous golf tournament sponsors, Torch's employee-owners, retirees, and Board of Directors, as well as the employee-owners and Board of Directors of their sister and parent companies Freedom Real Estate & Capital, LLC and Starfish Holdings, Torch was able to raise \$110,000 for Village of Promise! They believe in giving back to the communities their employee-owners call home, and VoP is so grateful to the sponsors and employee-owners for their generosity.

**Thank you to everyone who contributed and made this fundraiser such a success!**



# EVENTS

## SPEAKER SERIES

As VoP is a Family Advancement Center addressing the needs of children and families in distressed, under-resourced neighborhoods, the Speaker Series event provides a stage for national thought leaders to share their insight with the Huntsville community on best-practice solutions for addressing generational poverty and/or relevant topics to encourage continued community learning.



The 2022 Speaker Series hosted author and original Freedom Writer **Manny Scott** and was held on August 18, 2022, at the Cavalry Hills Theatre. It was a wonderful learning event as he taught the community to “Be Salty!” During the lunch, Scott shared with the Huntsville audience that all it takes is one person in your life who believes in you and that can change the trajectory of your entire life. Thank you to the community for your support.

The 2023 Speaker Series hosted former NASA astronaut and NFL player **Leland Melvin** and was held on May 16, 2023, at the U.S. Space & Rocket Center in the Davidson Center for Space Exploration and was a great success - thank you, attendees and event supporters. The 2023 event, presented by Axient Corporation, marked VoP’s sixth Speaker Series event since 2011 and was the first to be held as an elevated evening event.



PRESENTING SPONSOR





# EVENTS

NOVEMBER 2022

## ONE TABLE

*Nominated for Best Outdoor Event 2022.*

2022 One Table Huntsville - the free, city-wide Thanksgiving meal - was held on November 21, 2022, in Big Spring Park with just over 2,000 attendees. The event represents a connection point for bridging the gap between the community VoP serves and the future that is possible - thank you to the community for being part of One Table!

VoP's goal in hosting the One Table event is to bring people from all walks of life to give thanks together and celebrate unity and diversity! Through One Table, VoP is dedicated to removing barriers and bringing our community together as ONE. Participants gather as strangers and eat as family.

*one table*  
HUNTSVILLE



# CELEBRATION OF LIFE

## Mary Rankin

**The Mary G. Rankin Scholarship Fund focuses on continuing Mrs. Rankin's passion for educating her community - all thanks to the establishment by her family.**



Mary Rankin was a dedicated wife, mother, grandmother, and educator committed to serving her family and community. She and her husband Booker were married for 52 years and had one son, three daughters (three sons-in-law), nine grandchildren, one great-grandson, and many other relatives who made up her family. Her teaching journey began in 1979, and she shared her love for teaching "Rankin Babies" for twenty-five years in the Madison County and Madison City School Systems.



Rankin retired from teaching in 2004 but continued to foster her passion and love of children through service at her beloved St. John AME Church. She served as the Children's Ministry Director, Children's Choir Director, Children's Bible Study teacher, and several other ministries in the Church. She also continued to pursue her passion for educating others at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, Alabama A&M University, Horizon Elementary School, and Village of Promise.

Additionally, she was a proud and active member of the Epsilon Gamma Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, for over 40 years. She believed we should "always strive to do anything we can, to inspire anybody we can, for as long as we can." Funds from the Mary G. Rankin Scholarship fund will be utilized to provide professional development opportunities for our teachers and staff. You can support this fund at [villageofpromise.org](http://villageofpromise.org) and click donate - Please note "Mary Rankin" in the comment box.

# GROWING AT THE VILLAGE

NEW PROGRAMS AND EXPANSIONS

## CORPORATE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM 2023

VoP's corporate program allows area businesses to walk alongside VoP in propelling VoP's mission and vision forward with community investment that is based on an alignment of community goals to strengthen the Huntsville area for years to come – this program is an annual commitment. Corporate partners receive exclusive benefits and recognition depending on their annual level of giving – with structured giving levels.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT**



**Morgan Stanley**



# OUR VILLAGE

## 2022-2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**DR. BETH B. RICHARDSON**

**Board Chair**- United  
Community Bank

**LYNNE BERRY VALLELY**

**Vice Chair**- Huntsville  
Hospital Foundation

**ALICE LANIER**

**Secretary**-Community  
Volunteer

**LEWIS PRICE**

**Treasure**-Pearce  
Construction, Inc.

**DR. RUSS ALEXANDER**

SpecTrum A&T Solutions LLC

**BOBBY BRADLEY**

Genesis II, Village of Promise  
Co-Founder

**MARSHANNE CASTRO**

Corporate Office Properties  
Trust

**JANE DANIEL**

Community Volunteer

**KANDY GARDNER**

Anglin Reichmann  
Armstrong, P.C.

**DR. VIOLET GILBERT**

**LARRY LEWIS**

**Treasure**-Project XYZ

**EMILY MOODY**

Community Volunteer

**REV. JAYMES MOONEY**

St. Bartley P.B. Church

**ALBERT MWANGI**

Toyota Motor  
Manufacturing Alabama

**WENDY YANG**

Community Volunteer

**Dr. James Gilbert**

Ex-Officio, Past Board Chair-  
Tennessee Valley Pediatric  
Surgery

**PAULA STEIGERWALD**

Ex-Officio

### ADVISORY COUNCIL

Paula Steigerwald, Advisory Council Chair • Lisa Abbott • Denver Betts • Samantha Brinkley • Terry Bynum • Lucia Cape • Marvin Carroll • Randy Cash • Mike Clark • Sybil Cleveland • Brenda Conville • Matt Fowler • Sierra Fuqua • James Gilbert • Sarah Green • Laurie Heard • Tharon Honeycutt • Mary Shepard Hughes • Barbara Jones • Marilyn King • Ben Little • Loyd (Buddy) Little • Bob Ludwig • DeMarco McClain • Gayle Milton • Kelli Pollock • Matt Reed • Bill Roark • Chris Russell • Peggy Sammon • Sasha Sealy • Delois Smith • Flo Stallworth • Charles Vaughn • Mike Wicks • Frank Williams • Ernie Wu • Allen Young



# OUR VILLAGE STAFF



**DANA M. GILLIS**  
CEO



**RITA MCADOO**  
Executive Assistant to  
CEO



**ALLISON MERRILL**  
Education Director



**KIM STEWART**  
Program Director



**VEVA PHIPPS**  
Finance Director



**DANIELLE HART**  
Director of Development &  
Marketing



**REGINA MILLER**  
Facilities Manager/  
Volunteer Coordinator



**T'SHA BUYCKS**  
Director of Family  
Advancement



**KRISTIN MYRICKS-LOYDE**  
Family Advancement  
Specialist



**MARTHA FERGUSON**  
Spanish Interpreter



**EMILY LEMONS**  
Pre-K 4 I Lead Teacher



**MEGAN TURNER**  
Infant Lead Teacher

# OUR VILLAGE STAFF



**FAITH WALKER**  
PreK II Curriculum  
Coordinator



**SHARON PALMER**  
Family Connections  
Coordinator



**BRIANA WASHINGTON**  
Toddler Auxiliary  
Teacher



**TAMESHA HALL**  
Prek II Lead  
Teacher



**KAYLAN SIMMONS**  
Toddler Lead Teacher



**DOMINIQUE WRIGHT**  
Threes Lead Teacher



**ZALIKA LEVEROCK**  
Registrar/Receptionist



**BRYANA FARRINGTON**  
PreK I Auxillary Teacher



**TROPHY THOMPSON**  
Infant/Toddler Floater



**VANESSA HASSAN**  
Infant Auxiliary Teacher



**JORDAN MOORE**  
PreK II Auxiliary Teacher

Village of  **PROMISE**<sup>®</sup>  
A Family Advancement Center



## LOOKING FOR MORE WAYS TO GET INVOLVED WITH THE VILLAGE?

Consider **volunteering** with us!

Contact **Regina Miller** for volunteer opportunities  
at [regina@villageofpromise.org](mailto:regina@villageofpromise.org)

Visit our website and schedule a tour  
[villageofpromise.org](http://villageofpromise.org)



@villageofpromise

