

FALL 2016

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# THE DORNSIFE CENTER CONNECTOR

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# GETTING TO WORK



*Mantua resident Terri Ballard at work at Drexel's DragonCard office*

## DIRECTOR'S WELCOME

"We think that everybody deserves a chance to explore their talents and find satisfying work."

Greetings, friends and neighbors.

The adult education and workforce development programs and services at the Dornsife Center, offered out of the Beachell Family Learning Center, make up some of our most in-demand resources. So many of us are on the hunt for satisfying work that can sustain our families, and sometimes we need a little bit of help in getting connected to a job.

We are proud to partner with neighbors who are looking for that help. Whether it's finishing up a high school diploma, getting up to speed with modern office software, getting help with job applications and resumes, or finding a role in one of our on-the-job training programs, we have been able to help our participants get to the next level in their careers.

We invite job seekers to get in touch with us to learn more about how our Helms Academy program, KEYSLOT, technology training, and career services might be the right fit. Let's get to work!

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## STAFF MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

*Name:* Sarah Steltz  
*Job:* Director, Workforce and Economic Inclusion with Drexel's Office of University & Community Partnerships  
*Hometown:* Reading, Pennsylvania  
*Favorite food:* Salad (yes, seriously)  
*Favorite TV show:* Whew, this is a tough one for me. The Wire, Sopranos, Mad Men, or Six Feet Under.  
*Favorite movies:* Dead Poets Society, Hoop Dreams, West Side Story, An Education

*What is your job?*

It's my job to look at how Drexel does business and find ways to create more opportunities for local residents. I do this in Drexel's hiring, construction, and purchasing.

*Where will we find you at the Dornsife Center?*

I'm on the first floor of the Carriage House.

*What is your favorite thing about the Dornsife Center?*

I basically love everything about the Dornsife Center. I like how it's a space where a lot of people come together to get their hands dirty, working to make things happen. I see people collaborating on issues that may have traditionally pulled them apart. And personally, the Dornsife Center has given me the opportunity to meet people who have been committed to their neighborhoods for decades, and they've taught me a lot about commitment, persistence, and selflessness.

*What do you do when you're not at work?*

I mostly chase my 2.5-year-old daughter, Perry, around the zoo, the Please Touch Museum, and Smith Playground. I also really enjoy exercising, exploring the city that I love, and doing home improvement projects, typically not too well.



## FROM WRITERS ROOM

### THAT LAST NIGHT ON CAMPUS

Norman Cain

On a mild early August night in 1964, the few remaining end-of-summer students on the miniature Bluefield State College, nestled within the foothills of the Appalachian mountains, were summoned, by the supreme deity of their Beloved institution, to convene in front of the girl's dormitory. The site had metaphorically been transformed into a mystical shrine, where they would engage in an extemporaneous ritual to render homage to Alma Mater legacy, memorializing all those that had graced its hallowed grounds since its 1895 inception.

This was a time when I had completed my course requirements for a B. S. degree, a time when I envisioned the traditional cap and gown college graduation the following spring, a time when I realized that this ritual was my rite of passage, the crossing over into the "Real World," an organic graduation ceremony monitored by peers.

We conjured predecessors and returning students, by reminiscing and singing the songs habitually sung on campus: the fight songs and chants that energized our athletic teams, the mellifluous ballads of the fraternal organizations, the rhythm and blues tunes that filled the gyms of weekend night dances, the Powerful Freedom Songs we sincerely rendered during civil rights demonstrations, and lastly, encircled, arm-over-arm, and rhythmically swaying counter-clockwise, we sang our sacred school hymn.

The harmony of our voices coincided with our harmonious brotherly, sisterly relationships. Our singing was nostalgic, the exhaling of a whirlwind twinkle-dancing

to the night skies' archaic rhythms. Our voices transcended the campus and ascended upward, above the silhouetted Majestic mountains that encircled it, and onward, to the stars.

*Author Norman Cain was born in 1942 and raised on Olive Street in West Philadelphia. He graduated in 1964 from Bluefield State College in West Virginia where he majored in social science and minored in English. A retired social worker, teacher, father of five and grandfather of seven, he is active in several writing groups, including the Best Day of My Life So Far at the Germantown Senior Center.*



*Norman Cain reads his work at the 2016 Writers Room Anthology reading.*

## LEARN MORE: BEACHELL FAMILY LEARNING CENTER



DREXEL UNIVERSITY

**Beachell**

Family Learning Center

*Dornsife Center for Neighborhood Partnerships*

The Beachell Family Learning Center features two staffed computer labs and is dedicated to providing a range of digital literacy supports that are key to adult education and to successful job searches and applications: understanding computers and how they work, getting familiar with common computer software, understanding how the Internet works and how to browse the web, setting up and using an email account, and using social media tools. Check the Dornsife Center's monthly calendar for information about upcoming workshops and opportunities.

## TERRI BALLARD: NETWORKING TO SUCCESS

Having spent a number of years in Harrisburg, Terri Ballard returned to the Mantua neighborhood, where she was born and raised, looking to reestablish her roots and her financial independence. Now in her 50s, Terri found that looking for work was not as it used to be. “Back in the day you used to have to pound the pavement,” she recalls. “Now everything is online.” Needing more time on the computer than the public libraries allowed, Terri began frequenting the Dornsife Center’s KEYSPOOT in 2014 where she was able to spend as much time as she needed searching for work online as well as access literature on various neighborhood programs.

Once inside the doors of the Dornsife Center, Terri found herself connected to what seemed like an endless network of resources and friendly faces, including Courtney (Price) Claiborne, Drexel Human Resources’ Community Engagement Partner, who helped her fine-tune her resume and connected her to employment. This experience opened a number of doors for Terri, such as access to job fairs, phone calls from temp agencies, and a job with Goodwill Industries.



*Terri Ballard on the job at the DragonCard office*

Terri also found a lot of value in the networking opportunities she encountered at the many community meetings and dinners she attended. For example, she found independent housing through neighborhood partners People’s Emergency Center (PEC) and gained access to clothing that was suitable for her job hunt through the Our Closet pop-up shop at the Dornsife Center as well as through Career Wardrobe.

Ultimately, her Dornsife Center connections helped her land a temporary Office Coordinator position with Drexel’s DragonCard Office in January 2016, which became permanent a few months later, in April 2016. Terri beams about her new co-workers and boss - “teamwork makes the dream work,” she says. But it is the financial independence she has found with permanent employment that really makes

her happy. She worked hard to make this happen and she believes that piecing together the many connections and resources she found at the Dornsife Center made it possible. “It can get frustrating, but you just have to trust and believe and keep networking. I’m glad I was persistent.”

## LEARN MORE: CAREER SERVICES WITH DREXEL HR

In collaboration with Drexel’s Office of Human Resources, the Dornsife Center offers free career services including resume writing, job search assistance, and career counseling provided by a Drexel Human Resources professional. Contact Courtney Claiborne at [cnp45@drexel.edu](mailto:cnp45@drexel.edu) for inquiries or to schedule an appointment.

Appointments every Tuesday  
11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Open Hours every Thursday  
1:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.





## LI SUMPTER AND MIYA MACK: SHARING A MEAL AND GETTING TO WORK

“This city has always had my heart,” says Li Sumpter. After 15 years away, pursuing multiple college degrees including a doctorate, Li returned home to the city in which she was born and raised. In June of 2016 she was hired as Director of Programs and Operations at Mill Creek Urban Farm (MCF), an educational farm and environmental education center “dedicated to improving local access to fresh, chemical-free produce at low cost for the immediate Mill Creek community and surrounding neighborhoods.” A chance meeting between Li, Micaiah Hall (MCF Director), and Chef Richard Pepino (Drexel’s Center for Hospitality and Sport Management) “planted seeds for what has become a very fruitful partnership” between MCF and the Dornsife Center.

In July, Li attended her first Dornsife Center Community Dinner, where she found “a truly warm and welcoming environment” and had the pleasure of sitting across the table from Mill Creek resident Miya Mack, who was there with her son. Miya, a recent graduate from Temple University with a BSW - a bachelor’s degree in social work - was unemployed at the time and spent much of her days collecting and distributing resources like food, water, clothes, and information to her West Philly neighbors, with her son by her side.

Li was impressed that Miya “was doing all of this independently, fueled by her own passion for community and a keen insight for what the people in her community need most.” Right away, Li believed Miya was the perfect candidate for an opening at MCF. In fact, her special skill set ultimately informed the job description and title. In August, Miya became the farm’s first Coordinator of Community Access and Engagement, and “she has really hit the ground running!” says Li.

Miya is happy to not simply have a job, but to have one that allows her to use her skills in her own community. She works to “increase knowledge and awareness” of MCF in the community and manages the volunteer



*Li Sumpter and Miya Mack at the Dornsife Center*

and tour schedule. “The farm work is hard work but it is self-rewarding at the same time,” she reflects. With Li’s encouragement, Miya also landed another part-time job as Program Coordinator at Greensgrow West. “I’m lucky to have two jobs that allow me to serve in my community.” Sharing a meal at the Dornsife Center cultivated a truly fruitful connection.

In the spirit of communities working together, Miya and Li extend the invitation to Mill Creek Farm’s weekly farmer’s markets on Wednesdays at 52nd and Haverford Streets 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. and Saturdays 11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. They also welcome volunteers on Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

## LEARN MORE: COMMUNITY DINNER

The Dornsife Center hosts community dinners on the first Tuesday of each month from 6:00 - 7:30 p.m. Come find out what new things we’re up to while enjoying a free delicious dinner with your neighbors. Everyone is welcome - bring the whole family along!



## RAY EUBANKS: WORKING TO DEFY THE ODDS

People once told Raymond "Ray" Eubanks that he'd never amount to anything.

Ray grew up in Mantua, in a house full of supportive women. He credits his grandmother, aunts, and mother with shaping him into the person he is today, but Ray also recognizes a host of other strong forces in his life, the effects of which he is currently exhausting all of his energy to change. Like many other kids in his neighborhood growing up, Ray did not finish high school and feels he missed a lot of opportunities because he was "hanging with the wrong people" and had "the wrong priorities."

On the advice of his mother, Ray came to the Dornsife Center about two years ago, unemployed and relying on public assistance to support his growing family. Through programs and contacts here, Ray found employment with Goodwill Industries and enrolled in Helms Academy - a diploma completion and college access program offered in partnership with Goodwill Industries and Community College of Philadelphia. Ray now maintains a 4.0 GPA. It has been a long journey for him, and it has not been easy. He has had a lot on his plate and often feels "exhausted by it all" but he hopes that "all this hard work will pay off." And, in some ways, Ray believes it already has. He points out that he is doing things he never thought possible. He remembers hearing that "you will never do anything" and is happy to prove it wrong. "I'm trying to defy the odds as a young black man to not be another statistic." He recognizes that he has already accomplished this by finishing his high school degree and earning college credits.



*Ray Eubanks at the Dornsife Center*

With a head start on his college credits earned through Helms Academy, Ray plans to study architecture and real estate at Community College of Philadelphia. Now 34 with three kids and one on the way, Ray believes that working toward these goals, finishing the education he started when he was a teenager, and being successful is "getting things right" not just for himself but for his family.

## LEARN MORE: HELMS ACADEMY



The Dornsife Center is one of the locations for Helms Academy, an alternative high school program for adults who have not completed high school. Led by Goodwill Industries of New Jersey and Philadelphia, Helms Academy brings the Community College of Philadelphia to the Dornsife Center to help residents complete their high school diploma while they earn college credits. Instruction for West Philadelphia residents takes place at the Dornsife Center, and programming includes life skills training, career exploration and counseling, college admissions guidance, resume preparation, vocational job training referrals, individualized academic skills training, job search and placement assistance, and various other support services.



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