



BOSTON

FALL 2024 NEWSLETTER

CLIENT PARTNER SPOTLIGHT - DONNIECE WATSON

When Donniece Watson, LMHC & Founder of Crossroad Counseling Services, discovered that her office space was being sold, the panic was intense. Since June 2021, she had been providing vital mental health care for returning citizens in Lower Mills, but now, depending on how quickly the building sold, she might have as few as 60 days to vacate.

Finances were solid, but lean. And she didn't have the savings to re-establish her private practice in such a tight turnaround. Donniece recalls, "My back was against the wall, and the thought of failure had me quaking in my boots." She needed to secure funding for rent, potential moving expenses and additional office equipment.

That's when the power of connection kicked in. Donniece knows the Boston reentry ecosystem well, both as a returning citizen and as a facilitator of support groups for the justice-impacted. She knew Jay Vilar, Boston Site Director, through previous crossover in the reentry space, so she decided to reach out. After sharing details of her situation and brainstorming options, Donniece applied and was approved for a \$3,000 business loan!



Donniece Watson is the Boss! Her counseling agency brings wellness to the reentry ecosystem.

While the funds were critical, Donniece is equally thankful for the help she received finding a new office space and developing a strong business plan. During the loan process, Jay served as a quasi-realtor and Paul Yates, National Director of Economic Empowerment, helped her envision new business possibilities. "Let me tell you, it was also the stuff that money couldn't pay for, that I didn't even know I needed."

Donniece's office is now just down the hall from the Fountain Fund, and this is a big win for both agencies. She shares, "I believe Crossroad Counseling Services is a place where the community with the greatest need meets the community that's there to serve them."

"I'm only one piece of the puzzle," she humbly continues. "But there's no wrong door when someone comes to see me. Depending on what they have going on, I can help them make those meaningful connections."

BOSTON FACTS

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

- 95% "Transformed my life for the better."
- 97% "Feel empowered to overcome barriers in my life."
- 97% "Established trust & felt supported by the Fountain Fund team."

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

- "Flexibility was needed in many situations, and they stayed patient with me and kept faith alive in me! Thank you all so much for caring."
- "I have received above and beyond help from the Fountain Fund. Wherever there was an issue I was met with grace."

ACTIVE LOAN PORTFOLIO

Lending commenced in Boston in August. As of October 31, 2024, our active loan portfolio includes four loans valued at \$7,499.



To visit our website and find out more, scan here!

PROGRAM PARTNER SPOTLIGHT – JUSTICE 4 HOUSING

Communication between agencies in the reentry space is vital to Client Partner success. Just ask Omay Ford. Late this summer, through a referral from Justice 4 Housing, Omay became our very first Client Partner to receive a home downpayment loan.

A key element of J4H's mission is, "ending housing discrimination and homelessness for individuals impacted by incarceration." By teaming up, the Fountain Fund and J4H are creating long-lasting change for the individuals they serve. This particular loan was the first of its kind and required a strong bridge between our two agencies.

"Through our partnership, we're able to break barriers for formerly incarcerated people," shares Sandy Valdes, SHARP Program Manager. "These include building generational wealth and building equity through starting a business, something the Fountain Fund has helped our clients do." She continues, "Breaking these barriers helps us foster stronger, more resilient communities and contributes to J4H's very low recidivism rate."



Omay is turning his dream of home ownership into reality with the help of a Fountain Fund loan!



SHARP, a core program at Justice 4 Housing, addresses the housing and stabilization needs of Formerly Incarcerated People (FIP) by providing not only housing subsidy vouchers, but also wrap-around care and empowerment services. SHARP aims to build pathways to homeownership by divesting from inequitable discriminatory systems and returning not just resources, but control over these resources to the individuals most impacted by systemic racism.

NEWS FROM HEADQUARTERS – THREE MILLION AND COUNTING!

Taking time to celebrate life's milestones is an important ingredient to success. It creates an opportunity to pause and reflect, not only upon how far one has traveled but also upon the relationships that have been formed along the way.

In that spirit, the Fountain Fund is excited to mark another major milestone. Earlier this fall, we crossed the threshold of distributing \$3.4M in loans, nearly \$1.6M of which has already been recycled! This includes 736 loans for 607 returning citizens.

Behind every low-interest loan is an inspiring Client Partner who has paid off fines and fees, secured transportation, landed a job, gotten an apartment, enrolled in classes, or maybe even opened a new business. And every time someone repays their loan, those recycled dollars become a window of opportunity for the next person who is rebuilding their life.



Arlis Evans (left) becomes Boston's very first Client Partner! Jay Vilar, Boston Site Director, and Arlis celebrate the moment.

CONTACT US IN BOSTON



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EXAMPLES OF LOANS IN BOSTON

- Business Equipment
- Secure Housing
- Obtain a Driver's License
- Vehicle Repair
- Tuition

OUR MISSION

The Fountain Fund increases economic opportunities for formerly incarcerated people to improve their lives and remain in their communities.