



# 2023 ADVANCE MEMPHIS NEWSLETTER



## FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

### Dear Friends:

**Merry Christmas! Advance Memphis is still following Aslan (King Jesus). That will never change! Aslan has brought us a new tool this year to break down barriers to flourishing.**

Every other Friday Advance Memphis staff, program participants, and volunteers are meeting with Licensed Christian Counselor, David Stenberg at our office to learn and understand the connection between the Bible and mental health. It is exciting to learn and share how our emotions and deeply hidden wounds (usually from childhood) can interrupt flourishing in our relationships with God, ourselves, others, and work, which is the foundation of what we teach in Work Life and Faith & Finances. These gatherings with David have been a sweet time committed to growth and building community.

When suffering, pain, or trauma enter our life, the coping begins. I like to cope with suffering and pain by avoiding conflict: running, hiding, and shutting down. This inhibits or, at the very least, stifles health and growth in relationships, personally and professionally. Others might cope with suffering and pain through aggression, depression, anxiety, addiction (drugs, alcohol, sex, social media, work) or just plain busyness. We all tend to pull away into isolation and loneliness, which only makes life worse because we are not allowing others to fully know us and build a supportive community.

Advance Memphis continues to walk in relationships toward the brokenness and mess in ourselves and others. This DOESN'T happen without proximity! We are in South Memphis to build relationships and invite our neighbors into respectful, reciprocal-learning relationships. We need a community to heal, find encouragement, and flourish. If we are in Christ, He provides flourishing by our commitment and engagement in a local Church.

We cannot “know” someone from a distance. We must be in close proximity to one another to be able to overcome our prejudicial blindness and perceive the *imago Deo* (the image of God) in our neighbors and ourselves.

Merry Christmas!

Steve

CONTACT US

PO Box 2201, Memphis, TN 38101 | (901) 543-8525 | [advancememphis.org](http://advancememphis.org) |



# The Long Road to Life Change

It's hard for Advance Memphis graduate, Michael Smith to enter a space without his presence being known. Even in seasons of hardship, he has a distinctive smile and a sense of humor that can make acquaintances feel like good friends.

Michael came to Advance Memphis in 2012 after he had lost his job and things weren't really going right for him.

**“My friends kept telling me to go to Advance Memphis because they could help you find work...”**

Michael graduated from Work Life and went on to work through Advance Memphis Staffing Services.

“Michael was always the type of person who would do his best to be there every day, work hard and participate as much as possible,” shared Advance Memphis Director of Employment Development, Juanita Johnson. Throughout the years, he stayed connected with Advance Memphis staff. His employment journey had peaks and valleys as he worked through some significant roadblocks to his personal success.

“Drugs has always been my biggest roadblock,” said Michael. “I kept going up and down with jobs and my drug problem. I would go to work for a while, and then get suspended... I'd stop working for awhile, until I found something new.” This cycle went on for years. After being suspended from working through Advance Memphis Staffing for a failed drug test again in 2022 (ten years after starting to work through Staffing Services) Smith said, “I finally got tired of being sick and tired – I started going to OTC [“Overcoming Through Christ” – Addiction Recovery Support Group] and the folks there- they didn't give up on me and they showed me tough love.” He attributes much of his present 10 months of sobriety to Mr. Charles Grey, OTC volunteer.

**“Charles was there for me—and all the people at Advance Memphis. That showed me people cared for me and so I knew I had to care for myself.”**



After his most recent long-term suspension, and with the ongoing support and encouragement of Advance Memphis staff, Michael started attending church again, he started attending regular recovery meetings outside of OTC, and he began tackling some issues with debt and focusing on addressing challenges with his painful arthritis. These were all personal roadblocks that had taken a back seat when he was active in his addiction. About 6 months after the last suspension from Advance Memphis Staffing and another temporary position elsewhere ended, Michael asked to come back to work yet again. Seeing all of his hard work and focus on sobriety, Juanita agreed to send him on yet another temporary assignment at Kenco.

On July 31st of this year, Michael was hired as a permanent employee. Kenco even customized a position for him taking into consideration some of his mobility challenges after seeing the value of his hard work, his character and positive attitude in the workplace. “I'm just so grateful that things are going so good for me. I'm just taking things one day at a time, and I know that if I keep doing that, with God on my side, and Advance Memphis helping me when I fall down—God's doing the work for me,” he said. While Michael's story of life change isn't over—it emphasizes the power of long-term relationships, just as our heavenly Father patiently and persistently pursues relationship with each of us.

## ADVANCE MEMPHIS: THE ROAD TO FLOURISHING

- Ongoing job coaching & employment opportunities
- Mobility Mentoring—holistic one-on-one coaching and goal setting
- Community events and celebrations

- 1 Find Dignity through Work**
- Attend **Work Life** (6-week job readiness class)
  - Afternoon work opportunities during class

- Relational support with every step
- Forklift certification
- Addiction recovery support
- Emergency relief assistance & support

- 3 Build Economic Stability**
- Attend **Faith & Finances** (12-week money management class)
  - **Open an IDA** (we match savings toward the purchase of an asset)

God's word

- 2 Develop Employment Skills**
- Start working through **Advance Memphis Staffing & Outsourcing**
  - Receive job coaching and support



# 2023 OUTCOMES



## ADVANCE MEMPHIS STAFFING & OUTSOURCING

GROSS WAGES EARNED BY OUR GRADUATES: FULL YEAR ESTIMATED

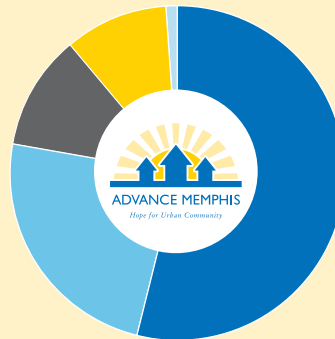
**\$717,340**

AVG. HOURLY WAGE EARNED BY OUR GRADUATES:

**\$15.92**  
2023

**\$13.53**  
2022

## HOW WE'RE FUNDED 2023



- Staffing & Warehousing: 54%
- Grants & Businesses: 24%
- Donations: 11%
- Art for Jobs: 10%
- Churches: 1%

**32** NEW GRADUATES ENTERING THE WORKFORCE

HIRED FULL TIME FROM TEMP ASSIGNMENT

**6**  
2023

**2**  
2022

## RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Every dollar invested in Advance Memphis generates **\$1.00 - \$1.25** in estimated poverty-fighting benefits for our neighbors in South Memphis.\*

\*Slingshot Memphis Report for 2022 published 2023



## 2023 ART FOR JOBS

Thanks for making our 13th annual Art for Jobs a special one. We were blown away again by the number of people who demonstrated support of the mission of Advance Memphis. We had over 400 people in attendance at the Preview Party and we exceeded the amount of artwork we sold from last year, totaling over \$69,000. Art for Jobs is so much more than a fundraiser, as community is built, employer connections are made, and God's heart for creativity and justice is displayed. Through the generosity of our sponsors, art buyers and donors, we raised a total of \$236,994 toward our mission of equipping adults for the workforce and promoting economic stability. Thank you!

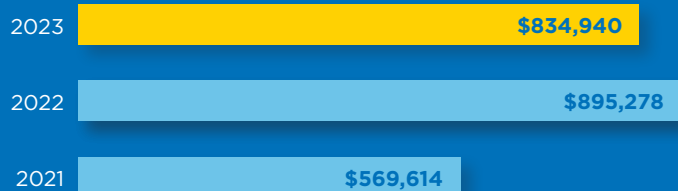
## FULFILLMENT & DISTRIBUTION SERVICES

God has humbled me in all the ways I see Him moving in the individuals who come to work every day.

Advance Memphis Fulfillment & Distribution Services have grown in efficiency and we are maximizing our use of the online warehouse management system. This year has been marked by significant personal and professional growth in our team as we've seen temporary employees (AM graduates) going to church and growing in their faith. These are the less quantifiable ways that we measure success in our revenue-generating business operations.

—Dell Lampkin, General Manager of Distribution

## WAREHOUSE REVENUE FROM OUTSOURCING



# ADVANCE MEMPHIS VOLUNTEERS

162 VOLUNTEERS

1,102 VOLUNTEER HOURS



## PROGRAM GRADUATES

47 WORK LIFE

21 FAITH & FINANCES

### Work Life

Our Work Life class has several new faces this year with Elena, Milton, Hannah, Curtis, and Mark in the classroom. We have moved Trauma-Informed care from “bolted-on” to “baked-in.” 47 participants graduated in 2023. 70% of those have gone to work. 47 participants graduated in 2023 with our last class graduating on Dec. 1st. We have shared the Gospel in word and deed, in the classroom and one-on-one. Please pray for God to work in graduates’ hearts.  
— **Mark Gosney**, Director of Operations

### Faith & Finances

God has been faithful in bringing neighbors to Advance Memphis who are interested in strengthening their relationship with God and their finances. We saw His movement as participants shared struggles and traumas. It’s difficult to know how to respond. In each instance, God gave another class participant the right words to speak into the person’s life.  
— **Rhema Fuller**, Faith & Finances Facilitator

## IDAs

An IDA is a matched savings account for an asset. We match \$2 to every \$1 saved.

11 ACTIVE SAVERS

3 BUSINESSES FUNDED

3 VEHICLES PURCHASED

1 HOME REMODEL

### IDAs

In 2023, five IDA participants were able to buy \$32,000 of productive assets with God’s help! This enabled graduates to expand businesses, purchase vehicles, and to make needed home repairs. Among the car purchases last year was a young man who committed his life to Christ while saving. Jesus is making all things new in his life including providing that needed car, getting a place of his own to live, obtaining custody of his four-year old daughter, and providing a church family.  
— **Mark Brommer**, IDA Coordinator

### Employment Development & Staffing Services

Our team focused on accountability and fostering ambition in our working grads. This contributed to the number of graduates who obtained permanent employment through staffing. We see the Lord’s hand in a 45% percent increase in the number of new graduates entering the workforce over last year! Nurturing strong client relationships has been key in meeting our staffing customer’s needs.

We’ve seen remarkable teamwork, building trust and openness, enabling us to find innovative ways to empower our graduates and overcome challenges.

— **The Employment Development Team**

### Mobility Mentoring

We have seen growth and development of this new program in 2023. Each Work Life participant is paired with a staff or volunteer coach who meets with them weekly to create attainable steps toward their personal goals. This program is providing the opportunity for participants to continue setting and accomplishing goals with their coach beyond graduation. After over a year of our initial pilot, Mobility Mentoring has helped over 46% of graduates maintain long-term relationships with an Advance Memphis coach. We look forward to learning and growing together more in 2024!

— **Hannah Saufley**, Mobility Mentoring Coordinator

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

**Brian Wiseman** started serving as an Ally with Advance Memphis in 2018, facilitating small groups connected to our job readiness class. He says he’s learned just as much from our participants as they have from him. “My time at Advance Memphis has been a two-way reciprocal learning process. I have learned about the injustices that are present in the justice system to the marginalized and how trauma of all kinds creates instabilities in the lives of so many.”

### Why did you seek additional volunteer equipping in the area of trauma-informed care?

Brian trained to become a Mobility Mentoring coach, providing goal-setting and relational support in one-on-one coaching. “Someone once said ‘Our brains are wired for connection, but trauma rewires them for protection.’ That’s why healthy relationships are so difficult for wounded people. I believe God uses relationships to build people up and help them change whereas programs can only do so much.”

### What pieces of encouragement can you share with others?

He said consistency and being present are so important. “... you need longer than six weeks to develop a genuine connection with someone. It can take a while to gain enough trust to be real with a person. Being willing to meet someone where they are is really the key. It’s also important to listen without judgment when things aren’t going their way.”

### What motivates you to stay engaged in relational ministry?

We’re incredibly grateful for volunteers like Brian, who take the time to show up repeatedly and pursue our neighbors. “Luke 12:48 says ‘To whom much is given, much will be required’ This means that my time and resources are not ‘mine’ they are God’s to do with what he wants. This blessing He has given me should be used to be a blessing to others,” Brian said. Please consider joining Brian and so many others in this valuable relational work!

## GIVE A GIFT THAT LASTS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR!

Consider joining our Good Neighbor Network and partnering with us in ongoing, relational workforce development through your monthly giving.



Scan the QR code or visit [advancememphis.org/give](https://advancememphis.org/give) to join the Good Neighbor Network!

Check out [advancememphis.org](https://advancememphis.org) for more volunteer opportunities!