



Youth at Western International High School: "Life Directions Youth Board members at Western International High School for a group photo at their first meeting of the 2017-18 school year."

# Life Direction program steers young people in the right direction

By Lee Watson

Life Directions is a mentoring organization focused on motivating young adults to become responsible, productive individuals through self-direction and promoting "Peers Inspiring Peers" in the community.

Founded in 1973 by Father John Phelps, Rev. Alex Steinmiller, Sister Rosalie Esquerro, and Alex and Judith MacDonald, Life Directions was created in response to an outbreak of violence in the city of Detroit. The goal was to "get to the cause of the violence," through community interaction directed at identifying root causes with those who were affected.

"We have found the cause of violence and invented ways to bring about the cure. We have never had an act of violence occur during our programs and activities in public schools or their surrounding neighborhoods. Our constant challenge is identifying best practices," says founder, Father John Phelps. "We sent our Program Managers from Detroit and Chicago to Harvard University's "Project Zero" workshop. We will be expanding our interactive learning tools to increase the growth of our young people's emotional IQ which has a direct impact on their intellectual IQ. We see each person that we engage with as having talents and gifts that can make a positive impact on their lives and the lives of their peers".

Since in 1980, Life Directions has exported its work to Chicago, New Orleans, San Antonio, Tucson, and Marion County (Indiana). Over 130,000 young adults have partnered with and benefitted from Life Directions peer-based programs. Life Directions efforts, in Detroit, through continuous improvement have formed into the three interconnected programs that exist today — the Neighborhood Enrichment Program, the Peer Motivation Program, and the Peer Mentor Program.

Life Directions' target audience are young adults, ages 13 - 35 who are considered "at risk", in economically poor; underserved communities and guide them into mature into responsible, productive members of society. Life Directions encourages responsibility for one's own future, balance in relationships, partnership in diversity, and fostering a mission-driven attitude. The Life Directions programs are effective because those providing program assistance are from the same backgrounds as those they are serving. Intergenerational programs are also offered where the elder "roots" motivate the "trunks" (young adults, ages 13 - 35) to be the connection between the roots and the "branches" (future generations).

The process engages in actions through forgiveness. The young adult leaders utilize neighborhoods, schools, and churches as part of their outreach to promote solutions for violence among their peers. The young men and women are encouraged to make an invest-



Youth with Large Clown: "Life Directions student peer mentors from Western International High School serving as volunteers for the Detroit Thanksgiving Day Parade Turkey Trot where they handled registration and check-in."



Youth with Sesame Street Characters: "Life Directions student participants from Western International High School at The Parade Company studio for costume fitting in preparation for the Detroit Thanksgiving Day Parade."

ment in their future, from generation to generation, compounding with time.

It is through fundraisers that Life Direction can continue its work with the young people in the community. Funds go to support its programs like peer motivation, neighborhood enrichment, and community service learning projects. According to the Life Directions website, 83% of all contributions are spent on programs.

"We will have our 42nd Annual Gala at Clark Park across from Western International High School

on August 5, 2018. We will feature the fruit of our work in the garden that is in its third year," says Father Phelps. "The young people will be sharing their talents and leading games for children and people of all ages. The Youth Board of Life Directions will take the lead to plan, do and enjoy the community celebrating reducing violence by lifting up peace-building ways of being together."

More information about the Life Directions organization is available on their website at [www.lifedirections.org](http://www.lifedirections.org).

## El Nacimiento

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food trucks in southwest Detroit.

El Nacimiento stands out because of its community support, said John Lopez, 49, a local realtor and Southwest Detroit resident.

"It is a beautiful thing," Lopez said. "It makes a difference when you are there for the community. People look for whether you are authentic or not and whether you give back or not."

Monica Garza Flores, another southwest Detroit resident likes that. "It's good that they give back," she said. "They should support the community."

Elizabeth Valdez agrees. She heads Detroit Southwest Pride, a neighborhood and grassroots community group, and said she likes to spend her money at businesses that help the community.

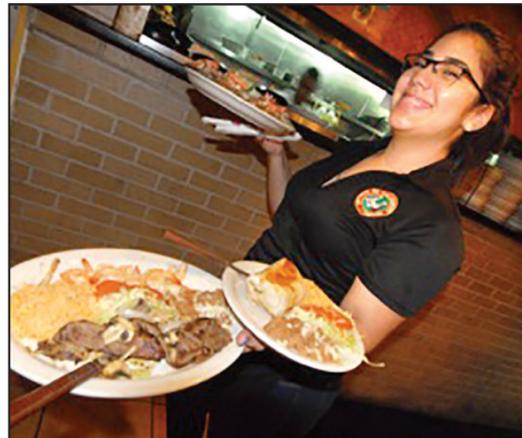
"I will support a business that supports the community," she said. "That is a big deal."

She said there are business in the community that help out in a similar way but that there is a need for more.

"There is always a need," Valdez said.

Padilla, who has worked for the restaurant since it opened, said he is proud of the business' generosity.

"We would not be who we are if we did not give back," he said.



**SOUTHWEST DETROIT RESTAURANTS**  
A few other Southwest Detroit restaurant offerings:

- Mi Pueblo**, 7278 Dix.
- Family Treat**, 2010 Springwells
- Armando's Mexican restaurant**, 4242 W. Vernor
- Evie's Tamales**, 3454 Bagley
- Xochimilco Authentic Mexican Restaurant**, 3409 Bagley

## Northwest

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### Bucharest Grill

19492 Livernois - This popular carryout and sit-down location offers variety of Mediterranean dishes.

### Good Cakes and Bakes

19363 Livernois Ave - Clever locally owned bakeshop and coffeehouse. Wide selection of homemade baked goods and vegan options. Welcoming atmosphere and most friendly staff.

### Kuzzo's Chicken & Waffles

19345 Livernois Ave - The name says it all. Breakfast all day with a full bar. 90's R & B on the sound system, paintings of black cultural icons adorn the walls, soulful atmosphere. Frequented by long time and new residents, students from the local universities and curious visitors from other parts of the city and beyond.

### Noni's Sherwood Grill

19700 Livernois Ave - Relaxed vibe, comfort food. Low-key hang out for local politicians, business owners and long time residents. Home of the Detroit Fine Arts Breakfast club gatherings. If you don't know about that group already, you should ask around!

### Mr. Fof's

19166 Livernois Ave, Detroit, MI 48221 - Locally-famous deli. Known for their "gigantic corned beef" sandwiches. Simple menu, casual, take out.

### Uptown BBQ

15700 Livernois - This carry-out joint specializes in bbq ribs and chicken, and offers an assortment of soul food sides.

## Dexter-Davidson

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### Eleos Coffee House

12041 Dexter - Eleos Coffee House offers fresh roasted coffees, great espresso drinks, teas, shakes, smoothies, pastries and sandwiches. Eleos offers meeting space for community groups to meet and the 10th Precinct Police Department Community Relations meets here monthly.

### Hook Fresh Fish & Chicken

9200 Dexter - You can buy fresh fish and chicken, and have it fried for lunch or dinner.

### Momma Shelby's Soul Food

3426 Clairmount - A small family owned restaurant that serves good southern style chicken, meat loaf, pork chops and more for lunch and dinner,

### Nicky D's Coney Island

3557 W. Davison - A sit down restaurant serving classic Coney Island Hot Dogs, Hamburgers and breakfast anytime.

### NUWAVE Fish & Chicken

2970 W. Davison - You can buy fresh fish and chicken, and have it fried for lunch or dinner.

# Black Male Leadership Conference to Recruit 100 Mentors and Place 100 Men in Jobs!

Man Power Mentoring, Inc. is celebrating its 11th year anniversary by hosting Detroit's 1st Annual Black Male Leadership Conference "STATE OF THE BLACK MALE" that will be held August 11, 2018 at Wayne County Community College District's Downtown Campus, 801 W Fort St, Detroit, MI 48226.

This conference is designed to bring leaders together to discuss, plan and implement strategies that

can impact and even reverse neighborhood poverty and crime. Conference highlights include a Job and Resource Fair, Organizational and Governance workshops, Credit and Finance, Block Club Creation, as well as other important topics.

Specific outcomes expected from the conference include:

- To recruit 100 mentors that can help meet the demand of Detroit's mentoring shortage

- To further the organization's initiative to place 100 or more young men in jobs in 2018.

- To develop committees of action ranging from, but not limited to: education, civic and law enforcement

- To develop plans of action that include, but are not limited to: economic development, employment, entrepreneurship and domestic responsibility

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