



[www.abelink.org](http://www.abelink.org)

## Organization Overview

### *Preparing People for Life Ready for Tomorrow*

#### **Vision Statement**

The Abraham Lincoln Centre will continue successfully *Helping People Help Themselves*.

#### **Mission**

The mission of the Abraham Lincoln Centre is to serve Chicago's greater south side communities by assisting the residents in their efforts to become self-sufficient and to live healthy, productive lives.

#### **Historical Overview**

The Abraham Lincoln Centre (ALC) was founded as a settlement house in 1905 under the auspices of the All Souls Church. The Centre quickly became the home to a variety of social, intellectual and cultural activities. The articles of incorporation at that time, state that the Abraham Lincoln Centre corporation was formed for the "the advancement of the physical, intellectual, social, civic, moral and religious interests of humanity, irrespective of age, sex, creed, race, condition of political opinion and in furtherance thereof the maintenance of institutions of learning and philanthropy." The Centre was unique in welcoming members of all races and religions during that period of history.

#### **Today**

The Abraham Lincoln Centre builds on the foundation that was laid in the early 1900s. The Centre continues to meet the needs of people regardless of religious, ethnic or cultural background. Abraham Lincoln Centre now has programs at 13 sites on Chicago's south side, concentrating on the needs of residents in the Greater Grand Boulevard community (also known historically as Bronzeville) where the central office is located. With a staff of highly-qualified professionals to administer programs and build partnerships with a broad range of organizations, the Abraham Lincoln Centre is successfully *Preparing People for Life Ready for Tomorrow*.



[www.abelink.org](http://www.abelink.org)

## Fact Sheet

**Founded:** 1905

**Focus:** Social service agency

**Status:** 501(c)(3) Non-profit

**Individuals and Families serviced annually:** 7,000

**Staff:** 140

**Communities serviced:**

South side of Chicago: 22nd Street to the north, 127th Street to the south, Lake Michigan to the east, and Western Avenue to the west.

**Core programs provided:**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Early childhood care and education</li><li>• Youth development</li><li>• Teen outreach and development</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Adult and senior services</li><li>• Mental health services</li><li>• Developmental disabilities services</li></ul> |
|--|--|

**Locations:** 13

**Funded By:**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• City of Chicago Department of Children &amp; Family Services</li><li>• CPS Community Partnership Programs</li><li>• Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Mental Health and Development Disabilities</li><li>• Illinois Department of Public Aid.</li></ul> |
|--|--|

**Sponsors:**

- A.A.W.S. Inc.
- Chicago State University Foundation
- Circle of Service Foundation
- CVS/Caremark
- Deloitte & Touche
- Delta Dental
- Fama, Eugene and Sallyann
- Field Foundation
- Galland, George Jr.
- Gary Harris Private Client Group
- Harris Bank
- Home Depot Foundation (The)
- Inner City Underwriting
- Jewel-Osco
- Juno Lighting Inc.
- Jimmy John's
- Little Lady Foods
- Mayer Brown
- Taproot Foundation
- Walgreens

**Partners:**

- After School Matters
- Bitty Ball
- Mount Caramel Church
- Passages
- Rock For Kids
- West Point Missionary Church



[www.abelink.org](http://www.abelink.org)

## Leadership

### Senior Staff

#### **Zirl S. Smith, *President and Chief Executive Officer***

Mr. Smith was elected in September 2003, after having served as Interim CEO since February 2003. He has operated Zirl Smith & Associates Inc. since 1987. His firm specializes in human services planning, interim management, organizational consulting and affordable and private housing development activities for a variety of public and private organizations. Mr. Smith has a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration from Franklin University. He has done post-graduate study in Business Administration at Ohio State University and The University of Toledo. His education includes NASD sponsored "Series 7" training and certification training in real estate, real estate management and public finance. Mr. Smith has served as Executive Director of the Chicago Housing Authority, President of Alliance Paint & Coatings Inc., President of Sylvanus Corporation and Managing Director of Berean Capital Inc.

#### **Gloria Knight-Hinds, *Director of Behavioral Health Services***

Ms. Knight-Hinds received her Bachelor's degree from Augustana College and Master's degree from Loyola University, both in the field of Sociology and Social Work. She has worked at Abraham Lincoln Centre for 30 years with various responsibilities. These include Case Manager for the Developmental Disabilities Department, Supervisor for 0-3 Early Intervention, respite care, foster care and family support programs. As Department Director, her responsibilities expanded to include management of residential and community support programs for children and adults with a developmental disability and community support and therapeutic programs for children and adults with emotional disorders or mental illness. Currently her departmental responsibility is focused on the mental health programs within the agency. She served in the Army Reserve for nine years and is a member of the Academy of Certified Social Workers.

#### **Melanie Miller, *Director of Child, Youth and Adult Services***

Ms. Miller has many years of experience working with children and families including 15 years with La Rabida Children's Hospital, first as an Infant Development Specialist and later as the Chief of Infant Development. She also has extensive experience in providing training and technical assistance to community programs. Prior to joining the Abraham Lincoln Centre, Ms. Miller worked as a small business owner providing educational and consulting services for Illinois Early Intervention System, Prevention Initiative Programs and home daycare providers. She earned a Bachelor's Degree in Social Sciences, and a Master's Degree in Early Childhood Special Education from Northeastern Illinois University.

### **Board of Trustees**

#### **Kat y Assem, *Chairman***

V.P. for Institutional Advancement,  
Executive Director  
Chicago State University Foundation

#### **Marty Young, *Treasurer***

District Manager #222  
Walgreens Company

#### **Philip J. O'Keefe, *Secretary***

Financial Center Manager  
Citibank NA

#### **Lester Blair**

Principal  
Blair Capital Management Corp.

#### **George F. Galland**

Partner  
Miner, Barnhill & Galland

#### **Craig M. Gilmore**

Director, Multi-Cultural Markets  
State Farm Insurance

#### **Maurice L. Gue, Esq.**

Associate  
Grant Schumann, LLC

#### **James Hudson**

#### **William H. Jones**

President  
Bill Jones and Associates LLC

#### **Vanessa Smith McTier**

Principal & National Managing Counsel  
Vantage Solutions LLC

#### **Barbara E. Pinder**

President  
Pinder & Associates

#### **Sander Postol**

Robert Morris University

#### **Walter H. Sobel**

Principal  
Walter H. Sobel, FAIA & Associates

**Julia M. Murrell, *Director of Administration/Assistant to the President***

Ms. Murrell completed her formal education at the Jones Commercial High School in Chicago, IL. She has spent the majority of her career at the Independence Bank of Chicago. During the period 1972-1995, she advanced from secretary to the corporate position of Assistant to the Chairman/Corporate Secretary. From 1988 until 1995, she also held the position of Corporate Secretary of Drexel National Bank, Drexel Holding Company and Indecorp, Inc. In 1995, Ms. Murrell took on a position at the YCMA of Metropolitan Chicago as Assistant to the President/Corporate Secretary, serving until 2001. Over the years Julia has received several awards for her community service. Her most valued is the “*Woman of Excellence*” award received from Operation PUSH at their 1992 convention in Chicago. She currently serves on the Board of Directors for Deliverance Manor Apartments.

**Melaku Tadesse, *Director of Developmental Disabilities Services***

Mr. Tadesse began his employment with the Abraham Lincoln Centre as a Case Manager in 1992. He holds a Master’s degree in Education, and has 17 years of extensive, professional experience in mental health and developmental disabilities. His certifications include a State of Illinois designation of Qualified Mental Retardation Professional (QMRP) and Qualified Mental Health Professional (QMHP). Mel is presently in charge of the agency’s Developmental Disability Services. As Department Director, he is responsible for the overall management, operation and growth of the agency’s Developmental Training Program, and several residential programs for children and adults with developmental disabilities. Mel helps to develop new policies and procedures to ensure the agency’s compliance with federal, state and local requirements. He makes public presentations about the department, regularly interacts with funding sources, facilitates external oversight reviews, and coordinates with other service providers.

**Lela Wafer, *Director of Human Resources***

Ms. Wafer previously served as Personnel and Training Director for the Chicago Urban League. She has over 40 years experience in the field of human resources. Ms. Wafer has a Bachelor’s Degree in Personnel Administration from Roosevelt University and completed post-graduate study at Keller Graduate School of Management. Ms. Wafer’s certification as a Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR) was granted by the HR Certification Institute, Society for Human Resource Management. Ms. Wafer is a member of the Society for Human Resource Management and previously served on the Board of Directors of the Chicago Chapter. She has also served on boards of other non-profit organizations.