

Mentoring Advocate Prioritizes Mindfulness for Mentors: National Volunteer Week

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After attending the Mentor 101 training offered by the Mayor's Mentoring Alliance (MMA) in January 2019, Lotticia Shefferson felt compelled to do more. The former educator, whose career has been dedicated to supporting youth, was making an impact of her own as a mentor, but she wanted to reach the larger mentoring community.

"I really wanted to do more to support not only mentors, but mentoring organizations that provide mentorship for our students here in Charlotte," she realized. Months later, when the opportunity arose to join the MMA Advisory Board, a dedicated team of volunteers who drive Charlotte's mentoring landscape forward, Shefferson did not hesitate. Fast forward three years, and she now serves as its board chair.

"Being on the receiving end of that training, it was great. I learned a lot, but I also wanted to go a little deeper with that and play a part in helping facilitate the training – play a part in providing opportunities for mentors to connect, to engage more, because that support was provided for me," said Shefferson. During the height of the pandemic, she served on board's Educate Committee, later serving as its committee chair, and used her passion for education to contribute to training curriculum. Calling it her "heart work," Lotticia is committed to ensuring that mentors feel supported as they support their mentees.

This eagerness drove the committee to create and offer a new training titled "Mentor 102: Check and Connect," which is centered around mindfulness as it pertains to mentoring. "We're not just focused on how you interact with your mentee. We want to make sure that you're taking care of yourself, because mentoring can take a lot out of you and if you're running on empty, you can't take care of your mentee and continue to support them," she shared. While the MMA Advisory Board continues to offer technical trainings to the mentoring community, there also several workshops and networking events offered to mentors as a form of support.

This genuine care for one another extends to the how members interact within the advisory board as a whole. Former board chair Deon Wimbush began each monthly meeting with a check-in to hold space for sharing amongst board members, a tradition continued through Shefferson's board leadership.

"That seems so simple, but in the space that we're in right now, that goes a long way. In that check-in moment, we're also providing encouragement to everybody. . . a lot of organizations or even work environments don't provide that type of space, and I don't think people fully appreciate how much that helps people," Shefferson shared.

She credits the culture within the MMA Advisory Board as one of the reasons that she has stayed for years, and that is because she has been able to be herself. "I've really grown the 3 years that I've been a part of MMA, and I don't think I would have had that growth if I wasn't a member."



In every MMA training, workshop, annual award ceremony, or networking event, there is the opportunity for people to connect, feel supported, expand their current network, and evolve as a mentor and also as a person. In a world where people all too often work in silos, MMA strives to serve as a binding force within the community that allows for partnerships to be established.

Shefferson's hope is that mentoring is able to "get to a place where all mentoring organizations here in Charlotte are able to collaborate and support each other and not work in silos because there are so many youth here in Charlotte that need mentors."

For more information on how you can get involved with the Mayor's Mentoring Alliance, visit www.charlottenc.gov/mma for details.

