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# Grounded in Values: PHS Provides Vital Workforce Development Services

February 19, 2021

IMPACT

PHS PROGRAMS



**By Marion McParland**

PHS believes in supporting the unique needs of people who have been incarcerated by expanding economic opportunities for them within our community. One brightly shining example of PHS's dedication to creating opportunity in the Philadelphia area is our Workforce Development program. PHS prides itself on our ability to serve vulnerable residents of Philadelphia by removing barriers to education and employment with hands-on training, tailored support programs, and job placement in the field of

horticulture. Learn how this program has helped almost 200 people train for horticultural careers, placed 160 participants in jobs since 2016, and how you can make a difference.

### **Rooted in Care**

In 2010, PHS collaborated with the Philadelphia Department of Prisons to provide training and job placement for people who were released from prison to return to the workforce. With a growing demand for workers in the horticultural industry, PHS was critical in helping to fulfill a demand for skilled labor in the field. In 2016, the same successful program was expanded to offer a six-week intensive paid training program taking place in the field. Additionally, the program provided support services and case management to help individuals decrease barriers to employment.

In 2020, under PHS Director of LandCare Keith Green's leadership, Zara Sims joined PHS as Workforce Development Manager to lead the program's expanding job training and placement programming in length and employment opportunities.

### **A Win/Win**

The success of the PHS workforce development program is a win for people who have been incarcerated, as well as for the city of Philadelphia. Over the past three years, 83% of program participants completed the training. Of those who graduated, 98% are in a full-time job with PHS's network of 12 core employment partners, most of whom are minority-owned local businesses. At least 55% were still employed after eight months. The LandCare maintenance and services they provide to the city are vital in the cleaning, greening, and care of these urban lots and landscapes.

### **Preparing for the Next Bootcamp**

PHS is already preparing for the upcoming six-week training boot camp beginning March 15, 2021. The Spring 2021 program will take place in two cohorts totaling 35 participants (due to COVID guidelines) and will take place virtually, as well as in-person, with work in the field. These boot camps are paid, hands-on training and education in the horticulture and landscaping fields under the guidance of PHS's skilled staff. Participants gain necessary skills as well as professionalism in the field.

### **Facing Challenges**

"Despite the program's great success, participants have challenges in getting trained," says Sims. "These include access to computers and Wi-Fi, money to pay their phone bills to keep their service, food vulnerability, work/life balance, and finding adequate and proper childcare." PHS's case management team provides excellent referrals and services to help participants navigate these challenges.

### **How Can You Help?**

Your donation to PHS helps continue and expand this vital program, as well as others, in our community. "Our workforce development programming resonates with PHS's values in providing economic stability through horticulture," says Sims. "In light of the recent racial injustices nationally, and in Philadelphia, it's important that we

reach these marginalized and underserved communities to provide opportunities for life-sustaining work and a healthy lifestyle.”

To learn more about workforce development at PHS, contact Zara Sims at [PHS-info@pennhort.org](mailto:PHS-info@pennhort.org).

Through a donation to PHS, you can support Workforce Development

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