



StepForward

To Believe in Yourself and to Take a Step Forward

Newsletter, May 2022, Vol. 2, Issue 1

Greetings to all friends and supporters of StepForward.

While the beauty of spring has just arrived, our clients have been continuing to make beautiful progress toward their goals. We hope you enjoy this update of their stories as well as of our expanded network of like-minded agencies. As always, we appreciate these agencies' vetting and referral of clients whose aspirations match our ability to help.

We would like to highlight those that are new to us and a great fit:

- *Home to Hope*, a program of peer support groups to help the formerly incarcerated get back on their feet and thrive;
- *New Hill Development*, inspired by the legacy of Vinegar Hill, they promote financial resilience and economic opportunities in the Black community;
- *Antwon's Culinary Concepts*, which changes lives and relationships through food, including a culinary training Boot Camp, and classes for entrepreneurs, ex-felons, teens, seniors.

And we continue to appreciate referrals from all our previous agencies such as Network2Work, LVCA (Literacy Volunteers of Charlottesville/Albemarle), The Women's Initiative, CNE (Center for Nonprofit Excellence), and more.

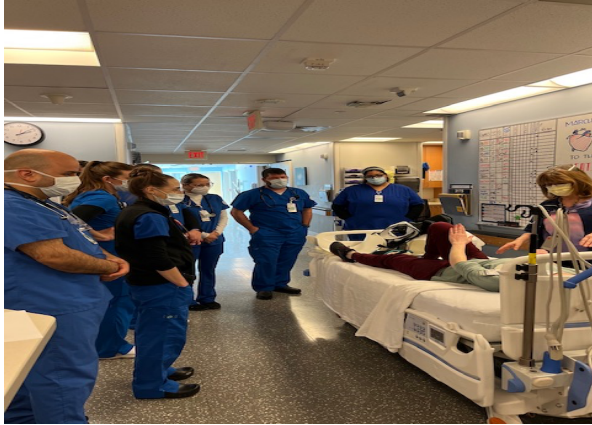
Of course, the best news is that our clients have made good use of all help, encouragement, connections, and resources, and they continue to make progress on their paths. We are for the



first time including a few photos, so you can "see" their progress.

Fatemeh, originally from Afghanistan, is pictured at work in her dream tailoring shop on West Main street known as the "*Gus Custom Tailoring*" shop. She is able to continue being a seamstress as she did during her years living in Turkey and Iran, and provide a much-needed

service in Charlottesville.



Olivia, one of our first clients, is well on her way to becoming a nurse, makes great use of any help or tutoring; she already finished her Associate degree, and the Nursing milestone is expected next May.

Our newest client is Shadee Gilliam, who is in fact a hip hop artist, with recordings out (stage name Shad Gill) but who has set his dream/aspiration on expanding his fledgling clothing line (sweatpants, hoodies, t-shirts, shorts, hats) under

the brand name SVN7VII. This represents 3 versions of the number 7, for the 777 days he was previously incarcerated, and during which time he turned his life around and now focuses on helping others do the same.

Other clients are making their way through various challenges such as childcare, transportation, entrepreneurship, or the small miracle of learning to drive in a new country.



And finally, you will see a new name on our 3-person Board. While we reluctantly had to say goodbye to Sunny Choi, StepForward's original mastermind, who has been called away to other endeavors, we are proud to introduce Dana Tornabene, currently Chair of the LVCA Board. She brings rich and extensive work and life experience, as well as wisdom, creative ideas, and generosity of spirit. We are grateful to Sunny whose resources and advice continue to be helpful, and to Dana for diving in even with her many commitments.

You are welcome to join us to continue the work of StepForward with a tax-deductible donation to make a real difference in someone's life. 100% of your contributions go toward helping the clients, while all operational expenses are covered by the StepForward founders. You would be proud to see how your support has helped clients overcome obstacles and has propelled them forward toward their life goals, and we thank you.

*With Warm Regards,
Achla Marathe, Lynda Fanning, and Dana Tornabene*

We are under the umbrella of Open Hands. The donations you make to StepForward through Open Hands are tax deductible. Please look for us at <https://openhands.avenue.org/>