

***Frank Reynoso  
Pours Out Love***

***Lisa Jones'  
Mission to Iraq***

A close-up portrait of Frank Reynoso, a man with a thick, dark beard and curly hair, smiling warmly. He is wearing a white jacket with red piping. The background is a dark, textured blue.

# ***Confronting Crisis with Compassion***



# Welcome Eric Johnson

The DVULI staff welcomes Eric Johnson (Los Angeles 2010) to our team of liaisons. Eric has been assigned to alumni relations and local follow up efforts in Los Angeles and San Diego.

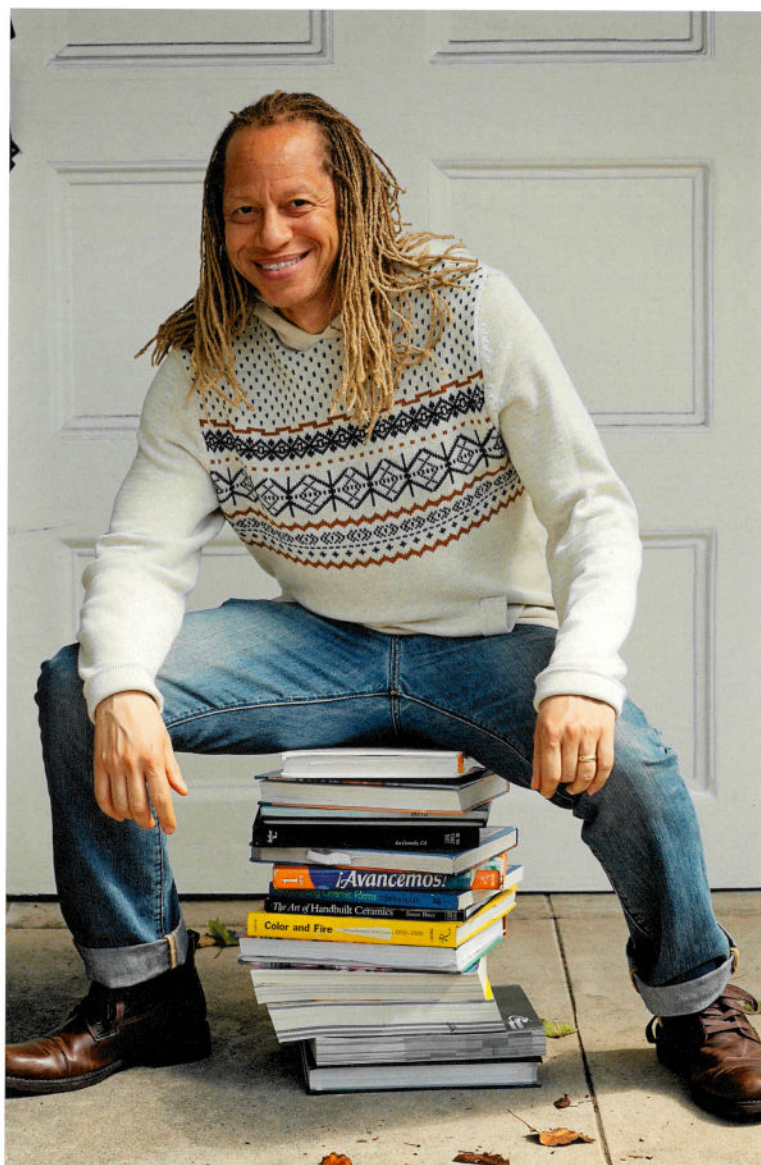
For more than 20 years Eric has been engaged in urban ministry in Pasadena, California. He currently serves as the Director of Partnerships and Collaboration at the Lake Avenue Community Foundation where he oversees a local collaboration with the Pasadena Unified School District. He advocates on behalf of students and families to ensure that each student is equipped with personalized support that leads to an equitable education plan and equal access for all students.

Since graduating from DVULI, Eric has been actively convening his fellow alumni, serving on the leadership committee to offer training to local emerging urban leaders and presenting the Core Values content in various training settings.

“As a kid I dreamt about building cities,” Eric said. “I am excited to have this opportunity to come alongside alumni and us being continual learners and bringing sustainability to our cities through [the use of] core values.”

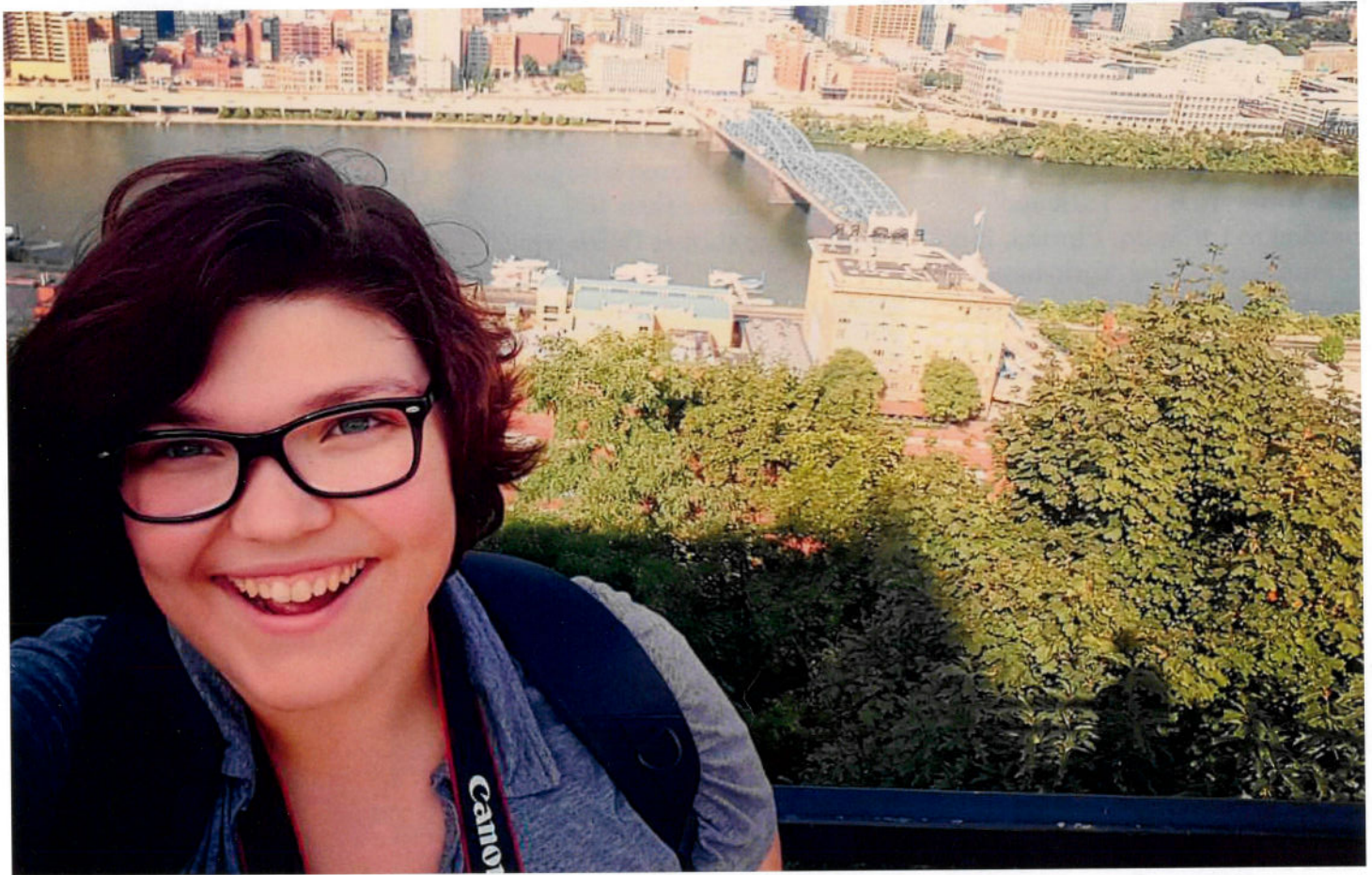
Eric has been married to Anna Marie for 28 years and they have one adult daughter. When he’s not attending to family and ministry responsibilities, he’s fully committed to the world of media, the arts and comics. “I am a geek,” he admits. “100 percent pop culture all the time. I still collect comics, watch all films, and keep up with every TV show.” He adds jokingly, “If Jesus were here today all parables would be told in film.”

You may drop Eric a note via email at [ericj@dvuli.org](mailto:ericj@dvuli.org).





# and Rebecca Wallace



Join the DVULI staff in welcoming Rebecca Wallace to the team! In January of this year, Rebecca accepted the position of Digital Media Specialist and will be working with our Communications team.

Rebecca has a degree in Film and Video Production from Cornerstone University in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She spent her time there learning how to tell stories in every setting. Her previous experience includes working with Grand Rapids Community College in their media department.

She is excited to bring her skills in video editing, graphic work, and storytelling to the DVULI program. "I'm looking forward to bringing more visual aspects to the program," Rebecca said. "Media, whether that be audio or visual, or even both, has a way of putting things into a whole new perspective."

Teamwork is something Rebecca had a lot of experience with during her time at Cornerstone. "Film-making is a team sport, so I got a lot of practice in working with groups, both big and small. You have to be able to do your individual job well, but in the end it really comes down to the team you're working with. The DVULI team is one I'm really excited to be joining."

Outside of her work for DVULI, Rebecca spends her free time either with family, reading, or working on various arts and crafts.

Say hi or ask Rebecca what is her favorite movie at [rebeccaw@dvuli.org](mailto:rebeccaw@dvuli.org).



# An Outpouring of Love

## Frank Reynoso (Orlando 2010) responds to night club shooting with the Love of Christ

by Gerald Bell

Twenty-five years ago, Pastor Frank Reynoso fled the streets of Brooklyn, New York and headed to Orlando, Florida. His reason – two New York-based drug lords were looking to take his life. So, at the invitation of a trusted family member, Reynoso relocated to the Sunshine State for his own protection.

Orlando is the 24th-largest metropolitan area in the United States, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. It is known as “The Theme Park Capital of the World” where Walt Disney World, Universal Orlando Resort, SeaWorld, and other attractions make their home. The city also ranks as the fourth-most desirable city in America to live in, as a 2009 Pew Research Center study reports.

Reynoso, 48, who now has his roots firmly planted in Orlando, describes the area as “a great place to raise a family.” The former gang-affiliated high-school dropout is a transformed man committed to his faith in Christ, and is the Senior Pastor of Body of One Ministries located in the Oakridge-OBT (Orange Blossom Trail) community. This neighborhood, with a high Latino and Haitian population, is plagued by “drug abuse, prostitution, and a bunch of strip joints,” Reynoso says.

On June 12, 2016, this popular tourist town suffered a tragic blow when more than 100 people were shot at Pulse, a gay

assault rifles and mass shootings. The following morning, while ministering to his congregation – a mere five miles away from



In the days after the Pulse night club shooting, there was a tremendous outpouring from the community. In response, Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer announced the formation of the OneOrlando Fund. The DeVos family and the Orlando Magic were among the many donors who gave generously to this fund.

nightclub. Fifty people, including the gunman, were killed and 53 were wounded. The incident, widely alleged as an act of terrorism and a hate crime, was both the deadliest mass shooting recorded in modern U.S. history and one of the deadliest mass shootings ever perpetrated by one individual.

That same evening, Reynoso was at home watching a documentary that was, ironically, about

the nightclub – an alert appeared on his mobile phone with an updated report on the total number of lives lost in the attack.

With microphone in hand Pastor Reynoso stopped his sermon and announced to the congregation (most of whom hadn't heard about the incident), “Something took place last night and it will go down as the largest mass shooting in America.” He continued on and “told them it



was time for us to rise up and be the church. We don't know how this is going to affect us, but we have to love on people."

"When you hear about something happening like this it makes you very contemplative. You don't really know what it looks like, you just become sober," offers Reynoso about the shooting. "I said to myself that we have to do something...but what do you do?"

With social media being his first inclination, Reynoso took to his Facebook page of nearly 5,000 friends with a message for the church at large. "I addressed our people and said that we have to love on this community, and I got all kinds of [positive] feedback and comments and support. I have never gotten that kind of response before."

Reynoso then recruited some key leaders in his church who he believed to be well equipped to address the needs of the victims who are "not necessarily buddy-buddy" with Christians. "This is the whole Interdependence piece," he recalls from his DVULI training. "I have members of my church who

turned from the gay lifestyle and who would know more about how to reach out to that community than I did."

"We went over [to the nightclub] to love on people; taking water, feeding them, going to the hospital, giving blood. We discovered that we knew some of the people who were shot or killed," he said. "There were police officers that we had to love on who were traumatized." Reynoso goes on to explain, "We worked with other churches. We worked with area restaurants and grocery stores to get food and supplies that were needed."

As a pastor in a high-risk low-income community, Reynoso is fully aware that there can be an "aggressive indifference" between the gay community and the church. To that he says, "They are my neighbors. They may be people that we don't necessarily see eye to eye with or agree with, but when there's a crisis, then we really get to be the love that God talks about."

Looking back at what drove him to Orlando, Reynoso says, "I'd never seen love until I met Christ. My heart is to find people

who have not experienced that true love and share it with them because it's transforming."

"If we have been trained up to be leaders, then we have got to be trained up to love the community," asserts Reynoso to his fellow DVULI alumni. "I was prepared for this. And [with area partners onboard] I knew that I didn't have to do it all by myself."

*Pastor Frank Reynoso is a 2010 graduate of the DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative. He is the Pastor of Body of One Ministries (bodyofoneministries.com) and Inner City Developer for the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. He and his wife Agnes have one daughter and live in the Orlando area.*

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**MISSION: FREE VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING**  
**LOCATION: IRAQ**  
**RISKS: EXTREMELY HIGH**  
**WHO: LISA JONES (Los Angeles 2010)**

by Kristen Pearson and Gerald Bell

Although it came at a high price and with no guarantees, Lisa Jones willingly accepted the call of God to minister to victims of human trafficking in Iraq.

Iraq is a country where numerous women and children are subjected to trafficking, specifically forced prostitution and forced labor. These women and girls, some as young as 11 years old, are often exploited within their own and other households. According to Reuters, up to 10,000 women and girls in Iraq have been abducted or trafficked for sexual slavery, prostitution or ransom. Annual statistics are admittedly hard to report due to lack of information. Many believe the actual number may be significantly higher.

As a missionary in Iraq, this calling is no small order for Jones, 55, who has seen unfathomable realities for the under-aged girls (often labeled women) she reaches in the majority Muslim country. "Some of [the girls] report being raped by more than 100 men, not sleeping for days, not having any food, and watching their own children being murdered in front of them prior to being taken captive," describes Jones. "It's not uncommon for them to have witnessed the murder of several family members prior to being taken and abused. They

(the men) used a lot of torture, and they had the girls witness the torture of others as a way to keep them in line, and a way to threaten them."

To date, Jones has made three visits to Iraq to help two groups of their nation's most vulnerable people in crisis. Her first trip, in August 2015, led her to an autonomous region of Kurdistan

In this territory the older girls are usually sold into domestic slavery, while the younger ones are bought and sold as sex slaves for soldiers. Jones returned to Iraq last August as a crisis counselor and therapist.

"Trauma counseling is something I've been involved in, having studied psychology at Vanguard University and taken some



in northern Iraq – located about 230 miles north of Baghdad. In January 2016 she spent six weeks working in a safe house for girls and young women between the ages of 12-20 who were recently rescued from ISIS – victims of human trafficking or captives.

[additional] courses in crisis response. I felt the Lord leading ... He gave me this assignment. It dropped in my lap. I wasn't thinking about it. It wasn't even on my radar," said Jones. "But when God says 'will you go to Iraq?' you know it's got to be



# Alumni Push Back

## Film industry has more road ahead in casting under-represented minorities

Op-ed by Troy Taylor (Pittsburgh 2004)

As an African American actor I have committed to never miss the Oscar Awards. After last year's boycott of the Oscars by actors Will Smith, Spike Lee, and Don Cheadle in reaction to the lack of black nominees, I knew I couldn't miss this year's show. I have to say I was not disappointed in the results and really enjoyed many of the acceptance speeches. I still believe, however, that there is room for more representation of minority actors and their depictions in the movies.

I can remember projects like *Antwone Fisher* starring Denzel Washington and Derek Luke, *Higher Learning* with Lawrence Fishburne and Ice Cube, and *Save the Last Dance* that starred Sean Patrick Thomas and Kerry Washington. These films left viewers with a sense of purpose and helped to show that youth can overcome odds and obstacles when someone listens to and encourages them.

Call me extreme, but I believe there is a great need for more scripts and movies that showcase our at-risk urban youth. If this can be accomplished with 2016 films like *Moonlight* and *Fences*, certainly there are more untold stories that are just as compelling, that give attention to the issues, the talent and the plight of today's urban youth.



For 14 years I directed youth programs in Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, and I can attest that our urban youth have profound potential, skills, and talents to offer. They also have very rich stories which range from their personal opinion to their efforts in trying to obtain identity and purpose.

I am grateful for the inclusive steps the Oscars made this year, but I am convinced there's room for improvement in the years to come if under-represented talent, such as our urban youth, is to have a chance.

Troy L. Taylor (Pittsburgh 2004) is a church based youth director in Albuquerque, NM and a freelance film and television actor. Contact Troy Taylor at [mrtrolyltaylor@gmail.com](mailto:mrtrolyltaylor@gmail.com)



# To be Told

God Invites You to  
Coauthor Your Future

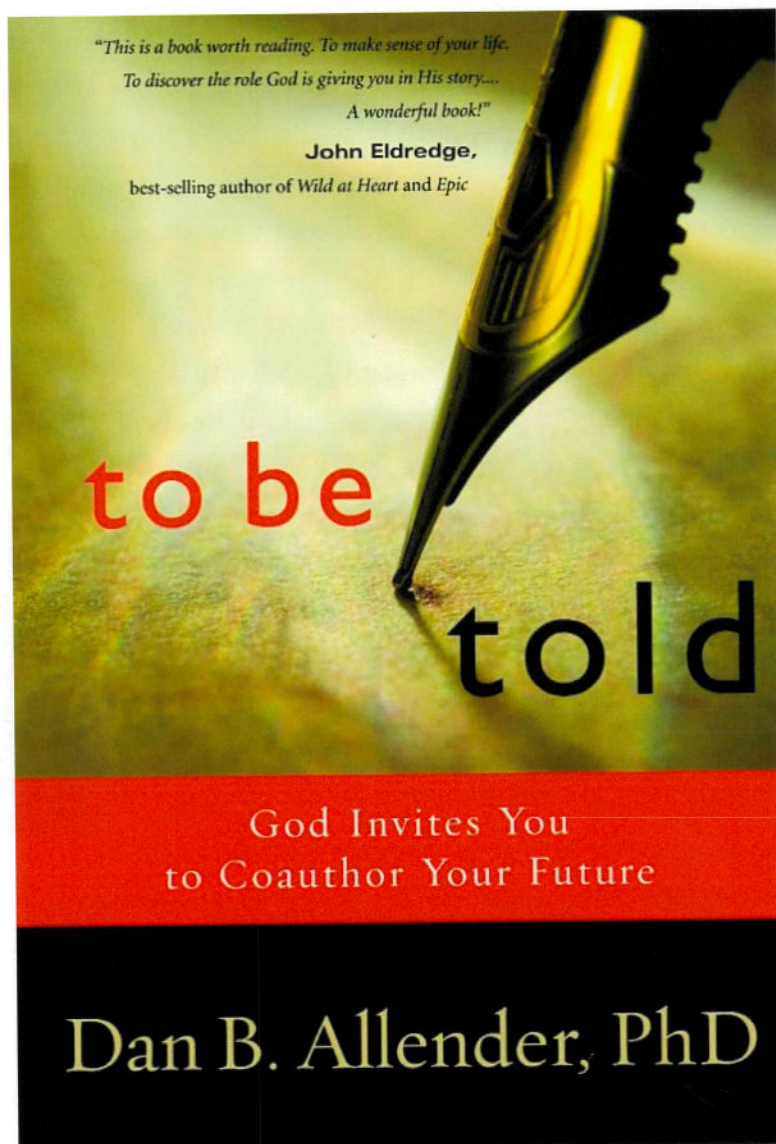
Resource recommendation by Ron Carter

We are all unique creations of God with differing life stories. In the same way that no two snowflakes are exactly the same, our individual lives are extraordinarily unique. The question is, how cognizant are you of your life story? By life story I mean the key people, places, and circumstances which collectively have played a role in shaping you into the person you are today.

Being able to understand, articulate, and discern God's hand at work in our life story is the focal point of Dr. Dan Allender's book, *To be Told*. This is a fascinating resource, and it helped me connect some very important dots in my story, which I had regarded as being inconsequential.

Whenever you are ready to be reflective and are interested in connecting some of the dots in your own life story, order *To be Told*! I'm confident you'll come away with a deeper understanding and appreciation for your own story.

*To Be Told* may be purchased on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).





God because I would have never thought ‘I should go to Iraq.’”

Admittedly, exposure to the kind of trauma the women and girls have experienced is unlike anything Jones has ever seen – even in her years of street ministry in Los Angeles. “The interesting thing is that a lot of them won’t talk about what happened to themselves, they’ll talk about what’s happened to their family members and their communities. One of the main reasons the safe house program was established is because after the girls got out of that situation (by escaping, being released, or purchased by a non-profit organization) they were very suicidal.” Jones goes on to explain, “The very basic hope is that they won’t take their life. You’re basically taking small steps to try and instill some hope back into their lives so they won’t end it.”

Jones referenced the importance of empowerment when working with those who have experienced psychological trauma because they have been disempowered. “They’ve had their power taken away from them,” she asserts. “Narrative Therapy is one way

to start taking small steps to move forward, to make sure their stories aren’t buried, and to regain some control and influence over their futures so they no longer feel stuck or helpless. These are big issues, and big decisions, and in the meantime there are young people who are giving up on their lives because they think ‘why bother?’ Our goal is to bring hope.”

Jones and her fellow missionaries have the girls talk about their trauma within a group dynamic, sharing their stories with one another to create a sense of community within the safe house. In addition to therapy, the girls participate in a wellness class that teaches them about the importance of exercise, caring for themselves, and hygiene. “The girls also say they lack Bible teaching, so we bring Bible study to their camps and open it up to anyone who is interested,” says Jones.

With her next journey to Iraq already in the works for July 2017, the courageous missionary admits, “Every time you go, you write up your burial plans ... you’re thinking about going somewhere where it’s not an

impossibility that you might be kidnapped and tortured yourself.” This ongoing mission is Jones’ commitment to helping those victims in need because it’s what God is requiring of her. “I’ll go back as long as that climate lasts,” she reassures. “My goal is always the same; to hear and obey, to do what He asks me to do, and trust that He’s gifted me with what I need to accomplish each task as I go.”

*Lisa Jones is a 2010 graduate of the DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative. She currently works with Youth with a Mission (YWAM), and facilitates two leadership development schools per year on their Los Angeles campus for international young adult students. She currently resides in the Los Angeles area.*



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# Alumni Updates



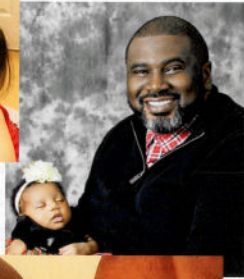
For more, visit:  
[facebook.com/dvuli](https://facebook.com/dvuli)



John Park (Los Angeles 2010) and Jennifer welcomed Elliott on November 11, 2016.



Edrin Williams (Minneapolis 2008) and Shanequa welcomed Harper Grace Williams on November 4, 2016.



Archie Honrado (Los Angeles 2010) and Tamara welcomed Rhett on February 4, 2017.



Carlos Perez (Newark 2016) and Madalyn welcomed Sebastian Logan Perez on November 17, 2016.



Moises Diaz (Newark 2016) and Vanessa welcomed David Nathaniel Diaz on October 27, 2016.



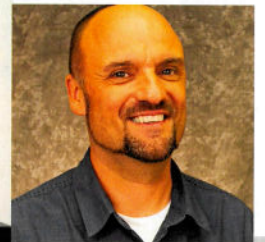
Mike Newton (Indianapolis 2013) and Kristen welcomed Amari Jade Newton on February 8, 2017.

Luis Fernandez (New York 2011) was elected as a Board Member to the Jersey City School District in Jersey City, NJ.

Marshall Snider (Portland 2014) is the new Executive Director of the Portland Adult and Teen Challenge in Portland, OR.

Robert James (Pittsburgh 2013) has accepted the Senior Pastor position at Zion Missionary Baptist Church in Roswell, GA.

Ben Sciacca (Birmingham 2016) released his first book *Meals from Mars: A Parable of Prejudice and Providence*.



Chrain (Simes) Walls (Orlando 2010) married Dereck Walls on June 25, 2016 and later received her Master's of Education.



Sharod Tomlinson (New York 2009) received the New York Nonprofit Media's Cause Award for Youth Development.



José Gonzalez (Miami 2013) has become a certified Life Coach.



Antoine Richardson (Kansas City 2008) received the 2016 Pharmacy Alumni Service Award from the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Pharmacy.