EXIT

THE FEED CLT | MAGAZINE

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# THE FEED CLT MAGAZINE

FOOD | EXPERIENCES | ENTERTAINMENT | DISCOVERY

VOLUME 4

NOVEMBER 15, 2026

## Charlotte's People, Places & Culture

## JASS CLUTCH

Next Up Out The Carolinas




FOOD
BUSINESS
EVENTS
SPORTS
& MORE

## Chef Andarrio

Owner For Cuzzos Cuisine

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VOLUME 4 | NOVEMBER 2026



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# CITY PULSE

ONE CITY. MANY STORIES. REAL IMPACT.

Charlotte is more than a skyline. It's a culture in motion. A city built on hustle, talent, flavor, creativity, and community.

Every day, people are **building businesses, breaking barriers, creating art, winning on and off the field**, and shaping the experience that makes our city one of a kind.

**The Feed CLT** is where we tell those stories.

## FOUR WAYS WE EXPERIENCE THE CITY. ONE PLACE TO DISCOVER IT.

### FOOD.
Spotlighting the flavors, chefs, and restaurants that feed our city.

### EXPERIENCES.
The events, collaborations, and moments that bring us together.

### ENTERTAINMENT.
The music, artists, DJs, comedy, and sports that keep the city lit.

### DISCOVERY.
The entrepreneurs, creators, and visionaries making moves and making impact.



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PEOPLE
PLACES
CULTURE
OPPORTUNITIES

# THE CHARLOTTE REPORT

A MONTHLY LOOK AT PEOPLE, GROWTH, MONEY AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE QUEEN CITY.



Latest published data available November 3, 2026. Reporting periods vary by source.

## POPULATION
CITY OF CHARLOTTE

**964,784**
Estimated population, July 1, 2025.

**20,731**
Residents gained from July 1, 2024 to July 1, 2025.



**Source:** U.S. Census Bureau, Vintage 2025.

## MIGRATION
16-COUNTY CHARLOTTE REGION

**49,324**
Net migration, July 1, 2024 to July 1, 2025.

**135** people per day
average.

**30,358**
Domestic migrants to the Charlotte MSA from within the United States, 2024–2025.

**Source:** Charlotte Regional Business Alliance, July 2026.

## JOBS & ECONOMY
CHARLOTTE-CONCORD-GASTONIA METRO

**1,407,000**
Total nonfarm jobs, September 2026 preliminary.

**25,400**
Jobs added year over year, +1.8%.

**3.3%**
Unemployment rate, September 2026 preliminary.

**Source:** U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, September 2026 data, released October 28, 2026.

## HOUSING
CHARLOTTE-CONCORD-GASTONIA METRO, SEPTEMBER 2026

**$424,950**
Median list price, down 3.1% year over year.

**11,182**
Active listings, up 10.3% year over year.

**64 days**
Median days on market, up 10.3% year over year.

**26.2%**
Of active listings had price reductions.



**Source:** Realtor.com Economic Research, September 2026.

## BUSINESS & DEVELOPMENT
CHARLOTTE REGION, Q3 2026

**$2.7 billion**
Announced capital investment.

**9 of 15**
Project announcements were in manufacturing.



**Source:** Charlotte Regional Business Alliance, Q3 2026 Regional Growth Report.

## CITY FINANCES
CITY OF CHARLOTTE FY2027 ADOPTED BUDGET

**$4.49 billion**
Total budget net of transfers.

**$1.04 billion**
General Fund, up 10.7% from FY2026.

**1.89-cent**
Property tax increase dedicated to enhancing public safety.




**Source:** City of Charlotte, FY2027 adopted budget, June 8, 2026.





## WHAT THE NUMBERS SHOW

Charlotte continues to grow. Population and migration remain strong, employment is expanding, housing inventory is higher as prices soften, and regional investment is building future opportunity.



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CHARLOTTE NORTH CAROLINA

# EAT • PLAY • STAY

## 15 PLACES TO KNOW IN CHARLOTTE




## EAT
CHARLOTTE'S FOOD SCENE

01 **Island Cuisine Charlotte**
2025 E Arbors Dr, Suite 210
Charlotte, NC 28262
(Highland Creek)

02 **Cuzzo's Cuisine II**
*Featuring Chef Andarrio Johnson*
9601 N Tryon St, Suite F
Charlotte, NC 28262
(University City)

03 **The Fig Tree Restaurant**
1601 E 7th St
Charlotte, NC 28204
(Elizabeth)

04 **Counter-**
2001 W Morehead St, Suite D
Charlotte, NC 28208
(Wesley Heights)

05 **Supperland**
1212 The Plaza
Charlotte, NC 28205
(Plaza Midwood)

## PLAY
NIGHTLIFE, LOUNGES & EXPERIENCES

06 **Aura Rooftop**
124 E Brooklyn Village Ave
Charlotte, NC 28202
(Uptown)

07 **The Cellar at Duckworth's**
330 N Tryon St
Charlotte, NC 28202
(Uptown)

08 **VINYL**
1440 S Tryon St
Charlotte, NC 28203
(South End)

09 **DeepCuts HiFi**
2433 South Blvd
Charlotte, NC 28203
(South End)

10 **Must Be Nice**
332 W Bland St, Suite E-11
Charlotte, NC 28203
(South End)

## STAY
HOTELS, BOUTIQUE STAYS & MORE

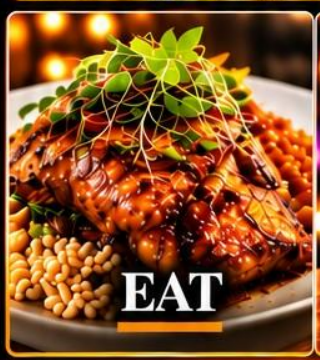
11 **The Ritz-Carlton, Charlotte**
201 E Trade St
Charlotte, NC 28202
(Uptown)

12 **JW Marriott Charlotte**
600 S College St
Charlotte, NC 28202
(Uptown)

13 **Grand Bohemian Charlotte**
201 W Trade St
Charlotte, NC 28202
(Uptown)

14 **The Ivey's Hotel**
127 N Tryon St
Charlotte, NC 28202
(Uptown)

15 **Kimpton Tryon Park Hotel**
303 S Church St
Charlotte, NC 28202
(Uptown)









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# THE FEED CLT MAGAZINE

CLT CULTURE. MUSIC. FASHION. & INSPIRING STORIES



## LET'S TELL YOUR STORY.

The Feed CLT Magazine is the premier platform for culture, connection, and visibility in Charlotte and beyond.

### WHO CAN GET FEATURED?

**ARTISTS**
Share your music, journey, and upcoming projects with our readers.

**RESTAURANTS**
Showcase your menu, story, and specials to a hungry, local audience.

**ATHLETES & INFLUENCERS**
Build your brand and inspire the community through your story.

**BRANDS & BUSINESSES**
Promote your brand and reach a loyal, engaged audience.



## ADVERTISE WITH US

- PRINT & DIGITAL AD PACKAGES
- MULTIPLE AD SLOTS AVAILABLE
- CUSTOM SOLUTIONS FOR EVERY BUDGET

## MAXIMUM EXPOSURE. REAL IMPACT.

We connect you with the right audience through powerful content and targeted reach.

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YOUR STORY DESERVES A PLATFORM. LET US HELP YOU SHINE.




FEATURE STORY

# MORE THAN A CHEF

## A JOURNEY BUILT ON PASSION AND PURPOSE, CREATING A LEGACY.

*The story of Chef Andarrio Johnson and the vision behind Cuzzo's Cuisine.*

For some, cooking is a profession. For others, it becomes a lifelong passion that opens doors to opportunities far beyond the kitchen. For Chef Andarrio Johnson, that passion began at an early age and gradually developed into ia journey shaped by hard work, perseverance, entrepreneurship, and a desire to make a meaningful difference in the lives of others.

His introduction to the culinary world was not built around instant success or overnight recognition. Instead, it began with the willingness to learn the industry from the ground up. At just 14 years old, Andarrio was already making pizzas, washing dishes, and gaining hands on experience in professional kitchens. From working the fry station to developing his culinary skills, each experience contributed to the foundation of the chef and entrepreneur he would become.

> *"I made pizzas at 14, washed dishes, worked the fry station, cooked in professional kitchens, and built my name one meal at a time."*

## FROM THE KITCHEN TO A PURPOSE

As his experience continued to grow, so did his ambitions. What began as an opportunity to learn a trade eventually became something much bigger. Cooking helped him discover a sense of direction and purpose, while the entrepreneurial journey provided an opportunity to turn his passion into something of his own.




STORY CONTINUES ON THE NEXT PAGE




That vision became part of the story behind Cuzzo's Cuisine, a business he is proud to have built alongside Anglee.

However, building a business comes with responsibilities and challenges that extend well beyond preparing and serving food. The entrepreneurial journey requires patience, resilience, and the ability to keep moving even when circumstances do not go according to plan.

Andarrio knows this experience firsthand. His journey included operating a food truck that presented recurring mechanical difficulties, creating setbacks that could have easily interrupted his progress.

Rather than allowing those challenges to determine the outcome of his journey, he remained committed to moving forward.

> *"I've had setbacks, including a food truck that seemed to break down every week, but I kept going."*

His words reveal an important part of his character. Success is not always defined by how smoothly the journey unfolds, but by the determination to continue working toward a vision despite the obstacles encountered along the way.

The experiences behind Cuzzo's Cuisine have given Andarrio a perspective on entrepreneurship that reaches beyond the traditional measurements of business success.

In reflecting on what the journey means to him, he makes it clear that his vision extends much further.

> *"I'm proud of what Anglee and I have built, but I don't want my story to end with restaurant success."*

That statement introduces a deeper side of his entrepreneurial mindset. For Andarrio, the opportunity to build a business also represents an opportunity to contribute to something larger than himself. He wants his experience, resources and platform to create meaningful opportunities for others.

His vision includes creating jobs, feeding people, teaching young people, and giving back. As he explains,

> *"I want to create jobs, feed people, teach young people, and give back."*

It is a vision that places community and service at the center of his long term ambitions. Rather than viewing success solely through business achievements, he recognizes the lasting value of creating opportunities and making a positive contribution to the people around him.

When reflecting on the legacy he hopes to leave, Andarrio brings his story back to the very thing that started it all, cooking.

> *"Cooking helped me find my purpose, If people remember anything about me, I hope it's not only the food I made, but the opportunities I helped create and the lives I helped touch."*

Perhaps the most revealing expression of his philosophy comes in his closing reflection.

> *"It's not about me anymore. It's about the people around me."*

For Chef Andarrio Johnson, being a chef is an important part of his identity, but it does not represent the full measure of his ambitions. His journey reflects the determination to develop a craft, overcome challenges, build a business and use the experience gained along the way to create opportunities for others.

***Cuzzo's Cuisine represents an important chapter in that journey. Yet the legacy he hopes to establish extends beyond the kitchen and into the lives of those he can inspire, support and empower.***



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THE FEED CLT

# FOOD

## WHERE CHARLOTTE COMES TO EAT.

BUSINESS. | VISION. | IMPACT.

MEET THE RESTAURANT OWNERS,
CHEFS, AND CULINARY CREATORS
BUILDING CHARLOTTE.

THE FEED CLT MAGAZINE

REAL STORIES. REAL PEOPLE. REAL IMPACT.

# CUZZO'S CUISINE

**SOUTHERN COMFORT. LOWCOUNTRY FLAVOR. A TASTE OF HOME.**

Bringing the warmth of Southern cooking to Charlotte, Cuzzo's Cuisine has built its reputation around flavorful comfort food, generous portions, and a dining experience that makes everyone feel welcome. Established in 2014, the restaurant draws inspiration from South Carolina's Lowcountry traditions while adding its own creative touch to familiar favorites.

From its popular Lobster Mac & Cheese and Shrimp & Grits to flavorful wings, seafood selections, and specialty waffles, Cuzzo's Cuisine offers a menu that celebrates variety, creativity, and the comfort of a satisfying meal. Each dish reflects a love for bold flavors and the traditions that bring people together around the table.

More than just a place to enjoy good food, Cuzzo's Cuisine embraces a welcoming atmosphere built around hospitality and community. With its motto, "Where Everyone's Family," the restaurant continues to make every visit about more than what's on the plate.

***Cuzzo's Cuisine. Where Everyone's Family.***


WAFFLE FLIGHTS


SIGNATURE WINGS


SOUTHERN COMFORT PLATE


LAMB CHOPS


SEAFOOD PASTA


CRAB CAKES


FISH & GRITS


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BEAUTY OF THE MONTH
A New Monthly Spotlight Celebrating the Beauty, Confidence & Individuality of Charlotte Women.
We're searching for women who deserve to be seen, celebrated, and featured in our magazine.
THE SEARCH BEGINS
JANUARY 2027
VOLUME 6
ELIGIBILITY:
WOMEN AGES 21 AND OLDER.
NO UPPER AGE LIMIT.
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Submit the following:
A recent headshot
A full-body photograph
Email your submissions to:
thefeedclt@gmail.com
Your Beauty. Your Confidence. Your Story.

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FOOD | ENTERTAINMENT | EXPERIENCES | DISCOVERY

BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

# ISLAND CUISINE

## CHARLOTTE

### *AUTHENTIC CARIBBEAN FLAVOR IN THE HEART OF CHARLOTTE*




Known by many as one of Charlotte's go-to destinations for authentic Jamaican and Caribbean cuisine, Island Cuisine Charlotte continues to bring the bold flavors of the islands to the Queen City. From richly seasoned oxtails and curry goat to jerk chicken, stewed favorites, fresh seafood, patties and traditional sides, every dish is prepared with authenticity, care and a true island touch.

More than just a restaurant, Island Cuisine Charlotte offers a welcoming atmosphere where great food, culture and community come together. Whether you're stopping in for a quick lunch, enjoying a night out with friends, or planning a special celebration, the experience is always filled with flavor, great vibes and warm hospitality.

Island Cuisine Charlotte is also a top choice for catering and private events, bringing the taste of the islands to birthdays, corporate gatherings, family functions and more. No matter the occasion, their team is dedicated to delivering delicious food and exceptional service.













980-237-2677

Island Cuisine Charlotte

Island Cuisine Charlotte

IslandCuisineCharlotte@gmail.com

### CATERING & PRIVATE EVENTS

Looking to host a special event? Let Island Cuisine Charlotte bring the flavor of the islands to your next celebration. Birthdays, corporate gatherings, family events and more.

Island Cuisine
CHARLOTTE

# EXPERIENCES

## WHERE CHARLOTTE MEETS

EVENTS. | COLLABORATION. | NETWORK. | COMMUNITY.



DISCOVER THE EVENTS,
PEOPLE, AND OPPORTUNITIES
THAT BRING CHARLOTTE TOGETHER.

CLT

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REAL STORIES. REAL PEOPLE. REAL IMPACT.







# THE FEED CLT MAGAZINE

FOOD | EXPERIENCES | ENTERTAINMENT | DISCOVERY

PEOPLE
PLACES
CULTURE
OPPORTUNITIES

*EXPLORE.*
*EXPERIENCE.*
*CONNECT.*
*CHARLOTTE.*

# UPCOMING EVENTS

NOVEMBER 15 – DECEMBER 15, 2026

EVENTS | MUSIC | ARTS | FOOD | CULTURE | COMMUNITY

## 01 NOV 15–22 — SOUTHERN CHRISTMAS SHOW

THE PARK EXPO & CONFERENCE CENTER
800 BRIAR CREEK RD

Holiday shopping, seasonal decor and live entertainment.

## 02 NOV 18 — DOJA CAT: TOUR MA VIE WORLD TOUR WITH LATTO

SPECTRUM CENTER
333 E TRADE ST

A major arena concert featuring Doja Cat with special guest Latto.

## 03 NOV 25 — NOVANT HEALTH THANKSGIVING EVE PARADE

5:30 PM
TRYON STREET, UPTOWN CHARLOTTE

A beloved Charlotte tradition with illuminated floats, music and a community celebration.

## 04 DEC 4–15 — CHARLOTTE BALLET'S NUTCRACKER

BELK THEATER
130 N TRYON ST

The classic holiday ballet with live music by the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra.

## 05 DEC 5 — ACC FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

NOON
BANK OF AMERICA STADIUM
800 S MINT ST

The conference title showdown in Charlotte.

## SPECIAL MENTIONS

FEATURED FLYERS & HIGHLIGHTS






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# THE WEEKEND FEED

*Where Charlotte goes when the workweek ends.*

## TOP 5 NIGHTLIFE DESTINATIONS IN CHARLOTTE

*The city's most talked-about spots for great music, energy and unforgettable weekend experiences.*

### 01 TRIO CHARLOTTE

1513 S Mint St, Charlotte, NC 28203

**THU – SAT: 9 PM – 2 AM**

A high-energy nightclub featuring headline DJs, immersive lighting and a vibrant dance floor.

### 02 STATS CHARLOTTE

3425 David Cox Rd, Charlotte, NC 28269

**FRI – SAT: 5 PM – 2 AM**
**SUN: 12 PM – 12 AM**

A popular sports bar and nightlife spot with great food, cocktails, DJs and big game energy.

### 03 GROOVERS CHARLOTTE

1510 S Mint St, Charlotte, NC 28203

**FRI: 7 PM – 2 AM**
**SAT: 5 PM – 2 AM**

A music-led listening bar with vinyl DJs, live music, throwback sets and a lively dance floor.

### 04 THE ROSE HONKY TONK

200 E Bland St, Charlotte, NC 28203

**FRI: Honky Tonk Fridays**
**SAT: Live Music, Dancing & Nightlife**

A Charlotte favorite for line dancing, themed nights, DJs and live entertainment.

### 05 WORLD NIGHTCLUB

900 NC Music Factory Blvd, Charlotte, NC 28206

**FRI – SAT: 9 PM – 2 AM**

A large-scale Latin nightlife destination featuring reggaeton, dembow, bachata, guest DJs and a high-energy dance floor.

**WEEKEND PULSE**

LOCAL BUZZ & AUDIENCE CONVERSATION | CURRENT EVENT PROGRAMMING | DISTINCT WEEKEND EXPERIENCES

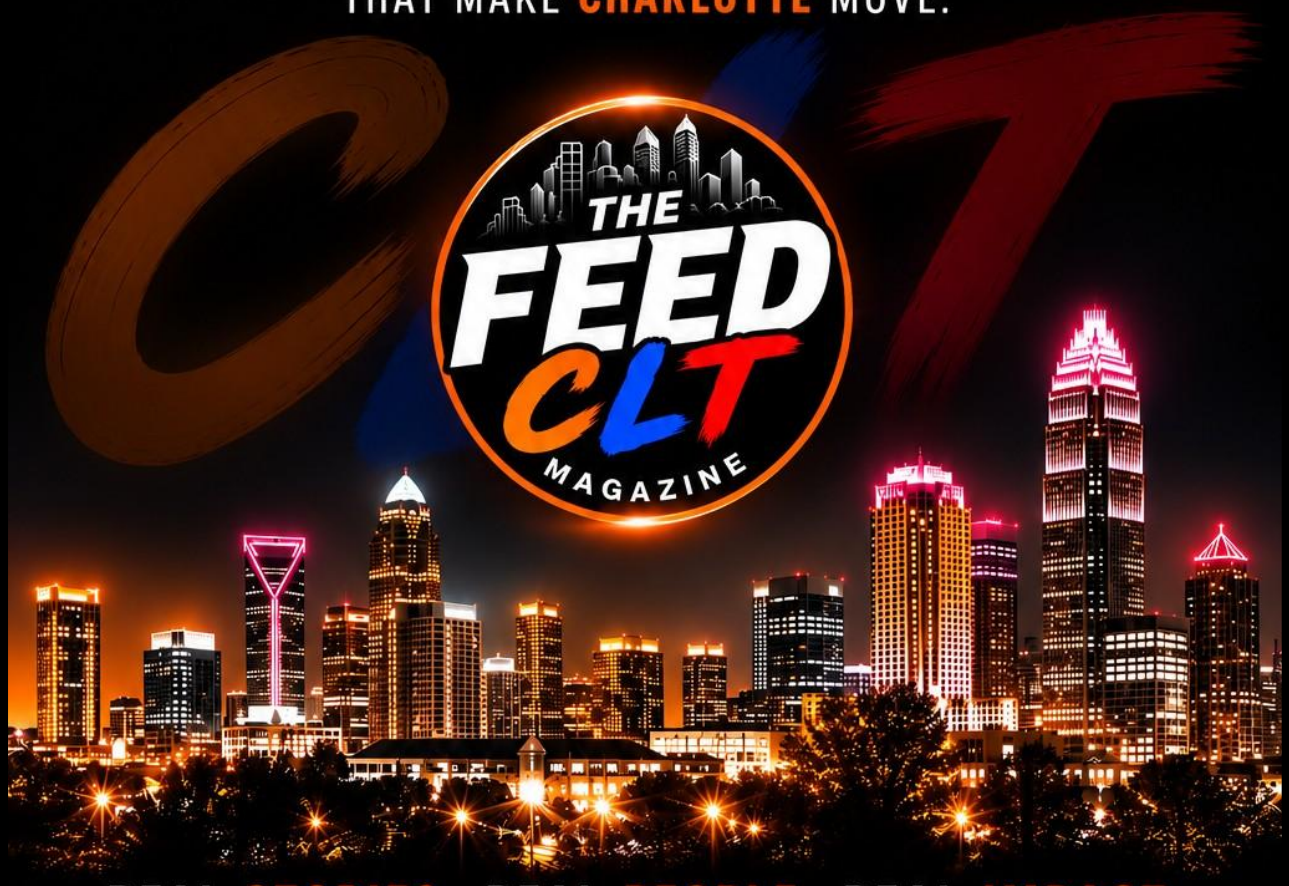
THE FEED CLT
MAGAZINE

# ENTERTAINMENT

## WHAT OR WHO MAKES CHARLOTTE MOVE?

MUSIC | CULTURE | NIGHTLIFE | ARTISTS | ENTERTAINMENT

THE PEOPLE, SOUNDS, AND EXPERIENCES
THAT MAKE CHARLOTTE MOVE.

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ENTERTAINMENT

# Next Up Out The Carolinas: Why Jass Clutch is the Undeniable Voice Ready to Take Over




If you have been anywhere near the Carolinas music scene lately, you already know the energy shifts the secend Jass Clutch steps into the room. Hailing from Henderson, North Carolina and holding down the 252, this independent powerhouse has been steadily building a movement that refuses to be ignored.

Fresh off taking home the trophy for **Best Female Artist at the 2026 Carolina Music Video Awards (CMVA),** Jass Clutch is proving that her rise is entirely undeniable.

For anyone tracking the pulse of southern rap, her trajectory has all the makings of a classic breakthrough story. She first grabbed national attention when she linked up with Finesse2Tymes for the explosive collaboration **"Whole Lot."** Since then, she has kept the gas pedal pressed down with heavy-hitting tracks, including **"Understood"** featuring **Sauce Walka, "Trap Nigga 2 (Carolina Mix)"** with **Gorilla** Zoe, Trap Dickey and Fetty P Franklin, **"I'm Clutch"** featuring Fetty P Franklin, and her 2026 release, **"It's Clutch."**

What makes her stand out in today's crowded landscape is her raw authenticity. Her bars hit hard, her delivery is unapologetic, and her connection to her roots remains entirely intact. Winning major regional accolades like the CMVA only cements what the streets already knew. She brings a star quality that resonates far beyond state lines.

As the buzz around her continues to swell, her live performances leave crowds wanting more, and her trophy case gains heavy new additions, one thing is certain.

***Jass Clutch is positioning herself as the next major female force to explode out of the Carolinas, and the takeover is happening in real time.***






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# FROM SURVIVAL TO SPOTLIGHT

*The Making of ShaneTV: A Journey Fueled by Ambition, Opportunity and the Power of Believing in Yourself*

FEATURE PROFILE | ENTERTAINMENT

Some journeys begin with opportunity. Others begin with a dream that refuses to disappear, even when circumstances make the destination seem far away. For ShaneTV, widely recognized as Mr. Pull Up, the road to building an entertainment brand in Charlotte, North Carolina, began with determination, resilience and a willingness to create opportunities where none appeared to exist.

Originally born and raised in Washington, D.C., Shane credits his hometown with shaping the personality and confidence that would eventually become part of his professional identity.

***"Growing up in D.C. helped shape my personality, my confidence, my hustle, and the way I connect with people."***

## A BEGINNING THAT DIDN'T DEFINE THE DESTINATION

Shane's journey in entertainment began in Charlotte, where he faced circumstances that could easily have discouraged someone with a similar ambition. At one point, he was living at a men's shelter off Statesville Avenue. Without many resources, he relied on something he refused to lose: his vision.

***"I didn't have much, but I had a vision, ambition, and a dream that I refused to let go of."***

Rather than waiting for someone to open a door, Shane began creating opportunities for himself. He visited local venues, introduced himself to people in the industry, connected with artists and built relationships wherever he could.

> *"Nobody was handing me a spotlight. I had to go out and create my own."*

That decision became an important turning point. He understood that recognition would require consistency, networking and a willingness to put himself in environments where opportunities could develop.

***"I believed in myself before everybody else knew my name."***

It was this mindset that helped transform his circumstances into the foundation of something much bigger.

## LEARNING THE BUSINESS BEHIND THE SPOTLIGHT

Shane's first professional opportunity working with a local artist became an important introduction to the business of entertainment. It taught him that success required more than being visible or creating content. Understanding the client's vision, delivering value and building relationships were equally important.

He began recognizing the importance of making every collaboration meaningful and creating experiences that would encourage people to work with him again. As his experience grew, so did his understanding of the industry. His focus expanded beyond hosting into developing a recognizable identity and building a sustainable business.

## BEYOND THE SPOTLIGHT: BUILDING A BRAND WITH PURPOSE

As Shane continued establishing himself in Charlotte, his work began creating opportunities to connect with larger audiences and share the stage with recognized names in entertainment.

Among his notable experiences was hosting an R&B concert featuring Trey Songz, Ashanti and Lyfe Jennings. He also had the opportunity to appear on stage at Be More Grateful alongside TDE artist Trap Dickey.

For Shane, these experiences represented more than memorable professional moments. They demonstrated how relationships, introductions and the courage to enter unfamiliar rooms could lead to opportunities he once only envisioned.

***"Those opportunities reminded me that every introduction, every connection, and every room I walked into was preparing me for something bigger."***

His professional identity has continued to develop beyond traditional hosting. Today, ShaneTV is building a brand around his work as a Celebrity Host, Brand Ambassador and Content Creator.

His ambitions extend beyond appearances and recognition. He is focused on developing a platform that connects entertainment, networking and opportunity.

***"I'm not just building a name; I'm building a brand, creating opportunities, and leaving a lasting impact."***

That distinction speaks to the direction he wants his career to take. For Shane, building a brand means creating something that can continue growing, opening doors and making an impact beyond his own professional accomplishments.

## A STORY BIGGER THAN ENTERTAINMENT

When reflecting on his journey, Shane returns to a message that has remained central to everything he has accomplished.

> *"My story is bigger than entertainment. It's about believing in yourself when your circumstances don't look anything like your dreams. I didn't let where I started determine where I could go."*

It is a message that carries particular weight when considering where his journey began and the professional identity he continues building today. His experience offers an important reminder to aspiring entertainers and entrepreneurs: your circumstances may influence your starting point, but they do not have to determine your destination.

Shane's advice is rooted in the very experiences that shaped him. Believe in yourself before others recognize your potential. Introduce yourself. Build relationships. Create opportunities. Understand the business behind your passion.

From Washington, D.C., to Charlotte, from the men's shelter off Statesville Avenue to major entertainment stages, ShaneTV's journey reflects the determination to turn ambition into action. His story is not simply about reaching the spotlight. It is about what it takes to get there, what he has learned along the way and the brand he continues working to build. He did not allow his starting point to become his stopping point. For ShaneTV, the spotlight is only one part of a much bigger vision.

# DISCOVERY

## THE ONES TO KNOW.

BUSINESS. | VISION. | IMPACT.



MEET THE ENTREPRENEURS, OWNERS, AND VISIONARIES BUILDING CHARLOTTE.

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PURPOSE
LEADERSHIP
MENTRASHIP
YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

VOLUME 4
NOVEMBER 2026




# COACH LASONJA COLLINS

COACH • MENTOR • LEADER • YOUTH ADVOCATE

# BEYOND THE FINISH LINE

## Coach LaSonja Collins and the Purpose of Developing People

*From a decorated Charlotte athlete to an accomplished coach and mentor, LaSonja Collins is building a legacy measured not only in championships, but in the lives she helps transform.*

### THE JOURNEY: FROM ATHLETE TO MENTOR

For Coach LaSonja Collins, track and field has always represented something greater than competition. It has been a pathway to opportunity, a lesson in perseverance, and ultimately, a calling to help others discover their potential. A Charlotte native and seven-time state champion at Independence High School, Collins once envisioned herself becoming an Olympian. Today, her purpose has taken a different direction, one that brings her back to the community that helped shape her.

Her athletic journey opened doors she had never imagined, including a full scholarship to the University of Georgia before continuing her collegiate career at North Carolina A&T State University. Along the way, she learned lessons about resilience, discipline, and navigating challenges that would eventually influence her approach to coaching.

The transition from athlete to mentor did not happen overnight. Collins began coaching during the 2013–2014 school year as an assistant at West Mecklenburg High School. She later became head coach at Phillip O. Berry High School, earning Conference Coach of the Year honors. From 2015 to 2022, she led the program at Harding University High School, growing it from six athletes to approximately 30. Her journey also included Albemarle High School before her current leadership role at Bradford Preparatory School.

What makes her journey especially meaningful is the perspective she brings to developing young athletes. Having experienced the demands of competition herself, she understands that talent alone does not determine how far someone can go. Sometimes, what a young person needs most is someone willing to recognize their potential before anyone else does.

> *"I don't just coach the talent I see today. I work to develop the potential others may not recognize yet."*

### CHAMPIONSHIPS, PURPOSE, AND DEVELOPING PEOPLE

That philosophy is reflected in her coaching accomplishments. Collins has contributed to 19 North Carolina state championships, eight state records across multiple divisions, and approximately seven national championships. Among her proudest moments was coaching an athlete to the 2022 World Under-20 Championship in the 400-meter hurdles. She has also watched former athletes become NCAA champions and Olympians, including one who competed at the 2024 Paris Olympics.

Yet, for Collins, the greatest victories extend beyond medals and records. Seeing former athletes become parents, educators, military service members, and successful individuals in their chosen fields gives her a deeper sense of fulfillment. She believes the true measure of coaching is found in the people athletes become long after their competitive careers end.

In 2017, that philosophy inspired her to establish Purpose Driven NC Elite Track Club. The organization was created to give young athletes opportunities to develop, compete, and receive mentorship beyond the track. Her vision centers on accountability, confidence, character, and creating pathways for young people who might otherwise be overlooked.

> *"Purpose Driven is about building more than athletes. It's about strengthening our community, creating opportunities, and changing lives."*

Her commitment to those values has also shaped her perspective as an African American woman in coaching. Collins recognizes that women frequently contribute to athleties while their leadership and sacrifices go unrecognized. She wants to see more female coaches supported, celebrated, and given opportunities to lead. Rather than allowing limited recognition to define her worth, she remains focused on the work and the young people depending on it.

### IMPACT, LEADERSHIP, AND A LASTING LEGACY

Behind the coaching responsibilities is also a mother, educator, mentor, and business founder. Collins openly acknowledges that balancing these roles requires sacrifice, support, and patience. Today, she serves as head track and field coach at Bradford Prep, teaches at TruElite Academy, and continues developing young athletes through Purpose Driven NC Elite.

Looking toward Charlotte's future, she envisions a stronger youth athletic community where education, mentorship, character, and development matter just as much as winning. She wants opportunities to be accessible regardless of a young person's background, financial circumstances, or current athletic ability.

Her philosophy is grounded in loyalty, integrity, and trusting the process. Those principles were reinforced by the coaches who believed in her, particularly the late Dr. Eric Ward and Coach Mike Porter, whose mentorship helped shape her understanding of what it means to lead with purpose.

When asked about the legacy she hopes to leave, Collins returns to the responsibility that has guided her throughout her journey. She wants young people to believe in themselves, programs to become stronger, and communities to recognize the power of investing in the next generation.

> *"I'm going to keep getting up, picking up my whistle, and blowing that whistle until the last kid who needs someone to believe in them has been reached."*

For Coach LaSonja Collins, the finish line is never the ultimate destination. Every championship, every young athlete developed, and every life encouraged represents another opportunity to make a difference.

***Track and field is the platform. Developing people is the purpose.***

*— Coach LaSonja Collins*



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# ANDREA DIXON

FOUNDER, TONIANN ORGANICS
BANKING PROFESSIONAL | ENTREPRENEUR
EMERGING AUTHOR

# From Personal Struggles to Purpose

## The Woman Behind ToniAnn Organics

*A journey of faith, resilience, natural beauty, and proof that purpose has no expiration date.*

Born and raised in Jamaica, Andrea Dixon grew up surrounded by the values of faith, family, hard work, and community. Those foundations would become guiding principles throughout a life shaped by motherhood, a career in banking, entrepreneurship, and now, authorship.

But behind the professional accomplishments is a woman whose entrepreneurial journey began with something deeply personal: her own struggle with skincare.

For years, Andrea searched for products that could address her skin concerns. From Jamaica to the United States, and eventually exploring products from London and Italy, she continued searching for solutions that worked for her. Her experiences also made her recognize that many Black women shared similar frustrations with skincare products that did not adequately address their needs.

Her search eventually led her to botanical ingredients and the beginning of what would become ToniAnn Organics.

### A BRAND BORN FROM EXPERIENCE

What started as a personal skincare journey gradually developed into a brand built on botanical ingredients, intentional self-care, education, and customer relationships. Featuring ingredients such as turmeric, moringa, aloe, avocado, and rosehip, ToniAnn Organics reflects Andrea's belief that skincare should be thoughtful and that healthy-looking skin deserves appreciation at every age.

The brand's message, **"Reveal Your True Beauty,"** is more than a slogan. It represents the personal transformation that inspired its creation.

Andrea's professional background in banking has also played an important role in shaping her approach to business. Her experience in personal banking, customer service, fraud and claims, and financial services taught her the importance of accountability, integrity, financial awareness, and building lasting customer trust.

> *"Customers are not simply purchasing products; they are placing trust in a brand and the people behind it."*

### A PERSONAL STORY OF HEALING

Another defining chapter of Andrea's story emerged through her experience with perimenopause and menopause. Beginning in her mid-thirties, she experienced physical and emotional changes that affected her sleep, confidence, relationships, and everyday life.

Recognizing that many women were navigating similar challenges without adequate information or support, she decided to share her journey through her upcoming book, ***Menopause Nearly Destroyed Me: Healing Rebuilt Me,*** scheduled for digital release on November 30, 2026.

The book explores challenges, lessons, faith, self-care, education, resilience, and rediscovering purpose. It also reflects her philosophy of **Intelligent Aging,** which focuses on making informed choices about physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being while embracing the beauty of growing older.

### PURPOSE, GROWTH, AND WHAT'S NEXT

Today, as she continues building ToniAnn Organics and preparing to share her story with readers, Andrea remains committed to encouraging women to pursue their dreams regardless of age or circumstance.

The Charlotte area, she says, represents opportunity, growth, and meaningful connections. Her vision is to expand ToniAnn Organics locally and internationally, while remaining committed to quality, education, authenticity, and customer care.

Her advice for women starting a business or embracing a new beginning is straightforward: begin with what you know, remain willing to learn, and never allow fear or past disappointments to determine your future.

> *"Your journey is not over. Your purpose is still unfolding."*

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# RAY A. LEWIS JR.

ACTOR

# THE DREAM NEVER EXPIRES

*From childhood imagination to the pursuit of a lifelong passion, the journey of an actor who refused to let time define his possibilities.*

Some dreams begin long before we understand what they mean. For Ray A. Lewis Jr., the love of acting started in New York City, where childhood imagination, television, and movies became the foundation of a passion that would remain with him throughout his life.

Growing up, Ray was encouraged by his mother to explore his creativity and follow his interests. He spent hours reenacting television shows, memorizing dialogue, and recreating movie scenes. What may have seemed like childhood entertainment was actually the beginning of something much bigger. He was discovering the power of storytelling and the ability to bring characters to life.

That fascination never disappeared. Although Ray recognized his love for performing early, his journey into professional acting would take a different route.

## A DIFFERENT PATH, THE SAME PASSION

Rather than immediately pursuing entertainment professionally, Ray entered the world of broadcast engineering, gaining valuable experience behind the camera and developing an understanding of television production from another perspective.

Life also brought responsibilities. Raising a family and supporting his children became priorities, and his acting ambitions temporarily took a back seat. But the dream never disappeared.

When his children were grown, Ray found himself asking an important question: What did he truly want to do?

His answer was simple. Act.

Determined to pursue the passion he had carried since childhood, he began taking opportunities through church plays, short films, and on-camera appearances. Some roles offered only a few lines, while others placed him in the background as an extra. Regardless of the opportunity, Ray approached every experience as a chance to develop his craft.

His philosophy was straightforward:

> *"There are no small parts, only small actors."*

## BUILDING A CAREER, ONE ROLE AT A TIME

For Ray, every production represents an opportunity to learn, grow, and understand the characters he portrays. One particularly memorable experience was playing the leading role in Bloodlines, a project that allowed him to fully embrace a character and demonstrate his ability to bring a story to life.

Yet his journey has not been without challenges.

Self-doubt, questions about age, and the uncertainty of pursuing a competitive industry later in life have tested his determination. Rather than allowing those obstacles to define him, Ray has chosen patience, persistence, and gratitude.

Whether delivering two lines or carrying a leading role, he believes every performance deserves his full commitment.

His approach to acting goes beyond memorizing dialogue, He studies the person behind the character, connects with the emotions, and searches for the truth that makes a performance believable.

As he explains, acting means becoming someone other than yourself while still bringing a piece of yourself into that character.

## BEYOND THE CAMERA, THE STORY CONTINUES

Away from the screen, Ray describes himself as a family man and creative individual who remains deeply connected to the entertainment industry. His background in broadcast engineering, combined with his experience as an actor, gives him an appreciation for both sides of the production process.

Looking ahead, his ambitions extend beyond acting. He hopes to explore more challenging roles while expanding his involvement in writing and directing. His vision includes creating meaningful stories that entertain audiences while encouraging them to think, feel, and see the world differently.

For Ray, success is not measured exclusively by recognition or the number of roles accumulated. It is also measured by the opportunities created and the inspiration passed on to others.

His greatest hope is that someone watching his journey will recognize that age, circumstances, and past responsibilities do not have to determine the limits of their future.

Ray A. Lewis Jr. is proof that some dreams never expire. Sometimes, they simply wait for the right moment to be pursued.

> *"If my journey inspires even one person to believe that it's never too late to follow their passion, then I've accomplished something meaningful."*
>
> RAY A. LEWIS JR.

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SANAA MOHAMMED
CHARLOTTE COUNTRY DAY HIGH SCHOOL
VOLLEYBALL
OUTSIDE HITTER
#14

# BEYOND THE NET

## Charlotte, Keep Your Eyes on Sanaa Mohammed

***At Charlotte Country Day School, a rising volleybal talent is making her presence felt. With impressive production on the court and a promising athletic future, Sanaa Mohammed is a name worth remembering.***

In high school althletics, some players make their presence felt through their performance, while others begin to establish themselves as athletes whose potential deserves a closer look. Sanaa Mohammed is doing both.

Representing Charlotte Country Day School in Charlotte, North Carolina, Mohammed has emerged as one of the area's notable young volleyball talents. Standing 5 feet 10 inches tall, the senior outside hitter wears jersey number 14 and has built an impressive high school résumé through consistent production, athletic ability and commitment to her team's success.

Her numbers tell an important part of the story. According to the reported final 2026 Charlotte-area volleyball statistics, Mohammed recorded **410 kills**, placing her among the leading hitters in the region.

A kill is one of volleyball's most important offensive achievements, representing a successful attack that directly results in a point for the team.

But her contributions extend beyond putting points on the scoreboard. Mohammed has also demonstrated the importance of being an all-around player. Her ability to contribute defensively, support her teammates and remain active in different phases of the game makes her a valuable presence on the court.

Her development has not gone unnoticed. In 2024, she earned All-State recognition, establishing herself among the standout performers in North Carolina independent school volleyball. During her freshman season, she was also recognized as Charlotte Country Day's Most Valuable Player and earned second-team All-Conference honors.

Those accomplishments reflect more than individual statistics. They demonstrate a player who has continued to develop through multiple seasons of high school competition.

Her impact was also recognized by Charlotte Country Day's head volleyball coach, Anna Criss. In a 2025 Charlotte Observer season preview, Criss described Mohammed as "the kind of player you build a program around."

Off the court, Mohammed maintains a reported 3.7 GPA, showing that her commitment to achievement extends beyond athletics. Balancing the demands of competitive sports with academic responsibilities requires discipline, organization and determination, qualities that are important for any student-athlete considering the next level of competition.

***Charlotte, keep your eyes on Sanaa Mohammed. Beyond the net, her journey is one worth watching.***

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CHARLOTTE CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

# JOHN HUCKO

OUTFIELDER / LEFT-HANDED PITCHER
#7 | CLASS OF 2027

AUBURN UNIVERSITY COMMIT



# THE MAKING OF A DIAMOND STAR

## *John Hucko: Charlotte's Rising Baseball Prospect*

From the fields of Charlotte Catholic High School to the attention of national baseball scouts, John Hucko is building a résumé that has placed him among the country's most closely watched high school prospects in the Class of 2027.

A left-handed-hitting outfielder who also pitches left-handed, Hucko brings a combination of offensive production, athleticism and speed that has attracted attention well beyond the local high school baseball community.

His 2025–26 varsity season provided a strong example of his offensive capabilities. Across 25 games, Hucko recorded a .463 batting average, collecting 31 hits and driving in 24 runs. He also scored 27 runs, recorded five doubles and two triples, and finished the season with a .593 on-base percentage and a 1.190 OPS.

His ability to reach base consistently also stood out. With 21 walks compared to 12 strikeouts, Hucko demonstrated a strong approach at the plate, the ability to work counts and a keen eye for quality pitches.

Hucko's performance has earned recognition at both the state and national levels. According to Prep Baseball Report, he is ranked No. 3 in North Carolina for the Class of 2027 and No. 37 nationally in the organization's updated rankings.

His talent has also drawn the attention of Baseball America, which listed him as the No. 25 prospect for the 2027 MLB Draft. The publication highlighted his athleticism, quick hands and consistent ability to drive the baseball to all fields.

Hucko has made his college plans clear, committing to Auburn University, giving him the opportunity to continue his development at one of college baseball's prominent programs.

On the national stage, Hucko showcased his skills at the 2026 Perfect Game World Wood Bat Association World Championship in Jupiter, Florida, where he hit nearly .550 during the event, collecting four doubles and stealing six bases while striking out just once.

For Charlotte, Hucko's continued development is a reminder of the exceptional talent emerging from local high school programs. With a college commitment secured and national evaluators following his progress, his next opportunities will provide another platform to demonstrate his abilities.

### 2025 – 26 VARSITY STATS
(25 GAMES)

| | |
|---|---|
| Batting Average | .463 |
| Hits | 31 |
| RBIs | 24 |
| Runs Scored | 27 |
| Doubles | 5 |
| Triples | 2 |
| Walks | 21 |
| Strikeouts | 12 |
| On-Base Percentage | .593 |
| OPS | 1.190 |

*Charlotte, keep your eyes on John Hucko. The journey from the local diamond to the national baseball spotlight is well underway.*

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# ALESHA S. BROWN

CIVIL RIGHTS ATTORNEY | ADVOCATE | FOUNDER



## *The Woman Behind the Fight: Justice Beyond the Courtroom*

*A civil rights attorney, nonprofit founder, and community advocate committed to creating change for her people.*

Originally from Charleston, South Carolina, Alesha S. Brown's commitment to justice began at an early age. Witnessing racial injustice shaped her understanding of equality and sparked a lifelong passion for protecting the rights of others.

A 2009 Magna Cum Laude graduate of the University of South Carolina with a degree in Political Science and a minor in Business, Brown earned her law degree from New York Law School in 2012. She is licensed to practice in North Carolina and New York.

### A CALLING FOR JUSTICE

"I wanted to become an attorney to help people who can't otherwise help themselves. I wanted to become a civil rights attorney to fight injustices."

Brown began her legal career at a Wall Street litigation firm before serving as Counsel to the New York City Council's Committees on Civil Rights and Contracts. In that role, she helped draft, pass, and implement key legislation, including the Ban the Box Law and the Anti-Discrimination Against Victims of Domestic Violence Law.

She later litigated voting rights cases with the Southern Coalition for Social Justice in Durham, North Carolina.

### A DIVERSIFIED APPROACH

Her experience in New York showed her what's possible when people work together. "Practicing law in North Carolina has forced me to be more diversified with my approach to fighting for justice both inside and outside of the courtroom."

### FOR THE STRUGGLE

Brown is the Founder and Executive Director of For The Struggle (FTS), a Charlotte-based nonprofit focused on combating systemic issues of racial and social injustice. The organization serves senior citizens, youth, and voters.

She was inspired to create FTS after seeing outside organizations receive significant funding to address Black issues without always meeting the community's needs.

"That showed me there is a lot of work to do outside of the courtroom as well. That is why I started FTS."

The mission of FTS reflects the purpose behind her legal career and her commitment to creating real and lasting change in the community.

### PROTECTING OUR SENIORS

A cornerstone of FTS is the Elder Response Initiative (ERI), which helps senior citizens age in place, protect their assets, and build generational wealth.

Through ERI, seniors receive free home repairs, ADA modifications, eco-friendly upgrades, assistance with property tax relief, healthy meals and fresh produce, and future planning, including estate and financial planning. Brown has directly managed FTS's critical home repair program since 2021.

The initiative has helped hundreds of seniors protect their homes and avoid displacement caused by gentrification, particularly in historically Black communities.

"We have a responsibility to protect them and fight for them in the same way they fought for us. We owe that to them."

### COMMUNITY, PURPOSE AND BALANCE

Brown believes meaningful community change starts with relationships and trust. "Instead of creating programs you want to see, ask residents what they want and need, and shape your programming around those needs. That is how you achieve meaningful impact."

Building a law firm and nonprofit initially made work-life balance a challenge. "However, I am now very intentional about taking breaks/vacations and ensuring I am not overwhelming myself with work and solving problems."

### THE WOMAN BEHIND THE WORK

Beyond her professional roles, Brown proudly describes herself as a Black woman first. "Alesha Brown is truly a BLACK WOMAN FIRST. I love being black. I LOVE MUSIC." she says. She loves music, with Boosie as her favorite rapper and Jazmine Sullivan and Lyfe Jennings among her favorite living singers.

She enjoys concerts, karaoke, playing spades, talking junk, traveling to different countries, and spending time with family and friends.

Brown is a former Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Commissioner for Central Region 1 and a proud member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

### A LEGACY WITH PURPOSE

For Brown, a legacy is measured by the difference made in the lives of others. "My prayer is that my legacy is one of a black woman who was able to truly make a difference with and for my people."

Through her legal work, nonprofit leadership, and community advocacy, Alesha S. Brown continues to be a powerful force for justice in Charlotte and beyond.

> *"My prayer is that my legacy is one of a Black woman who was able to truly make a difference with and for my people."*
>
> **ALESHA S. BROWN**





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# DEBORAH PHILLIPS

## LOVE, PURPOSE & THE POWER OF SHOWING UP

*The founder of Block Love Charlotte is transforming personal adversity into a mission of compassion, dignity, and lasting community impact.*

For Deborah Phillips, serving Charlotte's most vulnerable neighbors is more than a commitment to community. It is a mission rooted in personal experience, shaped by compassion, and driven by the belief that everyone deserves to be seen, valued, and treated with dignity.

Long before becoming the Founding Executive Director of Block Love Charlotte, Phillips experienced homelessness herself. Having faced some of life's most difficult circumstances, she understands firsthand how much a simple act of kindness can mean when someone is navigating uncertainty.

Born in Wilmington, North Carolina, and raised in Raleigh, Phillips experienced homelessness with her mother while they were fleeing domestic violence. Years later, she faced homelessness again while attending college.

> ***"The experiences that helped shaped this work is I found myself homeless with my mom when we were fleeing domestic violence and again I was homeless in college."***

During those challenging periods, it was often people with no personal connection to her who made the greatest difference. Their willingness to offer empathy and compassion left an impression that would eventually become central to her own approach to serving others.

> ***"It was the ones that I had no connection to but they showed me love and compassion as well as empathy. That's the same thing I give out to those I serve."***

### A CALLING THAT BECAME A MISSION

At the end of 2016, Phillips found herself navigating a difficult personal transition. She was separating from a marriage in which she says she had experienced abuse for more than a decade while raising her children. Rather than allowing those experiences to define her future, she turned to prayer and reflection for direction.

> ***"I did a lot of praying and soul searching and asked God to use me so I wouldn't grow bitter."***

Service had always been part of Phillips's life, but she felt called to take that commitment beyond traditional settings and directly into the streets of Charlotte. In 2017, she founded Block Love Charlotte, building an organization around a simple but powerful mission: spreading love throughout the city, one block at a time.

> ***"I was always serving others but God took me to the streets to serve."***

Today, Block Love Charlotte supports individuals and families experiencing homelessness and other life challenges through meals, essential resources, housing navigation, workforce readiness, and wellness support. Under Phillips's leadership, the organization has served millions of meals and established itself as an important source of support for neighbors facing difficult circumstances.

What began as a personal calling has grown into a community-centered mission, bringing together volunteers, supporters, and partners who believe that compassion should be put into action.

### LEADERSHIP ROOTED IN EXPERIENCE

Phillips's leadership is strengthened by more than her passion for service. She brings over 24 years of experience in Information Technology, management, and project coordination, professional skills that have become valuable assets in building and managing the organization.

From developing databases and coordinating projects to supporting equipment and operational needs, she has applied her professional background to the practical demands of nonprofit leadership.

An entrepreneur, Certified Peer Support Specialist, and graduate of Winston-Salem State University, Phillips brings together professional knowledge and lived experience.

For Phillips, success is not measured exclusively by the number of meals served or individuals assisted with housing. Some of the most meaningful moments come from witnessing what happens after someone receives the support and encouragement needed to move forward.

> ***"Seeing them do better in school, graduate, and attend college is something that really impacts my heart."***

She also finds fulfillment in witnessing a person's outlook change, particularly when circumstances that once seemed impossible begin to feel manageable again.

> ***"Watching people go from hopeless to hopeful."***

### SEEING THE PERSON, NOT THE ASSUMPTION

One of Phillips's most important contributions extends beyond providing resources. She is also challenging the assumptions and language society uses when discussing homelessness. Through listening to the people they serve, Phillips and her team have learned that some individuals prefer the term "houseless" because they feel the word "homeless" can carry negative associations.

She also challenges the assumption that everyone experiencing homelessness is struggling with addiction or severe mental health challenges. Through Block Love Charlotte's work, she has encountered individuals with degrees and employment whose circumstances changed because of unexpected life events.

When asked what brings the organization's volunteers and supporters together, Phillips answers with one word:

> ***"Love!"***

She explains, "The love to do something for someone other than ourselves. Love unified the work."

### PERSEVERANCE, BALANCE AND A LASTING LEGACY

Leading Block Love Charlotte has taught Phillips the importance of accountability, perseverance, and using her voice to advocate for others. Building and sustaining a mission of this scale has required navigating financial pressures, operational challenges, and moments when the next step was not always clear. Through it all, her faith continues to anchor her commitment.

> ***"The assignment was given to me to continue this work and as long as I keep the vision going God will provide the provision even when I cannot see it."***

She has also learned that meaningful service requires balance. While the mission demands dedication, she understands the importance of maintaining boundaries and protecting the time and relationships that matter most.

*Together, we can ensure that love continues to reach every block.*

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- Brief Description of Your Business and What Makes You Unique
- Best Email Address for Us to Send Our Spotlight Packages To

## 2 OUR EDITORIAL PROCESS

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**05 PUBLICATION & PROMOTION** — Once approved, your story is published in The Feed CLT Magazine (digital and print) and shared across our platforms.

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