

HEARTLAND ALLIANCE NEWS

EQUITY. OPPORTUNITY. FOR ALL.



FALL 2018

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ALLIANCE**

ENDING POVERTY

Heartland Alliance
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ONE STEP CLOSER TO SUCCESS

Dear Friends —

For more than 130 years, Heartland Alliance has taken bold and courageous action to tackle society's toughest issues. That's because we believe society is better for everyone when all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential.

Throughout our history, Heartland Alliance has stood alongside individuals who are among the most marginalized in society--those who are hardest to reach, and on whom others have given up or determined unworthy of help. READI Chicago, which reached its one-year milestone this year, is one of the most recent examples of our unwavering bold action that seeks to work with the most marginalized. Designed to reduce shootings and homicides in Chicago's most violent communities, READI Chicago relentlessly engages

individuals who are most at risk of being involved in gun violence using an evidence-based combination of transitional jobs, cognitive behavioral therapy, and coaching.

I hope that you enjoy our redesigned newsletter format in which you will learn more about READI Chicago participant, Diamontae. I hope you will be inspired by his story and commitment to his future. And I hope you will be inspired by how, together, we can stop the cycle of violence in our city by addressing its root causes, like poverty, trauma, and a lack of access to jobs.

Together, we can achieve Equity and Opportunity for All!



EVELYN DIAZ, PRESIDENT

READI CHICAGO

READI Chicago is an innovative response to gun violence in Chicago.

Violence has its roots in poverty, trauma, and a lack of access to economic opportunities. Research has shown that gun violence is often the result of split-second decisions, which can become deadly when someone's perceptions and reactions are skewed by trauma.

Cognitive behavioral therapy, designed to help individuals slow down their thinking and create space between impulse and action, is a

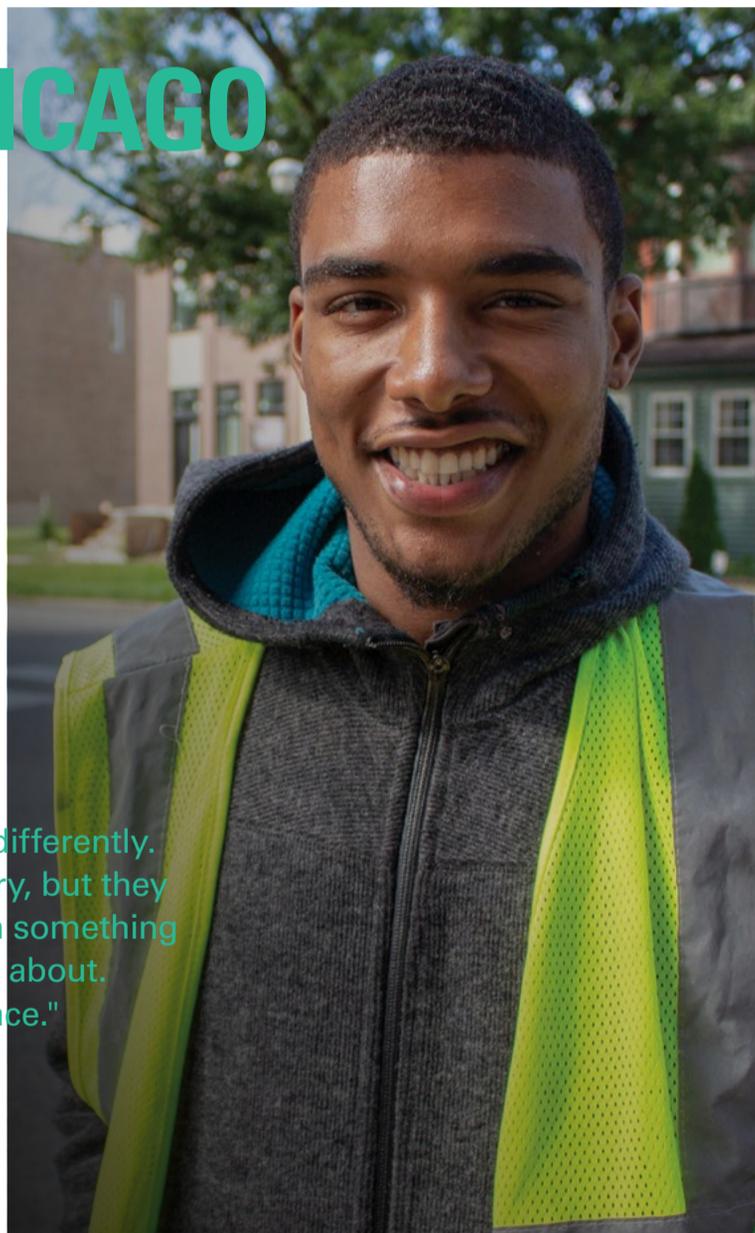
"People deal with emotions differently. You might think they're angry, but they might just be going through something they don't know how to talk about. READI is really bringing peace."

cornerstone of the READI Chicago model. It is paired with transitional subsidized employment which provides men at the highest risk of violence involvement a steady income and a safe space in which to hone job skills.

As of August 31, 253 participants have started employment and 161 are actively working, making safe wages and giving back to their communities.

Read more about those we serve: HEARTLANDALLIANCE.ORG/STORIES

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One year ago, Diamontae was homeless, trying to stay alive, and afraid to leave his West Englewood neighborhood.

He didn't have a job and had resorted to robbing people or selling drugs to make ends meet.

When a family friend involved in street outreach for READI Chicago—Heartland Alliance's innovative job, coaching and cognitive behavioral therapy program—told Diamontae about the initiative, he agreed to give it a try because he needed to make money, even while he was concerned about coming into such close contact with people from different areas and different gangs.

"I love this program, the whole idea to help men get off the streets and better themselves. It should have been thought of years ago."

Over the past year, he says he has seen lots of people change through the program. And he has changed, too. Diamontae has learned customer service skills and how to work with others, though he talks most about how he has learned to deal with his emotions through cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT).

Arkia Jenkins, Diamontae's READI Chicago job coach, says she has seen a drastic change in him in the past year. He has a different mindset, is geared more toward his future, and he takes time to seriously weigh the pros and cons of different decisions, rather than reacting immediately. This is one of the key aims of CBT - taking more time to consider, and reacting less automatically in stressful situations.

For six months, Diamontae saved every check, determined to get off the streets, and with Arkia's help, he was able to find and afford his own apartment. Last month, Diamontae got a second job where he employs the foundational skills he continues to strengthen through his participation in READI Chicago. He now works nights at UPS, in addition to days at READI Chicago.

Diamontae's favorite part of READI Chicago is how he and those around him have changed and become a family. Now his first thought when he sees someone new is no longer what gang they are in, but rather that everyone faces their own struggles.

After finishing READI Chicago, Diamontae hopes to go back to school, build his credit, and get his driver's license. Someday he wants to own his own house.

"I just need to keep pushing," Diamontae says. "This job taught me to be focused. They taught me how to push myself."