

Florida Housing Coalition Nonprofit Pitch Competition Picks A Winner!

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The Community Lift Institute (CLI) takes first place in the Florida Housing Coalition's inaugural Nonprofit Pitch Competition event. Community Lift Institute is a nonprofit based in Tallahassee focused on advocacy and education to create "equity-in-place" solutions that increase the availability and collaboration of Black contractors, developers, and investors working to increase levels of Black homeownership and real estate entrepreneurship. This candidate's focus on closing the gap in Black homeownership using a creative and holistic approach to rebuilding Black communities through Black entrepreneurship dovetails perfectly with our work this year within the Center for Racial Equity.



Community Lift Institute - *"The solution we advocate to achieve equitable housing development is simple - activate, empower, and invest in the capacity of black builders to build and support homeownership in their communities. In June 2021, Community Lift Institute convened a launch of this initiative with over 100 black contractors, developers, and investors in attendance."* - **Christic Henry, Founding Organizer, Community Lift Institute**

As part of the Florida Housing Coalition's Center for Racial Equity programs, staff designed the FHC Nonprofit Pitch Competition to inspire those organizations that are on the leading edge of creating real solutions to address the

complex challenges faced by people of color in all facets of the affordable housing ecosystem. We provided four topics from which applicants could choose that align with their organization's efforts. Topics included: 1) Closing the racial gap in homeownership; 2) Equitable recovery from disasters; 3) Housing opportunities for formerly incarcerated persons; 4) Supporting entrepreneurship and small business growth through housing.

The non-profit candidates were instructed to submit creative solutions through an outside-the-box examination, without rigid adherence to the borders and boundaries of the current programs,

policies, and practices of today. The judges were asked to look for creativity and judge the competition based on the merits and feasibility of the ideas and strategies presented along with any expertise they may have in the market. The top three submissions were invited to pitch in front of the judges.

After hearing all the pitches, the judges collaborated to select the winning nonprofit who would receive a \$1,000 prize.

The esteemed judges panel included Bank of America's Tammy Matthews, Market Executive for the Treasure Coast, Wells Fargo's Kate Wilson, Senior Vice President, Social Impact and Sustainability, Florida Community Relations, and Amy Robbins, Community Mortgage Officer for Valley Bank.

The two runners-up were **Crisis Housing Solutions** and **SBP**.



Crisis Housing Solutions is a South Florida regional nonprofit working to stabilize communities in crisis especially those dealing with large scale crisis situations. CHS has been innovating solutions to address current needs since it launched 2005 to help with the hurricane Katrina disaster. Their new venture in the city of Jacksonville aims to increase entrepreneurship and small business growth for minority business owners.

Crisis Housing Solutions - *"Our Unique Solution. . . affordable and post-disaster housing constructed from repurposed shipping containers. This housing will be constructed at our "Modular Housing Factory of Innovation & Green Technology" . . . a first of its kind in the country."* **Craig Vanderlaan, Crisis Housing Solutions Co-Founder, Executive Director.**



SBP (formerly the Saint Bernard Parish nonprofit working in New Orleans during Katrina) has a satellite office working in the Florida Panhandle on resilience training and disaster recovery assistance for the Bay County region since Hurricane Michael. This group was another strong candidate in the competition with their work focused on equitable recovery from disasters.

SBP - *"By taking a holistic approach, SBP shrinks the time between disaster and recovery. SBP's work is unique in that it doesn't end with rebuilding; indeed, our goal is to eliminate the need to ever rebuild by advancing intersectional, equity-focused solutions that effectively prepare low-income communities before disaster, expand the reach and impact of partner organizations, and streamline federal and state recovery processes."* - **SBP**

Releasing Shackles was not selected to present their pitch in front of the judges but did receive honorable mention for their efforts. Releasing Shackles is an organization that has observed gaps in the systems designed to protect and assist vulnerable members of the community and is creating ways to fill those gaps through sober living programs for returning citizens.

"Racial isolation and income disparity have long been problems in Sarasota County, as have a shortage of low-income housing and gaps in public transit that can make it difficult for the poor or disabled to access some areas." - **Rachel Goldman, Releasing Shackles, Executive Director**

The competition was very well received by our conference attendees, and we are excited to announce we will make it a regular feature of our annual conference agenda. To all our competitors we say, "Job well done!"



Juanita R. Jones is a Technical Advisor at the Florida Housing Coalition and veteran affordable housing development professional. Juanita is passionate about empowering people of color in their fight for diversity, equity, and inclusion in all aspects of life and in particular the redevelopment of their communities. Juanita holds a Master's degree in Social Work from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, is a certified planner through the American Planning Association, and a certified Project Management Professional through the Project Management Institute.