

# Volunteer Spotlight: Karen and David Konker

Thirty-four years ago, Karen and David Konker settled into Dallas with their two children. Karen notes that their "life was focused around [their] church, Highland Park Presbyterian." As involved members, Karen and David participated in various community outreach events and along the way were introduced to Dallas Leadership Foundation." DLF's annual city-wide volunteer event, Transform Dallas was and is a huge area of interest for the Konker family. After volunteering at the event and connecting with CEO Wil McCall, they were sold on the mission and have grown deeper as volunteers.

The Konkers have done everything from working with DLF's development team to pulling weeds in Mill City's community garden. In all aspects, they agree that a unique facet of DLF's work is the degree of personal mentoring that takes place in all our programs. "It's a rare organization that gives personal care then helps others develop the skills to do the same."

David and Karen are passionate about helping their community reflect Christ's love and want to spread the word while being earthly examples of God's kingdom. Volunteering supports their desire to be the hands and feet of Christ but there's always more to be done. David and Karen have experienced how technology has been utilized to expand the mission of their church beyond their four walls and are excited to see DLF's mission be shared in the same way. "There's so much rancor and conflict in our communities. Everyone just needs more practice in the language of love. That happens with what DLF is doing."

We are very thankful to have David and Karen as part of the DLF family!



*"We love the people. We love the mission. I love being with a gang of people and doing the work" - David Konker*

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## SAVE THE DATE: TRANSFORM DALLAS 2019

Fellowship Church Dallas, Friendship West Baptist Church, Highland Park Presbyterian Church, Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship, Prestoncrest Church of Christ, Dallas Leadership Foundation, have teamed up plan this year's Transform Dallas event.

This year, volunteers will work on multiple community projects in one day demonstrating help, hope, and compassion without judgment. The projects will take place across the city, crossing geographical and cultural boundaries.

A unified church leads toward a unified community. We invite you to step out of your comfort zone with your family, your friends and your neighbors to mobilize. We invite you to step up on Saturday, April 6th and serve food to the homeless, help a veteran, bless a refugee or paint a house. Volunteer opportunities exist for all skill levels and ages.

**Sign-up to volunteer at: [www.transformdallas.org](http://www.transformdallas.org).**





## Q & A: Tywon Burnom On Strategic Partnerships

*Tywon Burnom (T.D.) is currently a store manager at Home Depot. He's been with the company for thirteen years and has been instrumental in maintaining a fruitful partnership with Dallas Leadership Foundation.*

### **How did Home Depot's partnership with DLF begin?**

DLF and Home Depot have actually been affiliated for around 10 years. I met with the Neighborhoods Team in 2015 and we were most excited about supporting Transform Dallas at that time. More specifically, we were excited about your work with veterans. It's a huge part of Home Depot's culture to ensure veterans are taken care of. We've actually committed half a billion dollars to support that cause by 2025 so coming in as a partner for that event was an easy decision.

### **There are many organizations doing work similar to DLF, aside from our work with veterans, why else did Home Depot choose to partner with us?**

We want to make sure to spread the love amongst everybody. We had a barrier in our community outreach because we lacked the affiliation to get into those communities. DLF opened those doors for us to get in, do things the right way, and to have a positive impact for many people.

### **It's been three years since the first Transform Dallas event, how has Home Depot gone deeper into the community since then?**

We spent the first two years discovering so much of what DLF offers. We visited homes, talked with the elders in the community and we realized quickly that there was more work to be done than just the one event. We have a donation program where we look at items we no longer need (tile, flooring, faucets, etc.) and provide those resources to other home repair projects. Nationally, we are also working to train tradesmen across 4,000 cities which for DLF could mean job opportunities for the formerly incarcerated and for recent high school graduates.

### **What would you say to someone considering a partnership with us?**

Much like Home Depot, DLF has a top down culture of genuine care and involvement. There are a lot of forgotten people that you all make a point to touch. It's a family atmosphere and there's never any question about what you all are doing with the resources your partners provide. Your work speaks for itself. This partnership is a must.



# Closing the Parental Gap: Mentoring with Mandrell Drakes

"It may be one of the least controversial statements in American education: Parent involvement can make a difference in a child's education". – *Center for Public Education, 2011* Issues like work schedules, transportation, and a lack of communication between the parents and teachers have all been cited as reasons a stronger parental presence is missing in schools. DLF's Youth Team is seeking to fill this parental gap through community collaboration and the development of an after-school mentorship program, Power Mentoring.

In the planning phases of Power Mentoring, DLF was fortunate enough to find a partner in the Dallas Police Department. Mandrell Drakes is a long-time community servant and is in his fourth year with DPD as a Community Outreach Representative. Though Mandrell has only been involved with DLF for a few months, he has volunteered as a mentor through his church, Friendship West, for over 13 years. As an experienced mentor and father of three, he has enjoyed seeing how DLF approaches mentoring both young women and men and how diverse the topics covered are.

When Mandrell is on duty, he leverages small but intentional acts to bridge the gap with kids and how they view him as both an adult and a police officer. He keeps stickers and Nike armbands on him so that he can offer them up when he interacts with young people. For him, this helps to momentarily create space for a conversation. A child, especially one that is lacking in healthy parental involvement, has likely experienced adult interventions before. There are often times barriers to trust that must be taken down brick by brick to foster a healthy mentoring relationship. To that end, Mandrell believes that "working with kids means you probably need a mentor too. More than one." He knows that he is unable to understand all issues his mentees face and sees value in connecting with others to pass down wisdom to his mentees when needed.



Mandrell Drakes speaking to Clinton P. Russell Elementary School students.

Mentoring as means to close the parental involvement gap has been shown to reduce absenteeism and behavior problems. These indicators are used early on to show that a student may be falling off track. Mentors like Mandrell and organization's like the Dallas Police Department are needed to ensure a better future for at-risk students.

## A Message from Wil



Wil McCall, Dallas Leadership Foundation President & CEO

As community organizers, we know that we can't do it alone. The ability to partner with other organizations is essential to doing "the work" of building healthy communities.

Since 2000, the poverty rate in Dallas has increased by 22% yet the city's population has increased by less than 10%. More needs to be done by God's people can do more to help Dallas residents in need through compassionate service. With our clear call to develop leaders and the desire to grow community collaboration in the city, Transform Dallas was created.

This year's Transform Dallas workday will be held on Saturday, April 6, 2019. DLF in partnership with Fellowship Church Dallas, Friendship West Baptist Church, Highland Park Presbyterian Church, Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship, Prestoncrest Church of Christ, Dallas Leadership Foundation will bring together over 1,500 volunteers to repair homes, work in community gardens, update school libraries, and so much more.

**I am asking for your support of this event.** Your donations will help us provide the tools and resources needed to complete these community projects.

Best,

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