

Empowering the Underserved

Steven Lee

Founder and CEO

Unity Network and Counseling Center

School Board Member, District 5

Atlanta School Board, Atlanta Board of Education

Steven Lee is all about making a positive difference in the lives of people, especially young people. As founder and CEO of Unity Network and Counseling Center (UNCC), Lee has elevated the organization to become a beacon of light and hope for inner-city youth, adults, and families at-risk. “UNCC is dedicated to enhancing the lives of people that are in the cycle of poverty, dependency, and in other situations of social and economic downturn,” said Lee. “Our mission is to offer programs that will give them the skills to enter mainstream America.”

Since its inception in 1998, UNCC has offered an array of comprehensive services and programs of empowerment, such as adult education, inclusive of G.E.D. preparation, adult literacy, and job skills training. Additionally, there are community service programs that address drug/substance abuse and HIV/AIDS education and awareness.

While UNCC’s services are for a broad population of underserved individuals, the organization’s strong-suit is helping inner-city youth succeed in every aspect of their lives. Thus, UNCC offers in-school and after-school education/mentoring programs, as well as youth sports and cultural enrichment programs. Two UNCC hallmark programs are Boys of Promise, which provides mentoring to young elementary school-aged males, as well as A Guiding Hand, which offers mentoring to middle and high school students.

In addition to his executive role at UNCC, Lee, since 2014, has served as a school board member (District 5) on the Atlanta School Board. He continues to live up to his campaign commitments. “I am still committed to having a strong school system that needs the ‘stakeholders’ triangle’ of schools, parents, and communities,” said Lee, a native of Magee, Mississippi, who is an alumni of Alcorn State University. “My guiding principles are to make sure that all students succeed, regardless of race, economic status, gender, disability, or language.”

Whether an advocate in the community, or in the realm of education, Lee’s philosophy of empowerment is: “If you want to make the world a better place for our children, start right where you are in your own neighborhood.”

As one to lead by example, Lee, who in 2015 received a Doctor of Humane Letters Degree from Arkansas Baptist College for his work in the community, remains passionate about serving. His community affiliations have included, but not limited to People TV (past president of the board of directors), Martin Luther King Merchant Association (president), Hollowell/ML King TAD Advisory Committee (member), Youthfest (board member), and more.

Over the years, Lee has received honors for his commitments to change, inclusive of a Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition, as well as numerous community, city and state government awards. While awards and honors are great, Lee stays true and focused.

“My fight is for quality education, empowerment of our youth, economic development, and fair justice for all citizens,” he said. “That’s my calling card...It’s to change and make things better for the inner-city communities of Atlanta.”

Lee concluded. “In order to change anything, you have to be in the game,” said the father of four. “The educational part of change is a big part of what has to be done to help our youth. You can’t change it from the outside. You have to have a seat at the table where the decisions are being made.”