

2020

GIVING  
LEGACY™

# Transform St. Louis

## Transforming the Urban Youth of St. Louis

The future of America lies with the youth of our country. The urban core of America suffers greatly from poverty, crime and is deficient in high school graduation rates. Until these factors change, the citizens stuck in these communities face significant obstacles. The Transform St. Louis initiative is shining a light on organizations that are reversing those trends. Collectively, the organizations selected to participate in this transformative initiative are dozens of cooperative and collaborative solutions that have been successful in what we call the “Eight Spokes” of a healthy society. St. Louis ranks in the top five of the most dangerous cities in America year after year and thus stifles the efforts of many of these great organizations...NO MORE. We will put no less than \$100 million dollars towards solving America’s most critical issues that have plagued urban America and St. Louis for decades upon decades. No more racism as a standard; no more criminal behavior as a standard; no more ignoring that poverty-stricken communities are the breeding ground for all of the above...It is time to invest in transforming America one urban community at a time!



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*Transforming the Urban Youth of America*



*Christopher Riley, Founder Giving Legacy, LLC*

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What is Holistic Urban Transformation?

First, we must look at the definition of holistic. Merriam-Webster defines holistic as,

“: relating to or concerned with wholes or with complete systems rather than with the analysis of, treatment of, or dissection into parts.”

Using this definition, we can then look at the benefit of pooling the individual parts of the development of an urban youth in a holistic system. Those parts, or components, are the educational, social, emotional, and spiritual/communal components. The educational components include traditional schooling and all other forms of mental and intellectual learning. Social development encompasses a myriad of social skills, life skills, and other necessary tools to survive in difficult environments while learning relational skills to communicate and build relationships. Emotional wellbeing is comprised of a sense of balance in one’s life.

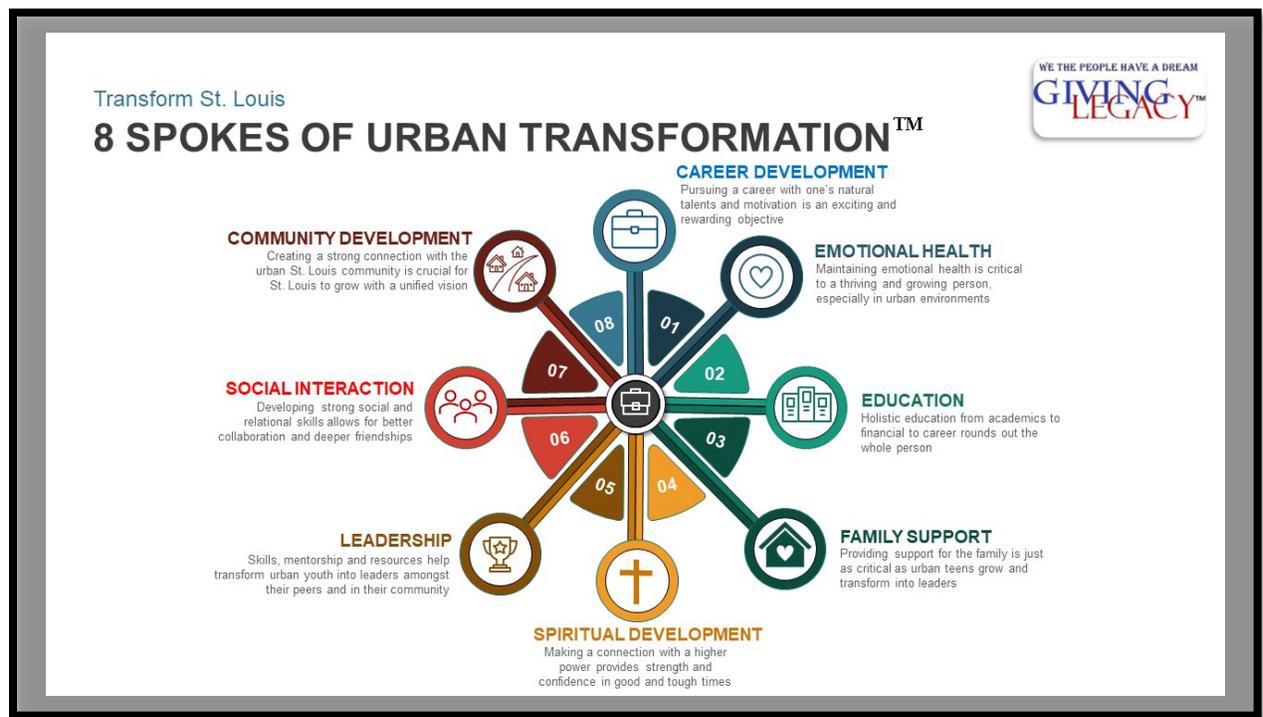
Very often, temptations can run a person’s life. In these instances, knowing how anger, grief, sadness, and unmet expectations all play into the development of a young adult are critical. Finally, the spiritual component of a young adult is critical to tie all of the above to a source of energy, glory, praise, and thanksgiving, not to mention the bringing together of a community in the eventual goal of loving one another.

These individual components, addressed individually, can produce positive results. However, if addressed and implemented as a “whole,” much greater results are possible as one component left unattended can negate the positive results of several components. In other words, they are all related and contingent upon the health of the others to successfully develop. For instance, one can address the intellectual component of learning with tutors, extra teachers and more schooling. However, if the home life is disruptive with struggling parents, siblings in and out of jail, and gang influences, the individual educational tools will turn out to be virtually ineffective. Similarly, if all focus is on relational life skills, yet basic education is ignored, then the excelling relational, social young adult will soon hit a wall. The lack of education will prevent further career growth and the social and life skills will be of much smaller value.

# The Eight Spokes of Urban Transformation

## Background

The future of the United States falls on the youth of America growing into healthy, balanced, and sustainable adults. This comes in many forms and over many years. Transform St. Louis is an initiative that is shining bright lights on organizations focused in this arena. Our country has a difficult road ahead navigating the next quarter-century of issues surrounding urban America. As our urban youth improve their high school graduation rates and transform their communities, they will grow into the leaders that will help solve these crucial issues. However, without the resources and collaboration of the whole community, transformation is not possible.



Below are the eight spokes to this transformation:

### **Emotional Support Programs**

Facing the issues that hover over urban communities can be daunting. Many urban youths are not only facing their own emotional issues, but are surrounded by family members and friends facing difficult circumstances. Having access to the proper resources to keep urban youths, healthy, happy and out of harm's way is a mandatory right that needs the full attention of every urban community, and especially the urban St. Louis community. The best resources and counseling services should be available to all urban youths and their families to clear the way for healthy development.

### **Education**

It is a basic need that all communities should provide, yet somehow in urban America, this education component gets left behind. It is up to each community to fill the gaps and ensure that all urban youths have access to quality education, tutoring and complete their secondary education at a minimum. Aside from traditional education such as schools, we are now facing another challenge with the Covid-19 pandemic that is interfering with the physical education environments. Now, more than ever is there a need to ensure that urban youths have a structured educational environment from which to learn and grow year after year.

### **Family Support Programs**

A solid family structure is critical to child development. Far too often urban families are broken apart, or started out that way. Providing the proper resources for families to remain together, healthy and thriving is critical for urban environments to make the transformation from declining to growing. Every family in urban St. Louis should have access to the best family support resources available, as in many instances, they need it the most.

### **Spiritual Guidance/Development**

Regardless of the grit and determination, all children as they face adversity will hit walls. Having a spiritual connection allows them the ability to know that someone out there is fighting for them, even if they can't see them on the street. Developing and cultivating this spiritual relationship helps to give power and confidence to urban youths as they grow into thriving adults. Urban youths with a relationship with a higher power and polarity that helps guide them in their decisions are armed with a weapon that is more powerful than anything they will encounter on the street.

### **Leadership Programs**

Leadership programs are not just for rising career managers and executives. Teenagers are leaders in their own right and need leadership training and mentoring more than anyone, especially in urban environments. The more leaders with integrity, character and courage, the more the temptations to wander over to the dark side are squelched. As urban youths face the many challenges presented to them, learning leadership skills early on can only strengthen our future leaders that are critical to ensuring that urban communities not only transform, but also thrive.

### **Social Interaction**

Social interaction with healthy peers is sometimes all that an urban youth has when family life isn't so great. Providing social opportunities for urban youths gives them not only the opportunity and skills to development life-long friends, but also an opportunity to address relationship issues and healthy conflict resolution techniques.

### **Community Programs**

Community centers, batting cages, basketball courts and other community activities are critical to bring together youths that share common interests. Staying active and collaborating with peers are signs of a healthy community. St. Louis should spare no expense to provide these activities and community centers for urban youths and families.

### **Career Development**

The eventual objective for urban youths is to develop into their own and pursue what they care most about. Providing early childhood counseling in the career arena can help them see their future and have a target to shoot for in a career that are interested in and motivated to pursue. Mentors, advisors and big brothers/sisters are critical for this career development. St. Louis can break down the walls of racial integration and begin connecting mentors and big brothers/sisters with urban youths as they develop interests in various career paths.