



CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF PEACE



Paul Johnson

Former Peace Program Director
Program Manager for the Houston Health Department

Paul Johnson credits Peace Neighborhood Center with helping him find his voice and life's purpose as an educator, mentor, and father. A "Peace Kid" and former Peace Program Director, he currently serves as a Program Manager for the Houston Health Department, where he develops curriculum for public school teachers on how to create a healthy environment that promotes positive behavior and helps prevent crime.

Paul Johnson's uncle first brought him to Peace Neighborhood Center when he was six years old—thinking his nephew needed some direction to avoid heading down a wrong path. At the time, Paul's family lived in the Pine Lake Cooperative, where in the 1990's Paul notes, "Crack was running rampant, and the news spoke about my neighborhood as if it were a third world country."

Paul participated in Peace's after-school programs and summer camp throughout his childhood, and appreciates all the tutoring he received, as well as the opportunity to explore all kinds of possibilities. Rose Martin gave him his first job "stamping checks" when he was 13. Though the job might have offered a small stipend, Paul remembers it gave him far more—an important sense of responsibility and important life skills. After high school, Paul attended Southern University in Baton Rouge where he earned a bachelor degree in Education. He first worked for Kaplan as a School Relationship Coordinator in New York City, and later moved to Atlanta to teach.

In 2006, Paul returned to Peace and worked as the Program Director for eight years, helping the next generation of Peace kids. Paul infused programs with his characteristic humor and style, and made a lasting impression on many Peace youth. As Program Director, he was struck by the way Peace provided creative ways for children to learn and see new possibilities: "I remember a camping trip Bonnie and I took with a group of Peace kids. Most had never been out in the country before. At night, Bonnie asked the kids to look up. They were transfixed just watching the heavens, as they had never seen so many stars. That moment is still symbolic to me as one example of the unique ways Peace opens kids up to the bigger world and new possibilities. You just have to pay attention and look around you."

“Peace was the first place that gave me a voice. They make it their mission to identify and preserve the potential and goodness in everyone. They showed me how to celebrate my strengths and individuality. Peace taught me how to look inside myself to be able to look beyond myself—to look for what I could do, what I could give, and what I can offer to help others. . . Peace is the reason I work so hard as a teacher, entrepreneur, and a father. I'm sincerely thankful for the place that played and continues to play such an important and profound effect on my life and the lives of so many others.”

Changing People's Lives for 50 years.



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