

LEGACY TRAINING, INC.

2025

SOUTHERNMOST
ILLINOIS CONFERENCE
ON **CRIMINAL JUSTICE**



June 27 & 28, 2025
Shawnee Community College
8364 Shawnee College Rd, Ullin, IL 62992



WORKSHOP SESSIONS

6.27.2025

**Lynne Chambers - Bridging the Gap:
Developing a System of Care for Returning
Citizens**

Learn how to build a trauma-informed, person-centered reentry system through collaboration, resource mapping, and real-world strategies. This session highlights equity, lived experience, and practical tools to improve outcomes for returning citizens.

**James Swansey - Civic Power in Action:
2025 Illinois Legislative Update &
Advocacy Training**

Get up to speed on 2025 Illinois legislation and learn how to advocate through witness slips, Capitol visits, and civic engagement. Gain practical tools to influence policy and amplify community voices.

**Ricky "Reentry Hamilton - C.A.N.D.O.R's
Project: Restore Ties**

Learn about Project: RESTORE TIES—a restorative justice program helping returning citizens rebuild relationships through guided circles, reflection, and healing. Ideal for those supporting family reunification and reentry.

**Rev. Tony Lowden - Changing the
Narrative: Fair Chance Hiring and the
Power of Community Support in Reentry**

Discover fair chance hiring and how to support returning citizens through mentorship, advocacy, and inclusive employment practices. Learn strategies to reduce barriers and promote successful reentry.

**Fine Art Show/Reception and Poster Session
Dorothy Burge - Art as Resistance:
Exploring the Chicago Torture Project and
Creative Activism**

Explore the history of police torture in Chicago and the fight for justice led by survivors and artists. Learn how community art and murals have become tools for healing, truth-telling, and activism.

6.28.2025

**Rev. Tony Lowden - Returning with Purpose:
Building Futures After Incarceration**

Join keynote speaker Rev. Tony Lowden for a powerful session on transformation after incarceration. Explore reentry challenges, personal reform, and strategies for building a positive, sustainable future. Ideal for advocates, service providers, and community leaders.

**Dr. Morris Jenkins - Building Bridges:
Understanding Restorative Justice**

Explore how restorative justice fosters healing over punishment through accountability and empathy. Learn practical applications to build inclusive communities and hear real-world success stories of transformation.

**Jamal Oxford - My Story: ReEntry Success is
a Community Effort**

This session highlights the challenges faced by people returning from incarceration, dispels myths, and raises awareness of systemic barriers. Attendees will be inspired to advocate for fair treatment and successful reintegration.

Community Heroes 2025 Award Ceremony



Meet the Speakers



Lynne M. Chambers is a licensed attorney, college instructor, social entrepreneur, and consultant. She is the Founder and Executive Director of Legacy Training, Inc., a nonprofit organization with a mission to promote health and expand the arts in underserved communities. She holds a Bachelor's in Social Services Administration, a Master's in Social Work with a focus on Child Welfare, and a Juris Doctorate with a specialization in Litigation and Alternative Dispute Resolution. Lynne has also completed advanced leadership training through the Delta Leadership Network, the National African American Women's Leadership Institute, and Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.

With over 30 years of experience in the nonprofit sector, Lynne has led and managed numerous programs supported by both public and private funding. She has served as a senior consultant for agencies such as SAMHSA, the Illinois Department of Public Health, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. In addition to her legal and leadership work, she is certified in a wide range of training programs, including mental health first aid, suicide prevention, foster parent education, and youth life skills. Her multidisciplinary background underscores a lifelong commitment to empowering communities and advancing equity.



James Swaney is the Policy Manager at Restore Justice, where he advocates for fairer sentencing laws and criminal justice reform. At the heart of his work is a powerful personal journey—from being sentenced to life without parole plus 30 years at age 17, to becoming a respected leader and voice for justice reform in Illinois.

After serving 28 years in prison, James was released following the U.S. Supreme Court's *Miller v. Alabama* decision and subsequent rulings that gave a second chance to individuals sentenced as children. During his incarceration, James committed himself to personal growth, rehabilitation, and the belief that people are more than their worst mistakes. His transformation was rooted in

treating others with respect, mentoring fellow incarcerated individuals, and embracing accountability.

Today, James uses his lived experience to inform policy, educate communities, and advocate for those still impacted by extreme sentencing. His testimony in support of House Bill 1064, which abolished life without parole for most youth in Illinois, exemplifies his dedication to change. As a mentor to young people and a tireless advocate for second chances, James is a living example of redemption and the power of reform.

He is committed to ensuring that justice is not only about punishment, but also about possibility, growth, and the belief in human potential.



Ricky Hamilton is the Co-Founder of Got Jobs America, a Chicago Heights-based social enterprise focused on transforming workforce development and reentry systems for justice-impacted individuals. His work is grounded in lived experience, resilience, and a deep commitment to building stronger communities through economic opportunity.

At 17, Ricky was convicted under Illinois' theory of accountability and spent 23 years in prison. While navigating the legal system largely on his own, he made a critical shift—from fighting for his freedom to preparing for the person he wanted to become after incarceration. He began educating himself, reflecting on his past choices, and developing a vision for a different future—one in

which he would help young people avoid the same pitfalls he faced.

This commitment to change led him to the Kewanee Life Skills and Reentry Center, the first facility in Illinois focused on preparing incarcerated individuals for reentry. There, Ricky helped lead programming focused on life, work, and behavioral skills. He also met his future business partner, Michael Cannon, and together they began developing ideas to address the urgent need for employment solutions for people returning from prison.

Today, through Got Jobs America, Ricky is helping to close the gap between employers and formerly incarcerated jobseekers. His organization takes a holistic approach—recognizing that sustainable employment requires support in areas such as mental health, transportation, and family reunification. He works directly with employers to connect them to hiring incentives and retention strategies, breaking the cycle of recidivism through economic mobility.



Dr. Morris Jenkins is a nationally recognized scholar, educator, and criminal justice expert. He serves as an Associate Professor of Practice in the Justice, Law & Public Safety Studies department at Lewis University in Romeoville, Illinois, where he advises students and teaches both undergraduate and graduate courses in criminal and civil law, litigation, and procedure.

Previously, Dr. Jenkins earned a Juris Doctor from Stetson University College of Law and a Ph.D. in Public Policy Analysis from Northeastern University. He also held the position of Dean of the College of Health and Human Services at Southeast Missouri State University from 2013 to 2017, co-chaired the President's Task Force on Diversity Education there, and help

leadership roles in criminal justice and sociology. Raised in Detroit, Dr. Jenkins' early experiences shaped his passion for justice. He later served in both the U.S. Army and Marine Corps, which deepened his commitment to public service and inspired him to return to academia. He began teaching part-time in business law before discovering the classroom as a powerful platform for social change. At Lewis University, he guides students through courses such as Paralegal Capstone, Fundamentals of Litigation, Criminal Law, and Criminal Procedure, as well as graduate-level offerings in Graduate Criminal Law and Public Safety Law. His research focuses on restorative justice, alternatives to incarceration, gang prevention, first amendment doctrine, and jury nullification. He regularly engages with policymakers and practitioners to drive reform and equity in justice systems. Students often describe Dr. Jenkins as a “laid back,” engaging instructor who encourages participation and intellectual curiosity.



Dorothy Burge is a fabric and multimedia artist, educator and activist who is inspired by current issues of social justice. She is a self-taught quilter who began creating fiber art in the 1990s after the birth of her daughter, Maya. Dorothy is a native and current resident of Chicago and a descendent of a long line of quilters who hailed from Mississippi. These ancestors created beautiful quilts from recycled clothing. While she showed no interest in this art form as a child, she grew to treasure the quilts that were created by family elders. Her realization that the history and culture of her people were being passed through generations in this art form inspired her to use this medium as a tool to teach history, raise cultural awareness, and inspired action.

Dorothy received her Masters of Arts in Urban Planning and Policy and her Bachelor of Arts in Art Design, both from the University of Illinois at Chicago. She is a board member of the Women of Color Quilter's Network (WCQN), one of the founding members of the Chicago Torture Justice Memorials and the Adjoin Fund. She is also a member of Blacks Against Police Torture. The Women of Color Quilters Network has featured Ms. Burge's quilts in several of their exhibitions including: *And Still We Rise, We Who Believe in Freedom*, *Visioning Human Rights in the New Millennium*, *Yours for Race and Country: Reflections on the Life of Colonel Charles Young and Commemorating His Purple Reign: A Textural Tribute to Prince*. Dorothy was a resident artist at the Last Resort Artist Retreat in Baltimore Maryland in 2024. In 2023, she was a resident artist at the Little Black Pearl Art and Design Academy and in 2020, she was awarded the Northwestern University Consortium's Artist in Residence at the Hyde Park Art Center. Dorothy received the Public Humanities Award from the Alice Kaplan Institute for Humanities at Northwestern University in 2025.



Jamal Oxford is a dedicated Army reservist and community advocate based in Harrisburg, Illinois. Alongside his wife, Amy Oxford—who works as a district staffer for Illinois State Senator Dale Fowler—Jamal has played a leading role in supporting local servicemembers and veterans.

In the wake of 9/11 and his deployment with the Army Reserve unit from Fairfield, Jamal and Amy co-founded the SI Yellow Ribbon Campaign, a grassroots initiative turning their concern for local troops into action pointsoflight.org. Beginning from their home in Harrisburg, they crafted yellow ribbons and pins to raise funds and send care packages to deployed servicemembers. Their efforts grew rapidly, gaining regional attention and national reach.

Despite health challenges, Jamal and Amy continued the campaign's logistics—packing and mailing customized care packages, collaborating with volunteers, and running fundraising drives—to ensure Southern Illinois troops received consistent support pointsoflight.org.

Jamal's military service, combined with his commitment to community mobilization, frames his ongoing dedication to veteran well-being and civic engagement. Working alongside Amy, his partnership in service underscores the power of grassroots organizing to create meaningful support systems for those who serve.



Pastor Tony Lowden is a respected national leader in criminal justice reform, education, and faith-based community engagement. He currently serves as Pastor of Maranatha Baptist Church in Plains, Georgia—the home church of former President Jimmy Carter, who personally selected Lowden as pastor and remains an active member of the congregation.

In 2020, Pastor Lowden was appointed Executive Director of the Federal Interagency Council on Crime Prevention and Improving Reentry under the Trump administration, where he led efforts to reduce recidivism and improve public safety across the nation. Previously, Lowden was appointed by Georgia Governor Nathan

Deal to the State Charter School Commission in 2012. He later served as Project Coordinator for the Justice Reinvestment Initiative and as Director of the Faith and Justice Initiative within the Governor’s Office of Transition Support and Reentry, helping to strengthen support systems for returning citizens across the state.

Raised in a single-parent home in North Philadelphia, Pastor Lowden’s lived experience fuels his lifelong commitment to addressing poverty, educational inequality, and systemic barriers to success. He earned a dual degree in Economics and Government from the University of Southern California on an athletic scholarship, and later completed a Master of Divinity at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

A passionate advocate for youth and education, Lowden founded and served as Executive Director of STONE Academy, an after-school enrichment program for at-risk children in Macon-Bibb County. His pastoral leadership has included roles at Strong Tower Fellowship, Lundy Chapel Missionary Baptist Church, and Fellowship Bible Baptist Church, in addition to serving with numerous civic and interfaith initiatives throughout Middle Georgia.

Pastor Lowden’s public service and leadership have been recognized through his participation in several prestigious programs, including Leadership Georgia (Class of 2011), the inaugural Bailey-Sullivan Leadership Institute of the Black Alliance for Educational Options (Class of 2014), and the American Enterprise Institute Leadership Network (Fall 2016).

He and his wife, G. Pilar Lowden—an educator and performing artist—are proud parents of their daughter, Tabitha Lowden.



Champions of Change

2025 COMMUNITY HEROES

The *Champion of Change* Award honors individuals in our community who exemplify the spirit of transformation and service. These dedicated leaders have made a lasting impact through their commitment to creating opportunities, empowering others, and driving meaningful change. Whether through job creation, advocacy, mentorship, or innovation, they have helped uplift individuals and communities, particularly those most in need.

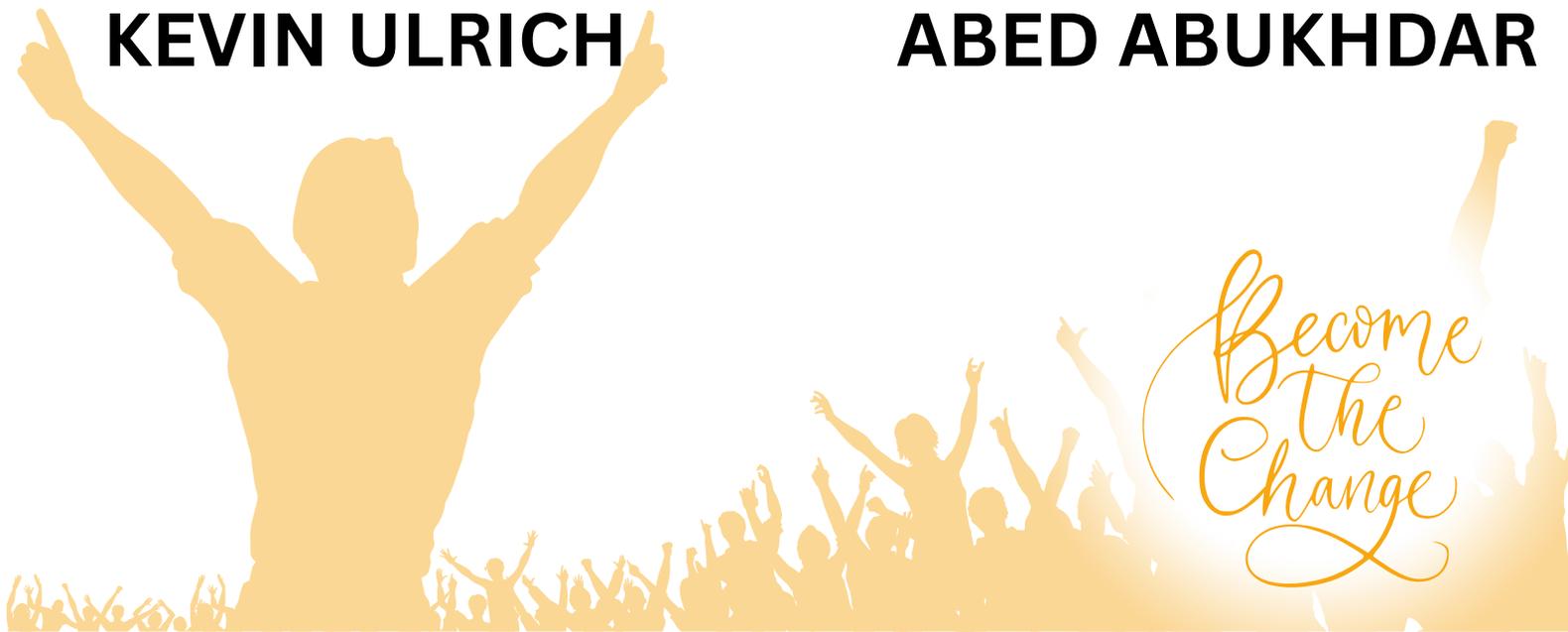
This award recognizes their outstanding efforts in building pathways to success and demonstrating that lasting change begins with bold action and unwavering compassion.



KEVIN ULRICH



ABED ABUKHDAR



Thank
you



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