



PENN CENTER THE SHOUT

Penn Center Announces Three New Board Members



Douglas Wood, Ed.M.'96, Ed.D.'00, is the 2018 recipient of the Alumni Council Award for Outstanding Contribution to Education. Wood is currently a senior fellow on justice and equity at the Aspen Institute. Prior, he was a program officer for global grants at the Ford Foundation. As the acting lead on the Ford Foundation's global Higher Education for Social Justice Initiative, he managed grants in the United States, Latin America, Southern Africa, Egypt, and China. Wood has been a successful teacher, researcher, policymaker, and leader, and the diversity of his experiences has made him an especially powerful advocate for our nation's most vulnerable students. For example, through his grant-making work at the Ford Foundation, Douglas has boosted efforts to improve college graduate rates for low-income and first-gen students.

He has been recognized for his tireless work to ensure that low-income, first-generation college students receive high-quality postsecondary education, including his continued efforts in improving high school and college completion rates and for his far reaching contributions in the field of education, and his relentless commitment to bringing opportunities to the under-served. He has a consistent track record that reflects his deep belief that education can be the anchor to break the inter-generational cycle of poverty, whether it be through his work to pass the groundbreaking early childhood legislation in Tennessee, or that today every single prisoner in the State of California has access to a high quality college education, to name a few. He has also worked as executive director and chief education officer of the Tennessee State Board of Education; chair of the Basic Education Program Review Committee that oversees Tennessee's \$3.2 billion K-12 budget; a member of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission; a fellow at the Elliott School of International Affairs, Georgetown University; principal investigator of the National Academy for Excellent Teaching, Teachers College, Columbia University; and associate dean of administration and planning at Eugene Lang College of Liberal Arts, The New School. His most recent work is focused on criminal justice reform and enhancing educational equity for the incarcerated.

Jonathan Robinson Jr.

Mr. Jonathan Robinson Jr. was born in Beaufort, SC and grew up on St Helena Island in the Wallace Community. After graduating from Beaufort High School in 1986, he served in the United States Military and later graduated from the SC Firefighter Academy and worked for the Lady's Island/St. Helena Fire District. He is currently a retired and disabled Veteran who takes pleasure in providing service to his community. He has been a dedicated Penn Center volunteer for the past five years. He has volunteered his services on grounds and buildings maintenance and on the Penn Center Heritage Committee. He is a member of the South Carolina Palmetto Grand Lodge Masonic Order where he is currently the head of the local St. Helena Lodge Number 4. He is a long time member of Bethesda Christian Fellowship and serves on the usher board. He and his wife of 22 years are the proud parents of 4 daughters and 1 son. He is looking forward to serving Penn Center in his new role as a member of the Board of Trustees.

David Yoakley Mitchell

Mr. David Yoakley Mitchell attended the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (**BFA-96**) and studied photography and anthropology. He is the Executive Director of the Atlanta Preservation Center, and is the President of M.H. Mitchell, Inc. He works with the University of Georgia Special Collections Libraries / Georgia State University Special Collections and Archives / Georgia Tech Archives and Special Collections and other repositories for documents and materials. He serves on multiple Boards and is happily married for 26 years and has a 17-year-old son. A native of Rome, Georgia he and his family live in Grant Park – in Atlanta.

Mr. Arnold Brown

A special thank you and appreciation is extended to Mr. Arnold Brown who has rotated off Penn Center's Board of Trustees.

In the Spotlight



Ms. Marie (Emma) Chaplin-Singleton

Penn Center, Inc. is proud to honor on Penn School's prestigious graduates, Ms. Marie (Emma) Chaplin-Singleton. Penn School Graduate, Class of 1948 and was Class Valedictorian. Ms. Chaplin-Singleton is 94 years young, and a formal interview with this graduate is forthcoming.

Culture and Community at Penn Center Names 2024 Research Partners

Culture and Community at the Penn Center National Historic Landmark District, a partnership between St. Helena Island, SC's Penn Center and the University of Georgia Willson Center for Humanities and Arts, funded by a grant from the Mellon Foundation, has named its 2024 community research partners: **Mr. Ed Atkins** and **Ms. Earnestine Atkins** of St. Helena Island.

Ed Atkins is a third-generation fisherman and owner of Atkins Live Bait and Oysters, whose expertise is in the local maritime practice and culture. Like her brother Ed, **Earnestine Atkins** is known for being a strong advocate for protecting the traditions, culture, and land of the St. Helena Island natives, who are commonly referred to as Gullah Geechee. The siblings have been leaders in the community for decades.

“The Penn Center is thrilled to welcome Earnestine and Ed Atkins as fellows. They are long-time members of the Penn community who possess deep ecological knowledge and an unwavering commitment to Gullah Geechee culture. Their leadership will greatly enhance the Penn-UGA partnership,” said Dr. Robert Adams, executive director of Penn Center.

The role of the community research partners is to help anchor the partnership's programs in local communities. During their year-long term, **Ed and Earnestine Atkins** will be engaged to work with the place-based classes, artist residencies, and community conversations that comprise the grant's major public programs. The project's first community research partner was Dr. Emory Campbell of Hilton Head Island, SC.

The 2024 Culture and Community Partnership student research residencies will take place May 15-19 and 21-25 and will be attended by students and faculty from UGA and other regional institutions, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities. In addition to engaging with **Ed and Earnestine Atkins**, students will have interactive lessons and workshops with artist in residence Amiri Geuka Ferris

Artist in Residence Exhibit



Amiri Geuka Ferris's exhibition has been installed in the York Bailey Museum. An artist reception will be held on February 24th at 6:00 pm at the museum. This event is free and open to the public, so please mark your calendars! Amiri Geuka Ferris is a renaissance man. A multi-hyphenate artist, he has worked in almost every medium imaginable. His art is bold, expressive, and completely different - inspired by his own life experiences and the materials at hand. Featured in over 50 solo exhibitions and juried museum shows nationally and internationally, Amiri is a true trailblazer whose work explores topics such as diaspora, culture, memory, and perception.

1862 Gala 2024

The Penn Center 2024 1862 Gala Event is planned for April 27th, 2024 on Hilton Head Island. A pre-gala event and party will be held at Penn Center on April 26, 2024. A more detailed information about the site and inductees will be disseminated in late January, and invitations will go out in late February 2024. So please save these very important dates!

P.A.C.E. Childcare Center

Dr. Tonya Allen-Jenkins, Director of Education would like all to know that there are still openings for enrollment in pre K 4 year old class, presently and in the fall. This program is completely funded by the ABC Quality program of South Carolina which focuses on providing high quality education for child care and early education.

Prestigious Announcements

Penn Center announces the planning and construction of a multi-purpose building that will house a Penn Center Preservation Trades School and serve as a multipurpose building for large community events such as the annual 1862 gala event. The newly constructed building will be located on Penn Center land behind the Penn Child Care Center which is located outside the historic landmark district. The building will be designed for studios, classrooms, and administrative support spaces. The building will have metal, wood, and stone studios, plus classrooms and a library, and admin spaces. Additionally the building will have collapsable walls for large events with catering support. We are currently working with a funder and costing out the building and determining what the footprint will be. We will produce a feasibility study with a cost report, so we can determine the total cost and then interview and bring a General contractor on board early so we can tighten the budget up. We will keep the community well informed as we proceed with this important project.

The Penn Center Hotel

We have designed plans produced by an architect to remodel the Penn Center hotel for use as both a conference center and lodging facility. We will share additional information during the 2nd quarter of the year.

Update on the Preservation and Restoration project at Penn Center: Penn Center, Inc. has successfully completed comprehensive restoration initiatives to Orchard Cottage, Benezet House, Hampton House, Pine Cottage and the organization is in the final stages of completing major restoration to Arnett House. Forthcoming is restoration to the York W. Bailey Museum, the Welcome Center and the Retreat House. Stay tuned for more information on this major initiative. To quote Dr. Emory Campbell: "Visiting Penn Center now is like visiting the White House."

Campus Signage: New signage for designating Penn Center's key historical sites is forthcoming!

Notes of Appreciation

Thank you to the 2023 Heritage committee for a festival that was enjoyed by all.

Thank you to Barbara Gardner-Hunter and her girl scouts for installing, decorating and gathering the community together for the lighting of the 2023 Christmas Tree activities in the MLK Park.

Thank you to the St. Helena Island community for all your support during 2023 and for your on-going commitment to Penn Center and the preservation of the island's history and culture.

Penn Center will be a part of the 2024 MLK Parade in January 2024.



Penn Center, INC.
National Historic Landmark District
P.O. Box 126
16 Penn Center Circle West
St. Helena Island, SC 29920
Administration Office: Phone: 843.838.2432
www.penncenter.com