



Quarter 2, 2023

Impact Report



We celebrated our 21 graduates from our fourth Cyber Security cohort at their graduation ceremony on May 12, 2023.

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“Never Give Up”: How a Cybersecurity Course Gave Kirk New Life



Kirk Northrup was working as a security guard on the Las Vegas strip when the anxiety attacks first began.

“It was something I just couldn't control,” he said. “I could be fine for years and one day I would just have a panic attack.”

Born in Detroit, Michigan, Kirk and his family moved to Macon, Georgia, when he was 16. After graduating high school, he decided to get a job instead of going to college. He tried to pursue a career in law enforcement and then in pharmacy. Both times he was thwarted by the cost of certifications. Kirk eventually found a job at Loomis, the cash-handling company. But during the pandemic, he was laid off. With few options, he moved to Las Vegas for a job opportunity. His grandmother had recently died, and he was looking for a fresh start. But the intensity of working security on the strip triggered the panic attacks. Doctors told him he was suffering severe stress and that he needed to take some time to care for himself. So he moved back to Georgia to live with his family.



A Fork in the Road

Kirk was at a crossroads. His anxiety was still high, he had no idea what he wanted to do vocationally, and he was still coming to grips with his grandmother's death. That's when he learned about City of Refuge's Tech Transformation Academy. By God's grace, Kirk grabbed the last spot available in a months-long cybersecurity class. Though he was initially nervous, he showed an enormous amount of grit and perseverance.

“I stuck with it. I networked. I prayed. I dealt with my anxiety and learned how to heal by being around people who spoke a lot about God and faith.”

After graduating, Kirk had the opportunity to participate in Microsoft's Accelerate: Atlanta, a course that bolstered his tech skills and experience even more. Eventually, he applied to be an Analyst Compliance Engineer at ICE, a global tech company. When the offer finally came through, he immediately burst into tears.



“I go to work every day looking up and saying, ‘Lord, thank you for your providing hand.’”

When asked what he would say to others who might be hesitant to take a job training course at City of Refuge, Kirk encouraged them to take a step of faith.

“That was me. I was nervous. I was scared. I was waking up in the middle of the night with anxiety thinking about things in my life. All it takes is a step forward. Just trust in God. And I guarantee he will guide you. He'll never leave you...Never give up.”

“This Place Changed My Life”: Davionne's Story

Eight years ago, Davionne walked into a Greyhound bus station in Miami. She wasn't just ready to leave the city. She was ready to leave an abusive relationship. The ticket attendant asked her where she wanted to go. Davionne's reply shocked her. "I said, 'You pick. Wherever you think is a good place to go, I'll go. I want to reinvent myself.'" At the attendant's suggestion, Davionne hopped on a bus headed to Atlanta. It turned out to be one of the most pivotal decisions of her entire life.

New Beginnings

But Davionne's journey wasn't without hardship. After arriving in Atlanta, she quickly ran out of money and found herself without a place to live. "Life came at me pretty fast." Eventually, she got the referral to come to City of Refuge.

"What people don't realize is that your first day of not being homeless is so overwhelming because you don't have to worry about that anymore—the anxiety, the stress, being tired all the time," she said.

While living on campus, Davionne took a class called Every Woman Works. "It's all about you," she said. "Positive affirmations, meditations. Hearing from speakers who have been where I'm at and made it through. Hearing those positive stories of impact really changed my life." After graduating from the class, she applied for a job at the middle and high school located on the City of Refuge campus. "They gave me a shot," she said.

“You're truly transforming lives.”

Today, Davionne works as a Career & Technical Program Manager at the school, specializing in college and career planning for students. "We're not just giving students a diploma and sending them on their way," she said. "We're an extended family." She sees her role as far more than just a job—it's a calling. "I truly believe that the Lord put us here to be change agents and to further his mission and spread the love. I try to do that as often as possible." When asked what she would say to City of Refuge supporters, Davionne referenced her own remarkable journey as an example of the kind of transformation that's possible.

"You're truly changing and transforming lives...I can tell you that from experience because this place changed and transformed my life."



Impact Metrics

114
individuals
housed

127,565
meals served

311
jobs placed

5,446
medical services
provided

51
reentry citizens

274
youth impacted



Affordable Housing Efforts in the 30314 Community



With shovels officially in the ground, we're excited to share that we're bringing **five new affordable single-family homes** to Burbank Drive in our Westside neighborhood in partnership with GROWTH by NCRC! This project is a unique opportunity for five first-time buyers to achieve their dream of homeownership in this historic community, and we look forward to welcoming those future homeowners.





City School Atlanta

**Our middle and high school
is expanding!**



In Atlanta's Westside, the education achievement gap is profound. **The 30314 zip code has the highest school dropout rate in the city (17%), and three out of four schools in the area are graded as chronically failing. Many students are academically three to four levels below grade level.**

Thankfully, Bright Futures Academy (BFA) has provided high-quality education to middle and high school students in a loving, Christ-centered environment in the Westside since 2002. For the past decade, they have operated out of our campus, which already has a preschool program and an after-school and summer camp program for elementary, middle, and high school students.

As of this spring, Bright Futures has merged with City of Refuge to become City School Atlanta! Together, we'll be able to expand our ability to provide an exceptional education to students in the community.

**Support our education
efforts by donating to our
back to school campaign**





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