

2023 is in Full Swing at Refill!

1 message



# THE REFILL JACKSON INITIATIVE

*Working Toward a Healthier, Wealthier Jackson for Everyone*



Cohort 16 members Alexis, Will and Candace relaxing after class

Dear Caitlin,

Welcome to 2023! We've got a lot of exciting things coming into bloom here at Refill - a newly opened café in partnership with Loaded Lettuce, three new projects with our federal and state partners, some great success stories from our 2022 alumni, and several new opportunities for metro Jackson area businesses, community members and organizations to get involved with our members and alumni.

I'm personally thrilled to announce that a community favorite event, Friday Forums with Jonathan Lee and Nicole McNamee, will be returning to Refill Jackson in March 2023! Friday Forums are a weekly opportunity for the community to fellowship, engage with dynamic, knowledgeable speakers, and learn about and discuss issues affecting the community. We are so excited to bring this event back - stay tuned for details on the first event!

Cohort 16 is also in full swing, and we are off to the races for an exciting year! Looking forward to seeing you at the café, at a fundraiser, or in the community soon.

With gratitude,  
Caitlin Brooking  
President and CEO  
[caitlin@refilljackson.org](mailto:caitlin@refilljackson.org)

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### Alumni Spotlight: Sincere Alves, Cohort 15



Sincere Alves of Jackson graduated from Refill Jackson in December of 2022. Since then, he has been working at The Bean Path in Jackson as a Workshop Assistant, a paid internship opportunity available thanks to funding from Central Mississippi Planning and Development District. While at The Bean Path, Sincere works closely with the Makerspace director to set up for events, research projects for youth and community members, and learn how to use machinery utilized in workshop classes. For him, the internship has been very beneficial because he is given creative flexibility in finding projects to research and execute with the support of his supervisor.

Sincere credits Refill Jackson for assisting him in polishing his employability skills, especially with learning how to communicate effectively with different types of people. As a member Sincere had the unique opportunity of being the first member to complete his on the job training as a new partner site, the City of Jackson's DREAM program. He provided assistance in the execution of the TECHJXN conference in November through data entry, researching and scheduling guest speakers and maintaining the volunteer database. Refill also provided him with practical tools such as providing the means for him to obtain his driver's license and assisting him with financial management, which is a skill he continues to use well past graduation. We are thrilled to see how much Sincere has accomplished and looking forward to his bright future.



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## New Grant Funded Projects at Refill Jackson Initiative

### RJI Workforce Health Equity Project

Funded by MS Department of Health Office of Preventative Health and Health Equity

Did you know that young adults have the highest uninsured rates of all age groups, and that Mississippi in particular has one of the highest rates of uninsured young adults, exceeding 23%? The community that RJI serves (young adults disconnected from school and work) are particularly affected by lack of health insurance - they are less likely to be able to access healthcare through a parent's employer, less likely to be able to obtain insurance through an employer, and typically do not qualify for Medicaid. RJI is working to address this gap by providing wrap-around social services to access affordable physical and mental healthcare, educating and coaching members on employer-based benefits and why they are important, and building their workplace skills to increase the likelihood that they can obtain better employment opportunities with benefits. We are grateful to have received Federal funds from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Health and Human Services, under Contract No. 1 NH75OT000089-01-00, to carry out this important addition to our 9-week workforce development program.



**Transportation Support  
Funded by AccelerateMS**



Many of the youth we target cannot reap the full benefits of our program because they struggle with reliable transportation: only 18% of our members have a car, and only 24% have a driver's license. Without a reliable source of transportation, not only are members unable to complete the program without excessive absences or tardies, they are also unable to get to necessary appointments to resolve social services challenges, such as proper documentation including social security cards, birth certificates, or state-issued identification, they cannot complete necessary health appointments and intake processes to access healthcare, and they are unable to participate in job interviews. With the support of AccelerateMS's American Rescue Plan Special Populations grant, RJI has increased our reach and effectiveness by meeting our members' transportation challenges, by providing transportation to members while they are in the program, coaching members in creating and implementing work transportation plans as part of our career coaching, and assisting members and graduates in overcoming transportation crises with prepaid gas cards to participate in the program and in job retention.

**AmeriCorps State and National American Rescue Plan Planning Grant  
Funded by AmeriCorps**

RJI is looking forward to launching a new program in 2024 that will create AmeriCorps service opportunities addressing vacant and abandoned properties, energy efficient home repairs, and disaster response in the Jackson area. AmeriCorps, the federal agency for national service and volunteerism, recently awarded a one-year planning grant to Refill to research community assets and needs, develop partnerships with community, municipal and state organizations, and design a program that will train members in construction and environmental skills, and meet pressing needs in Central Mississippi.



**AmeriCorps**

**Loaded Lettuce @ Refill Café Now Open!**



Loaded Lettuce @ Refill Café is now open to the public Monday through Friday from 11:00 am - 5:00 pm, serving the delicious, fresh salads and wraps you know from their original location in Westland Plaza, and have added loaded fries, nachos and baked potatoes, tacos, burritos and more to the menu!

You can find more information on Loaded Lettuce @ Refill Café on our website: <https://refilljackson.org/cafe/>

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