

Virtual Coffee Talk and Me Time Made History!

“What a great and powerful session for ladies at the Fairview!” -Volunteer

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Host: Dr. Avon Hart-Johnson avonhartjohnson@gmail.com

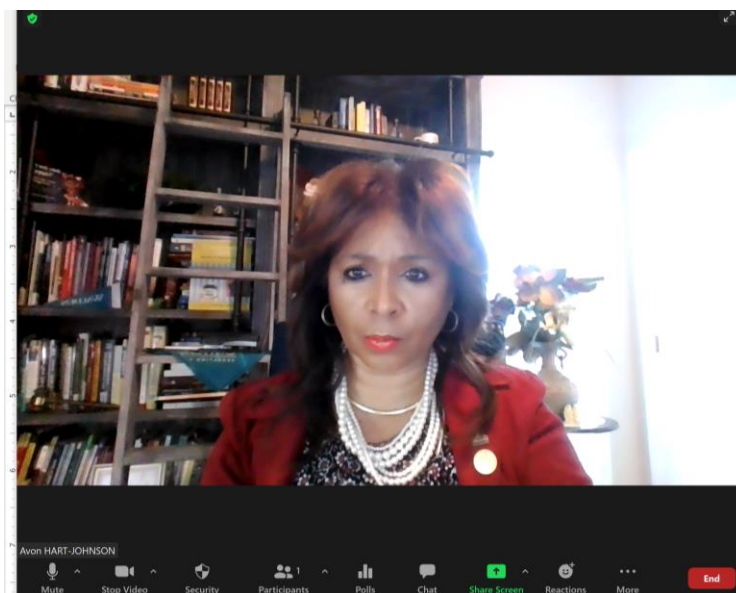


Figure 1 Dr. Avon's Technology Check

Background:

Yesterday's (1.18.2021) Coffee Talk and Me, Selfcare event for the residents of the Fairview Residential Reentry Center (halfway house) was phenomenal and made history! DC Project Connect's President and Co-founder, Dr. Avon Hart-Johnson hosted this session in conjunction with the Presidential Inaugural Committee, National Day of Service, honoring the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Dc Project Connect's reentry services are designed for women who are transitioning home from justice aligned experiences (prison or jail). Many of the women reside at the Fairview. Some of the women are sentenced to home-confinement as well. We honor the women who allow us to be part of their journey as they prepare to transition home or rebuild relationships at home. During the session, "...the volunteers became participants of a metaphoric safe-circle/zoom-healing circle during this memorable event. During this transformative session, I witnessed volunteers transforming from spectators and

contributors, to individual people – a part of a healing circle where they got in touch with their inner thoughts, said Hart-Johnson. “That’s the power of Coffee Talk. Anyone who attends these sessions leave feeling like a different person.” During the sessions, everyone got in touch with their feelings and vulnerabilities. One volunteer shared via chatbox: “This has been an awesome experience.” Another stated, “I live in DC, I would love to volunteer –that was quick!”

“In all essence, the coffee talk circle expanded from a halfway house and home confinement focused session to a “healing circle,” stated Dr. Hart-Johnson. The PIC pre-training content influenced the meeting norms and guidelines established a safe space for sharing.

Pre-pandemic, *Coffee Talk, and Me*, life skills, and group mentoring sessions were carried out in person. DC Project Connect provides a continental breakfast and coffee, as we participated in life skill support circles. Thus the name of the “coffee talk and me” time was born. We have continued this same process virtually and use food delivery service. On the National Day of Service, the boundaries and limitations of being in different states were removed via Zoom.

Four guest speakers delivered subject matter expertise, Rev. Dr. Demetra Hutchinson (intention and self-care), T Green (fitness), Dr. Elaine Barclay (mental health and mindfulness), and a make-artist who showcased how to apply makeup in real-time

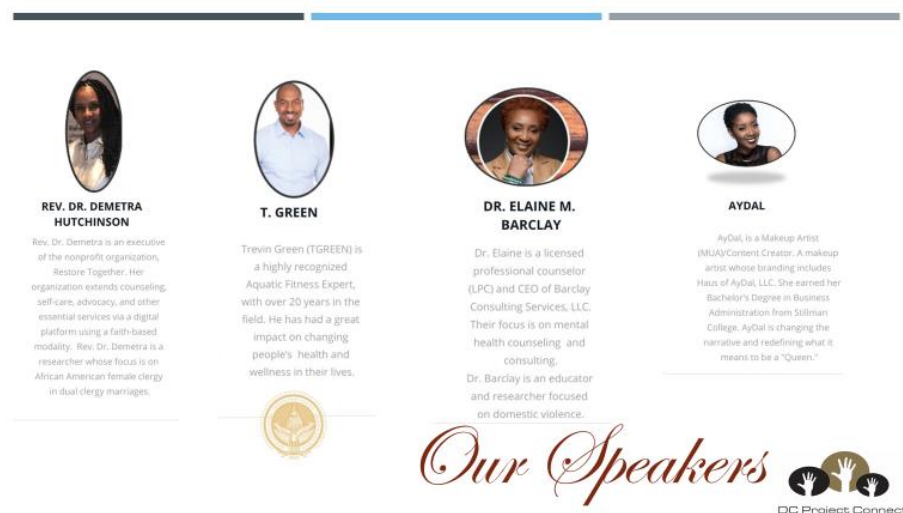


Figure 2 Dr. Hutchinson, T Green, Dr. Barclay, & AyDal

TESTIMONIALS

When checking in, the audience was asked: How are you feeling?

Good morning, from Oklahoma! ♥ Good Morning from Delaware ♥

Check-in From the Halfway House: Thank you so much for the food!

Today I attended the amazing virtual event, Halfway House Virtual Coffee Talk and Me time.

-Attendee

I feel good. Had to deal with my mother's verbal abuse today but have good friends who walked and talked me thru it – Anonymous

Check-in From the Half-way house: [Feeling] Overwhelmed but, thankful/ appreciative

Good morning from Northern Virginia. I am excited today for what is to come.!

When asked Ice breaker question: “What will be your legacy to the world?”

from Michigan: I want to leave Love and Laughter

David (he/him/his), Arkansas, volunteering

Self-care: Tell us what you do to unwind and find your balance and peace?

Journaling, daily inspirations, listening to soothing music, daily deep breathing, physical activity, walking, running, biking, stretching, yoga --Zumba, and dancing!

So grateful for the event. any possibility to watch a recording later on as well?

Halfway house: Music heals!! I feel positive. it was really helpful to hear what self-care is.

"INTENTIONAL" What a powerful word and concept!

I play this little game I call “here and now.” It keeps me in the present and keeps me grounded. Here and now I feel the chair beneath me. Here and now I feel the fabric of the shirt on my arms. Here and now I am typing on the computer and I feel the keys under my fingertips. It is simple but it helps.

Chat-box Question: What Self-Care Means to You:

Definitely important but often hard to make time for myself ~Volunteer

Selfcare seminar: This is wonderful advice. Thanks for the reminder.

Halfway House: Sometimes I have to remember that it's important to check in with self, and utilize those calming influences when needed. We owe it to ourselves to do that.

The Details: Presidential Inaugural Committee Volunteers Make History!

Yesterday, on the National Day of Service, DC Project Connect, a nonprofit hosting the Presidential Inaugural Committee organized an event entitled, “Virtual Coffee Talk & Me Time: with Self-Care as the theme. *This event constituted the largest group mentoring session in the history of the organization!* The event was held for residents of DC’s only halfway house for women and those in home confinement. These women are either transitioning or newly released to their homes who can benefit from the social and

emotional wellbeing that self-care focus offers. The additional goal of the sessions was to provide residents of the Fairview Residential Reentry Center with self-care workshops and offer self-

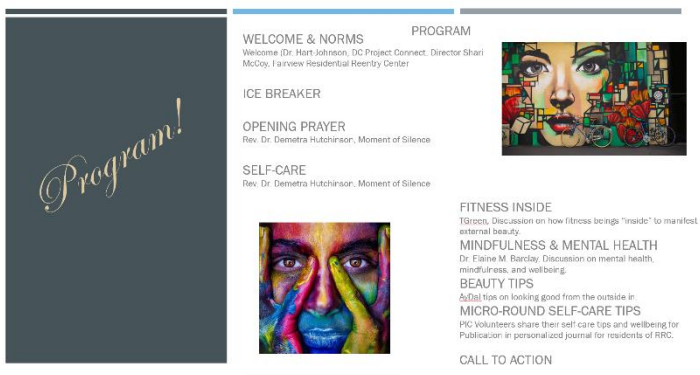


Figure 3 Coffee Talk Program

care tips that would later be memorialized and published in a custom print journal for current and future residents. Journals are the mainstay of Coffee Talk, a program started 6 years ago by Dr. Hart-Johnson, DC Project Connect’s president and co-founder. During the session, PIC volunteers joined in during and at the end of each seminar to share their self-care tips in the areas of mental health, fitness, mindfulness, social and psychological wellbeing. Each of these tips contributed to DCPC’s goal of achieving 365 tips to be included in the future journal, entitled “Coffee Talk and Me Time Journal: 365 Days of self-care.”



Figure 4.. Dr. Avon Hart-Johnson

About the Sessions

The Coffee Talk life skills event was facilitated by Dr. Avon Hart-Johnson (figure 2), president and co-founder of DC Project Connect. DCPC’s executive director was present and indicated that this event was truly remarkable. Hart-Johnson reminded

volunteers that their services will be long remembered by each of the attendees of this heart-felt program.

Four guest speakers delivered subject matter expertise, Rev. Dr. Demetra Hutchinson, T Green (fitness), Dr. Elaine Barclay (mental health and mindfulness), and a make-up artist who showcased how to apply makeup in real-time (see figure 3).

We Danced!

We Worked Out!

We Meditated!

We Laughed and Shared Vulnerabilities!

During the session participants and volunteers experienced an action-packed 3 hours. They danced (as a part of a self-care focus) led by Dr. Demetra Hutchinson. The audience mimicked the electric slide. Everyone on zoom had a smile or a giggle. They were Led by T Green in a stretch, mini-workout, and cooldown. They meditated. By the time Dr. Barclay completed her discussion on meditation and illustrated how to quiet the mind and find balance through mindfulness, all participants were clearly having a Zen moment. The grand finale entailed a makeup artist illustrating how to apply make-up and to care for our skin, noting that all genders could benefit from skincare routines. Ultimately the session helped everyone to reflect upon their inner feelings and strengths. It was a good day.

The Statistics

The PIC volunteers joined in multiple waves during the 3-hour long set of workshops. Approximately, 297 people registered for the event (from 21 states, as well the District of Columbia), showing interest in the subject matter. During our 3 hour event at any given time, there were over 85 people actively engaged and entering information in the chat. While we were unable to take a group photo because we wanted to honor the privacy of the residents of the halfway house and those who were zooming in from home confinement, we were able to capture photos of the preparation meeting held the day before (see figure 4). We were also able to discern from the signup sheet a few of the volunteers who were not residents and we provide a partial screen-shot of the event in Figure 5.

