



Moving beyond Labels

Newsletter

September 2015

Volume 2, Issue 3



The Latest from Loretta...

I am excited to share that B Stigma-Free has taken a big step forward toward our next phase of development. Our Board of Directors held its first meeting and our application for non-profit 501(c)3 tax-exempt status as a charitable organization has been submitted to the IRS! These two significant steps bring our organization to a new level.

The federal non-profit status has noteworthy implications. With it comes access to foundation and grant funding otherwise not available. Contributions to B Stigma-Free may qualify for a tax deduction for our donors. This is great news for sustainability!

On a personal note, this milestone brings with it an emotional exhale from me. Until our first Board meeting we were an independent operation, trying to find our place among stakeholders. Now, I share this responsibility with our capable and invested [Board of Directors](#). More importantly, as we continue to grow and make our mark, the organization now belongs to all of us.

Highlights

- Welcome to our newest partner, [Little People of America](#) (LPA)! We look forward to working together to impact change and reduce stigma. Look for our collaborations in October when we [Spotlight](#) the stigma often experienced by people with dwarfism.
- In June, [blog articles](#) from **Amy Shives**, who is affiliated with the Alzheimer's Association, wrote about stigma's personal sting, experienced due to early onset Alzheimer's disease; and **Dr. Neelum Aggarwal**, a neurologist from Rush University Medical Center, explained her theory that answering "*Now what?*" prevents stigma. Dr. Aggarwal is also the first Chief Diversity Officer at the American Medical Woman's Association. She is enthusiastic about working together to promote b'ing stigma-free and we are pleased that she accepted our invitation to join our [Advisory Council](#).
- Citizen re-entry has been in the news a lot lately, and for good reason! People with a criminal record are systematically stigmatized; we as a society continue to punish people after they've served their time, thus preventing them from successfully re-entering society and contributing to their community. The **Center for Community Alternatives** explained their research about how the "box" inquiring about felony convictions on college applications is a barrier to admission, and **Teresa Hodge's** first-person account about reintegrating into society after prison provided a

personal perspective. [Both articles can be read here.](#)

- For August's Spotlight on dermatological disorders, the National Organization of Albinism and Hypopigmentation (NOAH) contributed an enlightening [article written by Kelsey Thompson.](#)

Spotlight

This month we are spotlighting **Reverend Dr. Vernon S. Thompson**, who recently joined [B Stigma-Free's Board of Directors](#). He is the pastor of Morris Chapel Baptist Church in Philadelphia and a consummate and outspoken advocate for civil rights with a particular focus on making solution-based changes to support the needs of the disadvantaged. Reverend Thompson's efforts in Bridgeport, Connecticut over 20 years ago often made headlines; he was a leader of statewide [efforts to get "Mount Trashmore" cleaned up](#). Now he is in Philadelphia and his community activism in both communities has impacted the quality of life of countless citizens. Nationally, in addition to his Board membership with B Stigma-Free, he is on the Board of Directors of National Action Network.

Reverend Dr. Thompson's front-line work as a marriage and family therapist, and his work with citizen re-entry, veteran, youth, and substance abuse populations, coupled with leadership roles in both the public and private sector, inform his perspective. As a Co-Chair of the Board, he will have an instrumental role helping us reach our goals. [Read more about Rev. Thompson here.](#)

On the Horizon

We are thrilled that B Stigma-Free was chosen to run a moderated panel discussion at the [International Conference on Stigma at Howard University](#) in Washington DC. Our workshop will bring some of [our partners](#) representing diverse groups together for the first time. We will challenge stigma across different identities, focusing on identifying commonalities, recognizing differences, and developing action plans for collaborative efforts to stop stigma. Some of our panelists include executive team members from **Mental Health America, LGBT CenterLink and Obesity Action.**

Coalition. Follow us on Twitter or Facebook to stay in touch and be the first to hear updates about the conference. Learn more about the event here, www.whocanyoutell.org.



Stay Connected

