

# Immersive Gala

CELEBRATING



Keynote Speaker:  
Dr. Emma Lucas-Darby



Creative Spark Flame Awardee:  
D. Tyler Gourley

Thursday November 20, 2025 5:00pm-9:00pm

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# ACH COMMUNICATES

## CHALLENGE ACCEPTED!

In 2009, when ACH Clear Pathway was birthed, many people doubted that the organization would become a reality; even if it did, the probability of its survival was questionable. Tyian Battle, the Founder and Executive Director, refused to accept that what had been placed in her spirit was unattainable. In fact, she felt challenged by all the "naysayers" and she said: **"Challenge accepted"**! One of the many definitions for the noun, challenge, is **"a difficult task or problem requiring effort and determination to overcome."** That definition exemplifies the birth of ACH Clear Pathways. It was indeed a **"problem requiring effort and determination."** Tyian's determination to achieve her vision to create a space to "serve as an artistic hub by providing artists and community a place to thrive in the arts" was unimaginable to so many. The naysayers questioned the ability of a single mother from the Hill District, with no prior organizational skills, to form an artistic organization; but even if she were to surmount the developmental obstacles, she still had no money to fund such a project. It was indeed **a difficult task and required a determination to succeed.**



The initial challenges of birthing and developing ACH Clear Pathways have been met! ACH no longer wanders from place to place seeking a home for artists to thrive. The challenge of purchasing a home for the arts has been met; but the challenge of sustaining ACH and its assets is on-going. ACH cannot sit on its past accomplishments of challenges met; ACH is a launch pad for others to meet the challenges in their lives.

**This edition of ACH Communicates will focus on some families and partners of ACH who have been challenged to overcome difficulties and who have successfully, not only accepted the challenges, but who have been strengthened because of those challenges. We share these stories so that you may be encouraged to move forward into your dreams and aspirations and be willing to say:**

**"Challenge Accepted"!**



## MOVING AGAIN? CHALLENGE ACCEPTED!

Candace Young was a teen ager who was born and bred in Orleans Parish, New Orleans, Louisiana! That's one of the places we plan our vacation trips for during Mardi Gras season. We look forward to the music and costumes and parades and of course let's not forget the cuisine offered there. How could living in such an exotic place create a challenge that would impact her life for over twenty (20) years? The answer is Hurricane Katrina! For those who have never experienced life during hurricane season, it is difficult to imagine being surrounded by unexpected flood waters and losing everything that you thought was important. It was August 29, 2005 that Candace's life changed. She was 17 years old, 10 days before her 18th birthday when her family home, along with the homes of many others, was destroyed by raging flood waters. Over a thousand people died during this disaster. The surviving residents questioned whether they would ever be able to rebuild and what would they do



Hurricane Katrina

for survival In the meantime? Because we are a people who believe in helping one another during times of natural disasters, people from states across the country offered to open their homes to displaced residents of New Orleans. Candace and her mother relocated to Atlanta, Georgia during their period of displacement. Candace had never been outside of New Orleans and she was beginning a new chapter in her life in Atlanta. Candace was provided an opportunity to enroll in Savannah Arts & Design College. She remained there for a year while trying to piece her life back together. She and her mom were placed in a hotel by FEMA and that, in itself, created an uncertainty for their future. They needed more financial assistance, so Candace dropped out of school and got a full time job in the Lenox Mall in Atlanta. During this time, there were many other hurricanes in Louisiana. It seemed as if there was a hurricane every year or some within six (6) months of each other. Would it ever be safe to return home? Finally Candace and her mom returned home. Candace received a scholarship to Mississippi Valley State University, which was an HBCU. While in College, she needed to supplement her income and there were no positions



In 2016, Tenell began the organization which is closest to her heart. It is called **HER!**

**Heal, Evolve and Restore.** The photo to your left is a celebration and fellowship of women who are there for one another. Rev. June Jeffries of New Life Baptist Church in Apollo led the group in prayer, fellowship and revival.

**The loving spirit in Tenell shows through her in everything that she does because its about helping others to not only survive but to thrive!**

## THE ACH CLEAR PATHWAYS HILL DISTRICT ARTS FESTIVAL

In 2024, when ACH began planning the 2025 Hill District Art Festival, the headliner for the Saturday event was to be Ms. Angie Stone. The organizers were excited and couldn't wait to get working on it. Of course, tragedy intervened and Ms. Stone went to a greater reward. Tyian Battle, the Executive Director, said there is someone who is talented enough to honor Angie Stone in a musical tribute. She has the voice and stage presence that the residents of the Hill District will enjoy. That someone was Tenell Dorsey. When Tyian reached out to her, she did what she always does, she agreed to help and she didn't disappoint. Ms. Tenell Dorsey's voice and talent mesmerized the crowd. It was a wonderful evening and **yes, the little girl not only survived—she thrived!**





As the owner of Dreamz Hair Salon, she leads a team of 10 stylists and barbers, including her adult **son Dallas** and **daughter Melajia**. She shares her dreams with the dreams of others to help those who need help. Tenell is a giver! She gives of her services to those who need it; but more than that, she gives some people hope—which is just as life sustaining as food and shelter. In her search for opportunities to help, she has held a prom give away, Christmas events and some youth cancer patients a complete makeover. When you look good—you will feel good.

Tenell and Dreamz Hair Salon partner with the Steelers in a “Give Back” effort. The Steelers and the schools provide the children with book bags and academic items and Tenell and her team provide them with personal care items such as hair dryers, nail care items, body care



products, and other items that young girls need. She does this because she said: **“She is to the girls what she wished someone would have been to her.”**

The salon is currently located at 216 East Seventh Avenue in Homestead. The location allows Tenell to share her space with the **Café ASE**. It is a coffee shop for local artists to gather and share their talent, along with coffee specialties. Tenell has used the **Café ASE**

**ASE** to host special events and to provide a safe place to gather for those events. Because of Tenell’s talent, other talented singes, musicians and poets find themselves sharing the spot light at Café ASE!



SON—DALLAS

TENELL—ABOVE

DAUGHTER MELAJIA IN THE REAR AS SHER USES HER TALENTS ON A CLIENT.

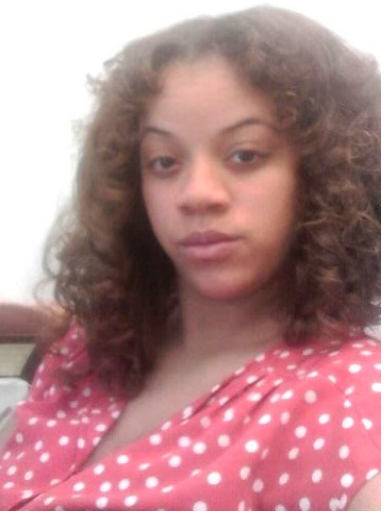
CAFE ASE



available in her field. Some of her church members recommended that she think about being a Nanny! That’s right, Candace became a Nanny for celebrities and politicians in New Orleans. Word of mouth created opportunities for Candace to become a full time Nanny and finish school. On May 8, 2010, Candace received a Degree in Mass Communications with an emphasis on Public Relations.

**Challenge Met!**

Candace would marry and become the mother of twins! Her twins, Kane and Kendall became the center of her joy. In late 2019, when it seemed as if everything had began to fall into place, life brought a new challenge to Candace—how to survive during Covid 19, an unknown virus that disrupted the lives of millions across the globe. In addition, she was now a single mom! Everyone knows about the isolation so many endured for over a year and the difficulties encountered with employment. Candace endured and once again, she accepted the challenges of life. She was in for yet another surprise. On August 29, 2021, on the 16th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, Hurricane Ida made landfall in Louisiana. The NPR reported the following on August 30, 2021: **“Hurricane Ida leaves downed power lines in its wake Monday in Metairie, La. The one-two punch of a natural disaster and the pandemic is complicating efforts to evacuate hospitals, seek shelter and administer COVID-19 vaccines.”**



CANDACE YOUNG

It was time to uproot her family, once again, and seek safety. She returned to Atlanta, a place where she



had found shelter and life before. She and her children remained there for five (5) months until New Orleans was rebuilt again. That’s it! Enough is enough! During the years 2022 through early 2024, Candace’s goal was to find a more permanent location for her children. She was done with uprooting her family every 6 months or a year. She wanted stability and a place where her children would feel safe.

It’s time to find a new home.

**Challenge Accepted.**



KANE GREEN & KENDALL GREEN



## MAKING THE MOVE! CHALLENGE ACCEPTED!

Candace began searching for a place to relocate to with her children. She didn't want to be in a large city and she wanted to make sure it wasn't a place where hurricanes frequented. Her father, a long distance truck driver gave her some suggestions. The place that he said might be the best was Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. It was sort of small like New Orleans, but it was convenient to other places like Ohio, Maryland, and West Virginia. Best of all, it was located in an area that was not prone to flooding and hurricanes. Candace began surfing the internet to learn more about Pittsburgh. The selling point for Candace was Mr. Rogers! That's right! She grew up watching Mr. Roger's neighborhood and she loved it. She watched all the August Wilson movies and plays. Now it was time to move further in her quest to leave



Candace visiting the 7 foot bronze statute of Mr. Rogers on the North Shore

New Orleans.

Candace applied for jobs on line and was hired by the City of Pittsburgh Housing Authority before she moved. It looked like things were turning around. She contacted a real estate agent and found housing in the West End of Pittsburgh. It was time for Candace to relocate. She left the twins with her mother so that they could finish out the school year in New Orleans.

Her excitement about reaching Pittsburgh was shown in the first picture that she took upon arrival. She finally got to see the statute of her friend, Mr. Rogers.

Now it was time for Candace to find a Church, a school for the twins, and after school care for them while she worked. It was almost unbelievable, but she found everything she needed in the Hill District where she was working. The church was St. Benedict the Moor, located on Centre and Crawford. Her smile and openness led her to meet members of the congregation who suggested that she consider putting her children in St. Benedict the Moor school which was in the same Hill District neighborhood. She had accomplished everything except finding after school care for her children.

Clean Slate, a program sponsored by the Housing Authority where Candace worked, held a workshop which focused on Kemba Smith, who was pardoned by President Clinton from a 24.5 year sentence. Tyian Battle was a panel member of the workshop and she spoke about ACH Clear Pathways in its role of creating artistic outlets for children. Candace had an opportunity to speak to Tyian and told her of her need for after school care. They arranged for Candace to visit ACH to see whether it was what she needed. It was perfect. So far, she had found a job, a church, a school for her children and now she had found after school care, all in one location—the Hill District of Pittsburgh. Candace was excited about all these wonderful things happening

made decisions. She said that “she’s glad God was her Father and that she has been planted and rooted to succeed!” Knowing that she was rooted to succeed encouraged Tenell to not only pursue those things that she believed would help her, but she believed that she could also help others at the same time.

Believing that you are destined to succeed does not prevent you from making mistakes and taking detours before you arrive at your destination. Tenell became pregnant at an early age and yet she was committed to opening her own business. At the age of 22, she opened **Go Divas Hair Salon** and **Ms. Diva’s supplies** on the North Side. She remained at that location for four (4) years, but she knew that was not where she belonged. Still moving forward, she moved her business in 2003 to Homestead, the place where she would open **Dreamz Hair Salon**. She would remain at 100 E. 8th Avenue for 17 1/2 years. The location had enough space for her to activate some of her dreams which would benefit others in the community. **Dreamz Hair Salon** was not just a name, it was the evidence of dreams that come true when you work at bringing them to life. There were others who had dreams and she had space to share.

Some of the programs that Tenell envisioned provided opportunities to young girls who were interested in hair care. She began a program that provided training for two hours on Saturdays to those girls who had a desire to pursue cosmetology as a career. She provided more than hair care training—she taught them etiquette and techniques of presenting themselves. She wanted to make sure that someone taught them what no one had taught her.



theaters in Connecticut and Raleigh, North Carolina.

Tenell does not just have a beauty salon; she specializes in hair replacement and providing wigs for people who have experienced hair loss due to cancer, lupus, or other health related issues. Because of her deep concern and care for her clients that have experienced hair loss, she launched her own line of hair care products, **Dreamz Hair Restoration**.

As Tenell grew in the hair care industry, she recognized that many of her clients were suffering from depression, substance use disorder and just figuring out how to maneuver around life’s challenges. Tenell became a member of the Community Care Behavioral Health’s Our HAIR—which is the Health Access Initiative for Recovery, to help stylists identify signs of the need for intervention. More than 25 Pittsburgh stylists and barbers have become involved and certified. The program was designed to help identify those who needed services and to provide certified wellness ambassadors through the UPMC Insurance Services Division.

Tenell wants to make sure that these clients had the opportunity to thrive in their life journey.

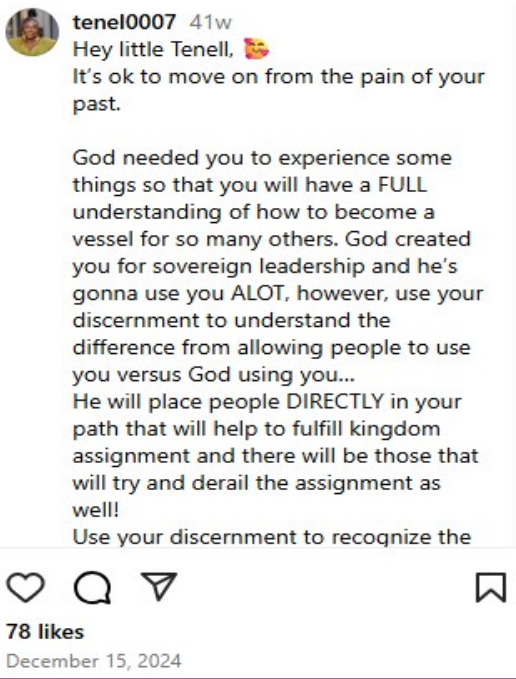


# STRUGGLING TO SURVIVE...BUT CAN SHE THRIVE?

## CHALLENGE ACCEPTED!

How do you tell the story of a young child who has already determined that “it won’t always be this way”? Tenell Dorsey was born and raised in the impoverished area of Bedford Avenue in the Hill District of Pittsburgh. She attended Bethel AME Church in the Hill; that church was her starting point—that is where she began singing at the age of three (3) and where the foundation of her faith began. That deep and abiding faith is what kept her strengthened through periods of hunger and a desire for a different kind of life. It is what kept her going when things seemed impossible. She said: “I don’t know how people make it without faith!” Her giftedness in music was her initial door to a brighter world than the one she knew.

She attended Vann and McKelvey Elementary Schools. By the time Tenell was nine (9) years old, she had



The adult Tenell looks back at her younger self and shares some observations. This is the Tenell that would not only survive, but she would thrive!

entered every music contest in the Hill District and surrounding areas. Those contests had money purses for the winner and Tenell was usually the winner. The money she won helped to provide her school clothes and personal care items. It didn’t matter that she was so young—she was struggling to survive! She continued to enter those contests until she was able to earn money another way. When she was nine (5) years old, she began “doing hair” for \$5.00 a head! Those hair dos sustained Tenell. She would later attend Pittsburgh Rogers CAPA Middle School for the performing arts. Tenell did well at Rogers and went on to attend CAPA High School. Tenell would have loved to remain at CAPA but her family moved to Homestead, PA. She would finish her high school years at Steel Valley High School. As we look back in time, we recognize that Homestead would play a greater part in the life of the little girl who was trying to survive.

Tenell was not only a gifted singer and hair stylist, but she had an innate sense of what she needed to do to not only survive, but to thrive. As she mapped out her future, she trusted her heavenly Father for direction as she

# AND...NOW WHAT?

Kane, an adventurous boy didn’t really have trouble making the transition from New Orleans to his new home in Pittsburgh. Being a part of ACH has made it easier because he’s learning how to be a drummer. He is naturally talented and with the help of our drum instructor, Mr. Jevon Rushton, he’s ready to showcase his talent. He was able to perform with Mr. Jevon, on stage, for the Hill District Art Festival. In just a year, he has soared in the arts.



Kendall came to ACH as a quiet, shy and unsure young girl. In just a few weeks, Ms. Takara, the art director had gained a new friend by introducing Kendall to the world of art. Soon Kendall emerged from her shell and connected with the other students and teachers. Kendall had fallen in love with art! Her work was included among the students’ work to be auctioned at the annual ACH Gala. The bidding was fierce for Kendall’s work. In the end her art piece sold for \$420.00. The pride and joy of such an accomplishment removed the last vestiges of shyness for Kendall. She was no longer just Kane’s twin, she was an artist and her own unique person. She has now moved on to dancing. It’s exciting to experience so many new chings. Although the original plan had been for the twins to return to New Orleans and visit



Kendall working on her masterpiece



with their Grandmother for the summer, Kendall wanted to stay in Pittsburgh and go to the ACH Creative Camp for the summer. Kane was in total agreement with his sister. The twins and their mother, had become a part of the ACH Family!

# CHALLENGE MET!



# MARRYING THE MISSION & STRATEGY WITH FINANCE & STRUCTURE! CHALLENGE ACCEPTED



Kate Spahr  
of Kate Spahr Consulting LLC

Many people in the Hill District are aware that ACH Clear Pathways is an artistic organization whose Mission is “to nurture creativity through the visual and performing arts”. In addition, the vision of ACH was to provide artists and the community a place to thrive in the arts. ACH and its Board members were in the early stages of the life cycle of a nonprofit. They recognized that its passion and drive might not be enough to sustain the growth and development of ACH as it completes its 15th year as a registered nonprofit organization. Nurturing creativity is challenging enough for any organization; but when we have to “marry” that mission with finance and structure; we must look beyond the artistic world and seek guidance from those who have been on the journey of finance and structure and are equipped to take ACH to its next level. We needed someone who understood our artistic goals, while simultaneously being equipped to help direct the Organization to a place of sound financial structure and help develop a strategic

plan for the sustainability of the organization and its assets.

## That is the Challenge and now “Challenge Accepted”

Meet Kate Spahr, a musician who was passionate about playing the piano. Her undergraduate degree at Duke University was in History and Music. Although she was passionate and wanted to remain involved in the performing arts; her talent and skill in that area did not provide an opportunity to continue in the field of music as a musician. She learned that developing and strengthening artistic organizations in their finances and operations was her true talent and she was passionate about providing them with her help. She had **the gift of “marrying their mission and strategy with finance and structure”!** Kate coupled her natural instincts with a Masters Degree in **Nonprofit Arts Management and an MBA in Finance** from Southern Methodist University. Armed with these academic credentials, Kate began working as a nonprofit consultant in 2003. After several years of working for other organizations, Kate began **Kate Spahr Consulting LLC**, her own consulting firm in 2013. Kate had some mentors along the way who helped her to understand how every client is unique. That understanding helped her to prepare her clients to understand their value. She wanted them to understand what they were doing and what should or could come next. Sometime later, Kate heard of ACH as the “new nonprofit” on the block. She didn’t know much about it, except that its founder, Tyian Battle, was passionate about ACH and determined that ACH would thrive! Kate kept her eye on ACH and Tyian Battle because she knew Tyian was up to the challenges coming.

**Kate Spahr Consulting LLC** has worked with large and small nonprofit organizations and with several foundations and philanthropic organizations. In 2015, Kate went to work for the McCune Foundation, a limited-life foundation in Pittsburgh. (The Foundation is due to sunset in 2029.) She helped develop McCune’s sunset grant-making strategy and was a program officer to over 100 nonprofit partners across the sector, including arts and culture and community development. How could ACH and Kate Spahr benefit one another? Was there anyway

that the Mission and Art could merge with Finance and Structure?

Most people who marry have a period of engagement while they get to know more about their prospective mate. Kate had used her time working with Foundations to better understand what she could bring to nonprofit organizations; meanwhile, ACH had been developing into a mature organization that understood what growing pains were. In 2022, Kate returned to Kate Spahr Consulting, LLC. Her time spent working for a Foundation gave her a broader view of the non profit sector. Kate’s areas of specialties included business and strategic planning, organizational business modeling, capitalization and financial planning. In other words, Kate specialized in what ACH was beginning to need. In order to meet the needs of the community and to follow the Mission of ACH, new programs were being developed and offered to the community. The Board Members of ACH and its Executive Director understood that these new programs would create additional needs– both structurally and financially on the Organization. Most of all, ACH would need someone to work with them to assess their current financial health and develop plans for its business model and balance sheet in order to become more financially sustainable.

While Kate was still working with the Foundations, she heard the buzz that ACH was interested in purchasing the Irene Kaufmann Center. Of course it was a marvelous opportunity for ACH to increase its assets and to create a stable location for its programming; however, the risk was monumental! Would the community support ACH in its endeavors? Owning this prime property increased the requirements and expectations. Most of all, it increased the financial liabilities of ACH.

From the perspective of a financial analyst, ACH might be behind the 8 ball. After all, most statistics show that in the early stages of small businesses opening and nonprofits beginning, there is a large sector that fail to thrive. You would wonder what makes the difference? Kate says the differences are the intangibles—**passion, drive, vision, and most importantly—commitment!** Kate says that is what she remembers about the Executive Director and Founder, Tyian Battle. She knew that if anyone could safeguard the future of ACH, it was Tyian. She and the Board understood that they needed to face developing the business side with different factors. The key factor was **Financial sustainability!** The questions that needed answering were: how do you sustain the assets and how do you make it work? Luckily, the buzz works both ways. Some of the Board Members had heard of Kate Spahr Consulting LLC and said that she might be able to guide them in the right financial direction so that they could reach the next level of growth and development.

Because Tyian is very selective in working with outsiders, she set up several meetings with Kate and her team to see if they were right for one another. It soon became apparent that the engagement period had been beneficial for both ACH and Kate Spahr Consultant, LLC. The Board of ACH and its Executive Director have agreed to terms that will allow Kate and her team to help ACH develop a long-term strategic financial plan along with a greater engagement of the Board Members. The team that will be assisting ACH is Kate, herself, along with Kate Freed, a



Kate Spahr Consulting LLC at work

co-leader of the financial team. The goal is to make sure that ACH has all the assets, people, finances and opportunities that it needs to continue to thrive.

**It seems as if there will be a wedding! ACH & Kate Spahr Consulting LLC**

## CHALLENGE ACCEPTED AND MET!