

Derrick Solomon- Neighbor to Neighbor award

Reading the phrase “Neighbor to Neighbor” immediately brings Derrick Solomon and the Hard Bargain Association into my mind. I met Derrick for the first time at a Williamson, Inc. young professionals luncheon, where I sat at a table with him and Hard Bargain assistant Europe Dooley. Since then, Derrick has become a good friend and someone I view as an incredible leader. Anytime I talk with him, he is full of excitement, energy, and plans for Hard Bargain events and ways to better residents’ lives.

Derrick became the executive director of the Hard Bargain Association in January of 2020. The neighborhood is one of Franklin’s oldest African-American communities. In 1880, Harvey McLemore, a formerly enslaved man, purchased four lots of land from his former slaveowner, Judge W.S. McLemore. He built his home in the community known as Hard Bargain, and soon, other free Black people moved into the neighborhood, building a tight-knit community.

Today, many residents can trace their heritage back to some of the original residents. The Hard Bargain Association’s mission is maintaining the history and helping create affordable housing for residents with ties to the area.

Derrick and his wife, Marquita, were the 6th family to work with the Hard Bargain Association to purchase a new home at a fair market value rate through the association’s home ownership program; this year, the 14th family will move into their new affordable home. The Solomons live in Hard Bargain with their son, Darius, and want to share the importance of family values and home ownership with others.

Marquita is the granddaughter of the former Rev. Denny Denson, who originally co-founded the Hard Bargain Association along with Rev. Scott Roley in the early 2000s.

Since the pandemic, Derrick and his staff had to change some of their original plans for fun community development events to better serve the needs of the community. Derrick and his small but mighty staff helped organize food and toiletry drives, a Thanksgiving food drive, as well as mortgage and rent assistance. Additionally, the nonprofit has assisted seniors in the community through community cleanup days, while logging some of the most successful Blackberry Jam fundraisers in recent years.

Having served with Hard Bargain Association for a decade on the board and advisory committee, Derrick has also served with the Boys and Girls Club of Middle Tennessee, Boy Scouts of America, and as an advisor to the City of Franklin’s Housing Commission. Derrick is an incoming member of the Leadership Franklin Class of 2022.

Born in Louisiana, Derrick is a graduate of the Shreveport Job Corps. Before joining Hard Bargain as executive director, he spent 12 years working for Comcast, earning elite ranking for being in the company’s top two percent of earners.

Derrick is a member and deacon at Empowerment Community Church in Franklin. Aside from his leadership duties, Derrick has logged 200+ hours of community service this year.