

Alumni Interview

Alphonso Ogbuehi, Dean. School of Business & Howard Haughton, CEO, Eva's Village

Eva's Village is a non-profit, comprehensive behavioral health and social service organization with a mission to provide care and support for people struggling with poverty, hunger, homelessness and addiction.

How they handled COVID:

"For us here at Eva's Village, we have residential programs and outpatient programs. Our residential programs mean that we have people living here with us. So, we have a couple hundred residents; congregate living. You can have as many as four people to a room. And so, there are a number of things we have to do. Fortunately, we have a medical director on staff who was able to give us a lot of guidance and that guidance really is geared toward following CDC recommendations. Masking, social distancing, also we had to lower our census so that meant that as we discharged clients, we didn't bring people in because we were trying to create space between people. And just following a lot of protocols. If we had anybody that became symptomatic, we created quarantine space so that they could isolate and make sure that they weren't mixed in with people that were just casually moving about."

How their time was here at Stockton:

"Stockton was so unique and dynamic. First and foremost, just the connections that were established at Stockton that were maintained were just phenomenal. When I think about it today and thinking about how Stockton operated then it led me, when I took on this roll, it led me to say to myself "I need to reach out to Stockton because...." I know so many people that entered the social work field and I'm curious to know, for example, if Stockton has students that need an internship inside of a social work environment, I want access to those students. Because, candidly, there are a lot of people that enter this space but when they get in the space and they realize substance abuse disorder and mental health, wow those are really weighty areas to be in, and not everyone is cut out for that. You don't know it until you are actually trying to deliver that service. But, if we can get interns in to gain experience to help them to make career decisions, I want to do that. And that's where Stockton, for me, one of the things Stockton offered."

"I remember Dr. Juanita High when she connected me with the CRDA in Atlantic City years ago. So, there was an opportunity to be able to do that. I interviewed with them and I just remember that connection and the offer to go work there. I chose to go elsewhere, but the support systems that existed at Stockton, that's just one example of it."

"All of that was a training ground and helped to develop and prepare me. So, when I left Stockton, I was able to enter the work force with knowledge, experience and skills that were transferable. It was great. And because of the size of the school, the intimacy of it all, that community; you didn't get lost in the numbers. You weren't just a number; you were a person. You were identifiable. People were there."

Message going forward to students who have dealt with the challenges of this past year (COVID):

“Persevere. The pandemic changed the way that students are experiencing college and have changed the way that employers are sourcing students. Adapt. Adapt through technology. Students today and uniquely poised to enter a work force that embrace them because of technology.”