

Reflecting on NBA's Time in Arizona for the 2019 SENT Seminar

Darnell Fennell, Director of Social Entrepreneurship
September 2019

The NBA SENT Seminar equips Social ENTrepreneurs for leadership and change and is a primary component of our Incubate Initiative. The four-day seminar is designed for Disciples-affiliated leaders and leadership teams who are starting new health and social services ministries. SENT covers the basics of nonprofit ministry startups, as well as skills for leadership and innovation across inter-connected, cross-cultural, and faith-based communities. This year's SENT Seminar took place in Scottsdale, Arizona, at The Casa Franciscan Renewal Center from September 11-14, 2019.

When I think about the NBA Incubate Initiative, my mind often goes to the process a bird goes through when sitting on their eggs to keep them until they are ready to hatch. This image became more vivid to me as I experienced my first SENT Seminar as the new Director of Social Entrepreneurship. It was during this time that I saw how NBA's Incubate initiative serves as a bird-like figure in the sense of encouragement and support to new enterprises.

We welcomed 15 new projects to our 2019 [cohort](#). It is because of our work through Incubate that people with deep calls to create health and social service social enterprises have an opportunity to hatch their ideas. Social Entrepreneurs are visionary people who are responding to God's call through the work of their enterprise. In our work with social entrepreneurs, we have found that a person can sometimes experience isolation and the reality of being alone in their efforts. Thus, so much of how we seek to accompany leaders includes offering time for reflection, environments of collegial learning, and genuine spirit of support and friendship.

Foster Frimpong is a part of our 2019 cohort. His project is entitled "Restoration." Through his project based in Lexington, Kentucky, Foster seeks to work with marginalized immigrants in order to provide them sustainable ways of living through health education, financial sustainability, and self-empowerment. During SENT Seminar, we took time over a lunch meal to sit together and process some of the information he had gleaned from our presenters. We spoke of different approaches to his work and spent time strategizing next steps.

Later, Foster approached me to offer sincere thanks (with a big smile) for including him and his enterprise in the seminar. It was clear at that moment that incubation was happening as Foster felt the warmth of our support and encouragement. This experience and so many others remind me of how honored I am to serve within the NBA Incubate Initiative with our many partners and communities. My full belief is that something sacred and special is taking place with our collective work and accompaniment. It is my prayer that the NBA Incubate Initiative will continue to scale to help hatch and nurture so many more innovative social enterprises. If this story or anything about the SENT Seminar interests you, please join us in this work of supporting social entrepreneurs. Find out more at nbacares.org/incubate and fill out the form at the bottom of the page.

As the health and social services general ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the National Benevolent Association partners with congregations, regions, general ministries, and a variety of Disciples-related health and social service providers to create communities of compassion and care. Founded in 1887 by six women responding to the needs of the day and on their doorsteps, for more than 130 years the NBA has continued to serve "the least of these." Learn more at www.nbacaes.org.