

'Show them that they matter'

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CROWN POINT — As he addressed a packed room filled with local politicians and leaders, Lake County Prosecutor Bernard Carter remembered a song by "The Temptations" titled "Ball of Confusion" written about substance abuse, unemployment, violence and more that afflicted society in the late 1960s.

"Around and around and around we go, where the world's headed, said, nobody knows," Carter recited at a news conference Tuesday. "Everything they said in that song, we are still experiencing today. Not one exception."

In an effort to combat some of these issues, the prosecutor's office, in partnership with Edgewater Health, announced the adoption of My Brother's Keeper, a national initiative that targets underprivileged young men of color and offers resources to set them up for success. The press conference was held at the Purdue Extension Building, 2291 N. Main St.

"This is a country in which anyone can excel..." Carter said. "We want to show them that they matter."

Carter, penned the "MBK Champion," was joined by Edgewater Health CEO Danita Johnson-Woods, and Purdue Northwest Associate Professor and MBK Vice Chair Karen Bishop Morris to introduce the program. Students from Calumet High School who have participated in similar mentorship programs in the community arrived to watch the presentation.

The initiative, created by former President Barack Obama's administration in 2014, includes six milestones to enhance the educational experience of the



LIZZIE KABOSKI, THE TIMES

Edgewater Health CEO Danita Johnson-Woods speaks Tuesday about My Brother's Keeper, a new initiative designed to fill an opportunity gap for young men and boys of color, at a news conference at the Purdue Extension Building, 2291 N. Main St. in Crown Point.

young men and prepare them to enter the workforce. The MBK team in Lake County identified three of the six milestones that they believe take priority: entering school ready to learn, reading at grade level by third grade and obtaining employment out of school. These milestones are supported by community partners, such as law enforcement, attorneys, educators, religious leaders and politicians who have agreed to mentor, offer support and connect the young men to programs and services to help them achieve success. Many of them attended the news conference.

"We cannot police our way out of this situation," Carter said. "We cannot pray our way out of this situation...[but] we need to keep both of those in mind, because it takes a lot."

Former pediatrician and founder of the Gary Literacy

Coalition, Dr. Steve Simpson, will pioneer the first two milestones. The final milestone will be led by Jose "Lupe" Valtierra, community development educator with the Purdue Extension, and Marcus Williams, division manager at the Lake County clerk's office.

Edgewater Health will serve as the "community backbone" of the organization, designed to help facilitate all community partnerships, financials, communication, development and support, Johnson-Woods said. More than 52 organizations and individuals have already agreed to participate. They are working with professionals at IUN to establish data analysis tools for local educational, health and crime data to help them measure their progress.

"Collaboration and community partners are what will make this successful," Johnson-Woods said.

The organization meets once a month for a monthly roundtable in which they discuss their upcoming plans. A summit is scheduled for May 15 at Indiana University Northwest, where young men and community stakeholders will come together to discuss their local action plans, Bishop Morris said. They are still in the process of becoming a formally certified organization through MBK and are on track to be certified in less than two months.

More information can be found at edgewaterhealth.org.

WATCH NOW:
To see a video of Bernard Carter introducing the Brothers' Keeper initiative, point your smartphone camera at the QR code, then tap the link. [NEWSVU](#)



PROVIDED

Tommy Williams was a longtime fixture at Lakeshore Public Media.

Williams' memorial service planned

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Tommy Williams, who's been described as the voice of Region sports and the Gary SouthShore Railcats, will be mourned at a funeral service Friday.

Williams' celebration of life memorial service will take place from 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Friday, April 12th at Smith, Bizzell and Warner Funeral at 4209 Grant Street, Gary.

Lakeshore Public Media, his longtime employer, invites the public to attend the service and reflecting on his contributions to broadcasting, Region sports and the community, as well as his enduring impact.

Williams recently died at the age of 66. He served as a longtime RailCats public address announcer and a Lakeshore Public Media sports journalist who covered many games and interviewed countless athletes. He co-costed "Prep Sports Report," "Prep Football Report," and "Lakeshore PBS Scoreboard" often signing off shows saying, "Gary, Indiana, you know I love you."

Williams was born on the fourth of July, 1957 and graduated from Roosevelt High

School, which he frequently referenced in person and on the air. He played football for the Panthers and tried to walk on at Indiana University.

He was a deeply religious man who was open about his faith and who was known for his deep, booming voice. He started his radio career at WLTH Radio in Gary and spent a decade with AM 670 The Score in Chicago. He became the RailCats' first PA announcer at the U.S. Steel Yard in Gary in 2003, called games there for two decades and was one of the few to earn all three of the franchise's championship rings, calling all three RailCats championships.

He was known for his catchphrase "people, people, people," his wealth of sports knowledge and his fandom for Gary athletes who went on to the pro leagues like Lloyd McClendon, LaTroy Hawkins, Garry Templeton and Brandon Moore.

A GoFundMe entitled the Tommy Williams Memorial Fund will cover his funeral expenses.

For more information or to express condolences, call Smith, Bizzell, and Warner Funeral Home at (219) 887-1852.

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