



**Media contact:**

Ania Czarnecka

Ward for Civic Heart Community Services

713-869-0707

[ACzarnecka@wardcc.com](mailto:ACzarnecka@wardcc.com)

**For immediate release**

## **Kionta Carter Named Civic Heart Community Services CEO Following Helen Stagg Year-end Retirement**

*Carter Brings 15 Years of Senior Non-profit Leadership Experience to The New Role*

**(Houston – Dec. 12, 2023)** Helen Stagg will retire as CEO of Civic Heart Community Services (Civic Heart) on December 31, 2023, after more than 4 years at the helm of one of the largest and oldest Black-founded non-profit organizations in Houston. Following an extensive executive search, Kionta Carter will assume the role January 3, 2024.

During her 23-year tenure with the organization, including 4 years as CEO, Stagg provided nurturing leadership and led the organization to achieve a 240% increase in community investment. With her unrelenting passion for empowering others, the organization's work expanded to more than 25 programs serving 65,000 people in 59 Texas counties, supported by 287 volunteers and 75 culturally diverse employees working under 150 agreements with a wide range of partners and a \$13 million annual budget.

Carter, who has held leadership positions with YMCA of Greater Houston for the past 15 years, brings a wealth of non-profit operational and fundraising experience to her new role. She has overseen the operations and growth strategies for 12 YMCA centers, with an operational budget of \$16 million. She holds a bachelor's degree from Michigan State University; a master's degree from Wayne State University; and a certification in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Workplace. She recently earned a Non-Profit Leadership Certification from Rice University. She serves on community leadership organization committees such as Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc.

For the past few weeks, Carter and Stagg have begun working together to ensure a smooth transition.

"The bar will be high for our new CEO, without doubt," said Vanessa Reed, Civic Heart's Board Chairperson. "Fortunately, Ms. Carter will stand on the shoulders of a successful predecessor, who fully supports her in the transition to ensure continuity in quality client services, and consistency in planned programs. We believe that Ms. Carter's passion and commitment to serving others, her deep history of community outreach and volunteerism, and her belief in the value of strengthening communities with purpose and intentionality will allow Civic Heart to forge new paths that further our mission to help others empower themselves."

"I am honored to be entrusted to build on the foundation established by those who have come before me, and those I will work alongside to bring more needed services, to more people in our community," said Carter.

“What inspires me is the opportunity to increase awareness to allow more people to know who we are, and get more people involved in continuing the legacy of impactful community work.”

2023 has been a year of change for Civic Heart. The 34-year-old organization, one of the largest Black-founded non-profit organization in the Gulf coast region, was formerly known as Change Happens! and announced its name change to Civic Heart Community Services in April. And in June, Civic Heart relocated its headquarters to One Emancipation Center at 3131 Emancipation Avenue in Houston’s Third Ward.

### **About Civic Heart Community Services**

Civic Heart Community Services is one of the largest minority-founded social service organizations in the Gulf Coast Region of Texas. For more than 34 years, the organization has successfully developed and implemented outreach, education, prevention, intervention, and collaborative partnerships to serve marginalized and vulnerable communities. The organization offers a wide array of program and services that includes: education, workforce and employment; after-school and summer enrichment programs; housing and supportive services; substance misuse prevention and co-occurring mental disorder treatment; HIV prevention; teen pregnancy prevention; increased access to health care coverage; reentry program and employment; implementing a resident-driven community plan to increase affordable housing and transportation and mobility options, and enhanced civic engagement to address challenges and facilitate a greater sense of inclusion. Learn more at [www.civicheart.org](http://www.civicheart.org).