



# NORTH END MATTERS

## Teatime With Braxton Daniels III

A North End resident is a new business owner in downtown Mansfield. Braxton Daniels III is now the proud owner of 3rd Cup Tea.

The cafe, on North Main Street, nestled next to Two Cousins Pizza, offers a variety of teas, lattes, kombucha and bubble tea. It offers a trendy, comfy, study vibe that you might find on a college campus.

“I worked for the previous owner for about four and a half years, and he saw my ambition and my drive to be a business owner, so he offered me the opportunity and I had no choice but to take it,” Braxton said.

Braxton, 26, has been a member of the downtown community since graduating from Madison Comprehensive High School in 2014. In 2016, he founded Studio:45 Multimedia, a company that specializes in wedding, portraiture, and event photography. Braxton started his photography while studying art and technology at The Ohio State University. His art has been featured at the Mansfield Art Center and other local places, and currently adorns the halls of NECIC’s office.

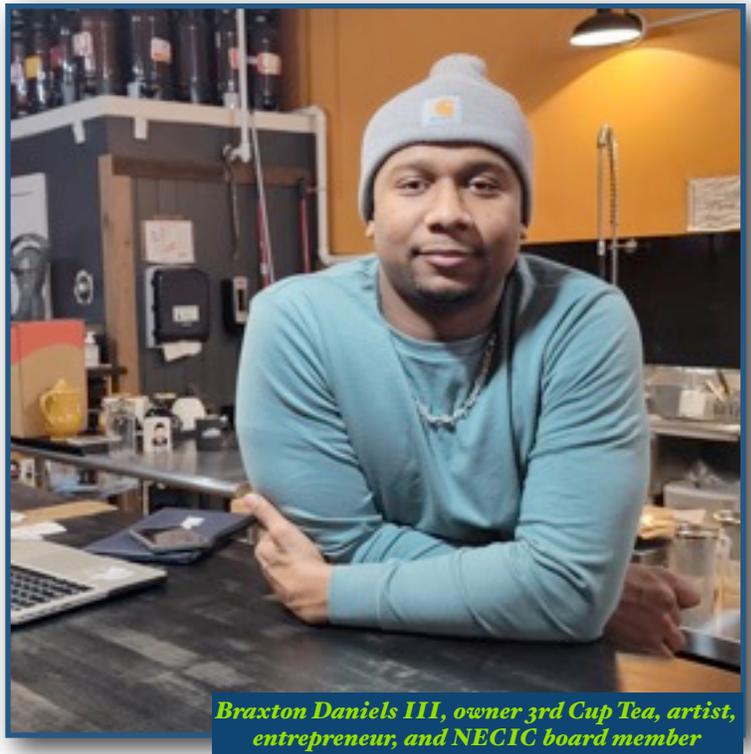
Braxton first started working at Relax, It’s Just Coffee under the leadership of owner Paul Kemerling, who is also the former owner of the tea shop.

“I’ve always wanted something to call my own,” Braxton said. “I love this space and location. I have huge plans for this space in the future,”

Tea is actually the second most consumed beverage after water, Braxton said. There are also many facts about tea that the average person doesn’t know or realize.

“Tea dates back to slavery and there are many hidden features in tea that date back to every culture.”

Playing chess is a favorite pastime of Braxton’s, so he said there are always chess boards available for anyone to play.



*Braxton Daniels III, owner 3rd Cup Tea, artist, entrepreneur, and NECIC board member*

“There are people that come here to play chess, read books or there’s even a small Bible study group that meets here,” he said. “I’m a huge person of conversation so I want this place to be open for that. Bring a friend down, come have some tea and talk.”

Being born and raised on the North End, Braxton said he is proud to have come this far with owning his own business. He is also a member of the board of directors for NECIC.

“It has been a huge step and it has been overwhelming but it’s also motivation,” he said of being an entrepreneur. “I got here but I have to keep this spot. That’s the key, to maintain this position.”

**Continued On Page 2**

**Braxton Daniels Continued From Page 1**



**Braxton Daniels III, owner 3rd Cup Tea, artist, entrepreneur, and NECIC board member**

Braxton acknowledges the fact that without the help of Kemerling, it would have been much, much harder for him to own his own business in downtown Mansfield.

“Without Paul it would have been a really tough road,” he said. “I have to pay homage to him for everything. The process of starting a business is difficult...no matter what, you can't do it alone.”

Braxton’s immediate and extended family is also a foundation for his support in becoming an entrepreneur. His little sister works with him, and the family makes daily trips and purchases of tea to support his budding business.

“Downtown is love and always has been love. It’s a community down here,” he said. “I try to learn something from everyone. I know people who are felons, who are entrepreneurs, people who are millionaires

and people who are dead broke, but I can learn something from all of them,” Braxton surmised. “I’m always a student. I learn every chance I get.”

Tea is brewed by culture and every culture does it differently, Braxton said. Tea can be used for medicinal purposes as well as for ceremonial reasons.

“It’s just leaves and hot water but it’s crazy what it can do for you,” he said.

The tea used at 3rd Cup Tea is fair trade sourced, which means the indigenous people who pick the leaves are fairly treated and financially compensated for their work so we can drink the tea. All the tea is organic.

Braxton said he is creating and adding new tea drink mixes every day. He is also adding fresh fruit to teas. You can follow 3rd Cup Tea on Facebook for a look at different featured drinks to try.

As far as future plans, Braxton said he hopes to open a dry bar in the future, but he does not have a definite timeline as of yet.

“I have to teach myself how to be a bartender,” he said with a smile. “All of our mocktails will be infused with tea.”

Braxton said he is also open to vendors and consignment if someone has something they want to sell at his tea shop. He hopes to bring a farmers market type event to his store where local farmers or gardeners can sell their produce.

“If you have something you’re selling or a product you’re passionate about, I would love to help out,” Braxton said.

“Just come in, grab a cup of tea and hang out.”

**3rd Cup Tea**

101 N. Main St., Mansfield

**Hours:**

Monday - Friday: 10am - 7pm

Saturday: 10am - 5pm

Sunday: Closed

**Online:**

Facebook.com/3rdcuptea

<https://3rdcuptea.onuniverse.com/>

**NECIC**

**Executive Director**  
Deanna West-Torrence

**Operations Manager**  
Tionna Perdue

**Community Development & Housing Manager**  
Alan Mitchell

**Research & Development Manager**  
Tony Chinni

**Social Services Coordinator**  
Nyasha Oden, LSW

**Fiscal & Administrative Coordinator**  
Matt Ayers

**Administrative Assistant**  
Kimberly Carnahan

**Business Development Coordinator**  
Crystal Weese

**Community Organizers**  
Mario Davison  
John Brooks

**Community Health Worker**  
Tonya “Toni” Jones

**Receptionist**  
Cheyla Bradley

**Farmer**  
Justin Ocheltree

**Teaching Garden Coordinator**  
Mona Kneuss

**NELFI Coordinator**  
Gabriel Pierce

**Contact NECIC**  
134 N. Main St.  
Mansfield, Ohio 44902  
(419) 522-1611  
Fax 1-877-433-0848  
“staff 1st name”@necic-ohio.org  
[www.necic-ohio.org](http://www.necic-ohio.org)



# Letter From The Director

Hopefully now when you see NECIC, you will see the tagline – “We Are Building Blocks.” In a very literal sense, we, as an organization are anxious to re-build the blocks in the neighborhood, but there is also a figurative meaning that recognizes that building blocks, which are the most basic units of something, are not always physical. As an asset based community development organization, we realize that our time, talents and treasures are all individual building blocks that we each can contribute to improving our community.

At the time of this writing, members of Mansfield UMADAOP’s prevention team, Third Street Family Health Services, Richland County Children Services and NECIC staff have been in a two-day training by psychologist Mark Freado in the Reclaiming Youth at Risk – Futures of Promise model for youth development. The philosophy is built on indigenous wisdom from communities around the world who greet one another with the question, “How are the children?” The response to the inquiry about the condition of the children in the community is recognized as a temperature check of the health and well being of the community.

Reclaiming Youth at Risk is grounded in the four elements that comprise the Circle of Courage: Belonging, Mastery, Independence and Generosity. UMADAOP and NECIC as two organizations located in the North End (but serving well beyond those borders), are committing to these guiding principles and recognize their importance in building successful outcomes with youth and residents.

As NECIC is planning an exciting transformation at the 486 Springmill Street Outreach Center over the next few years, we realize that we will build it with more than physical bricks and mortar. We aim to build a safe space that nurtures the belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity in everyone who passes through our doors as critical building blocks for a stronger community. It is a place, we hope, that will allow us to give a positive response when greeted with, “How are the children?”

We are excited at the journey ahead and invite you to join us, as there is so much more to come!

Best,

*Deanna West-Torrence*  
Executive Director NECIC



*Deanna West-Torrence*  
*Executive Director NECIC*



# Youth Pastor and Playwright Makes Dreams A Reality With Play Premier At OSU-Mansfield



Tiger Bradley and the cast of "The Healing Project"

Tiger Bradley has always dreamed of sharing his talent with the world inspiring others to never give up through his plays.

Bradley's play, "The Healing Project" debuted at the Ohio State University – Mansfield as part of the university's Black History Month celebration.

The project is the latest installment of "The Hurt and Healed," play series that have been performed at Bradley's church, New Community Temple Church of God in Christ, where he is a youth pastor.

Bradley served as writer, director and actor in "The Healing Project." He collaborated with Ohio State University-Mansfield to bring it to Founders Auditorium at the Ohio State University's Mansfield campus.

"My friend Joetta Polk suggested I reach out to OSU and they reached out to me first after hearing about the success of "The Hurt and Healed." I was asked if I could write a play for Black History Month and be able to have auditions from the campus students and with excitement, I said yes and the rest is history," Bradley said.

"The Healing Project" featured 16 cast members and amazing music. The play is about faith, family, and forgiveness.

"The Healing Project tells the story of Tevin Dutton, who brings his father along for an intervention after finding out his son is dealing drugs on his college campus. The father finds out healing needs to be done with him and his son to break the cycle of generation failures between the men in the family," Bradley said.

Bradley began writing plays as a child putting on plays for his brothers and sisters.

"Being pastor's kids we were sheltered and not allowed to go places so I would entertain my siblings. Then as a teenager I started writing plays for my church Sunday school classes. When I was appointed as Youth Pastor by my father, Superintendent Henry J. Bradley, Jr., I incorporated my play writing skills to help me reach and teach young people about Jesus," Bradley said.

The play resonated with the audience helping them work through the struggles in their own lives.

"I want the audience to be inspired and encouraged. I hope they will find the answer to help them heal from hurt or be able to help someone else be healed. Also, as a people, it's time to heal together so we can unite and stand together," Bradley said.

"The Healing Project" is a prelude to Chapter 4 that will be taking place on September 10 of this year.

# Kay's Korner: Neighbors Helping Neighbors

Even though Sidney Bonham was raised on the southside of Mansfield, as an adult he now resides on the North End. He even considers himself a “southside boy,” but that doesn’t stop him from helping out his neighbors and the North End elders with shoveling, plowing snow and anything else that is a need.

“It’s on my way anyway,” Sidney said of why he doesn’t mind helping to plow driveways and shovel sidewalks of his North End neighbors. “It’s not hurting me one bit. I’m just blessed to be a part of it.”

Tionna Perdue, Business Manager for NECIC, said some of the North End elders and residents call into the agency needing help, most recently, with snow removal. She said Sidney is always only a phone call away.

“I call on him to help plow some of our elders and he does it at no charge to myself or to NECIC,” she said.

Sidney is a 2004 Mansfield Senior High School graduate and owns three businesses: A1 Yard and Lawn, Maid in Mansfield (cleaning service) and A1 Entrees.

“I’ve always had the vision to own my own companies,” he said. “I had a child early so I had to get money, so I started to work.”

Sidney admits he had his time in the streets when he sold drugs to take care of his children. After a two-year prison stint, Sidney said he decided he didn’t want to contribute to recidivism, and he wanted to physically be present to raise his children.

So, he turned his illegal hustler spirit into legitimate entrepreneur work. He got his first LLC in 2016.



*Sidney Bonham*

## Continued On Page 6

### *About Kay's Korner:*



*Geneva "Kay" Smith*

North End resident Geneva “Kay” Smith was a Community Organizer for NECIC. She was passionate about the North End community until her untimely death in November 2019. In addition to being a North End resident through-and-through, Kay was passionate about non-violence and her family. In Kay’s Korner, we will spotlight different strong people from the North End who are handling their business in their career, the community and with their families. We will also focus on those who are strong proponents for non-violence. May this be one way to honor our dear Sister Kay’s memory and continue her legacy of being a strong, empathetic individual who was also a great mother. May she Rest in Peace.

## Kay's Korner: Neighbors Helping Neighbors Continued From Page 5

Sidney starts his grind early in the morning, whether it be cutting grass, plowing and removing snow, cleaning and hauling junk from a building or house, or preparing and serving food from his food truck and he doesn't stop until the day's work is complete.

He has seven children and still makes time to be a father to his children.

Sidney said he developed his work ethic as a child from the influence of his Uncle Bob, his mom's brother.

"My uncle had a business in Norwalk and in the summertime, he would come get us boys. We would work and we would go to all the hotels on Route 250 and switch out all the trash bags," he remembered. "We loved it though. We would get paid \$85 a day and that was for each of us boys. We were happy to do it. He would give us each money for our work, and we would take it home and give it to our mom. We were so happy to do that and that definitely put a stamp on my mind about hard work and what it takes to live out here."

Sidney says he's a part of the community and it doesn't hurt him one bit to help his neighbors.

Mansfield city fifth ward Councilman Aurelio Diaz also doesn't mind getting out a shovel and helping to dig his neighbors out of a snowstorm. He helped several of his neighbors dig out their houses and driveways, and remains highly accessible to his constituents.

"That's always been my job to help people and I would want someone to help me," he said. "There's a few older folks that I've identified in the area who need help and they have my number if they need anything. I just look at it as respecting my elders."

James Gordon, who lives on Mulberry Street, is also another example of neighbors helping neighbors, Aurelio said.

"He is one guy who helps his neighbors. He has his pulse on the neighborhood. He's always looking out for his neighbors," Aurelio said. "He's the watchdog and knows what's going on in the neighborhood."

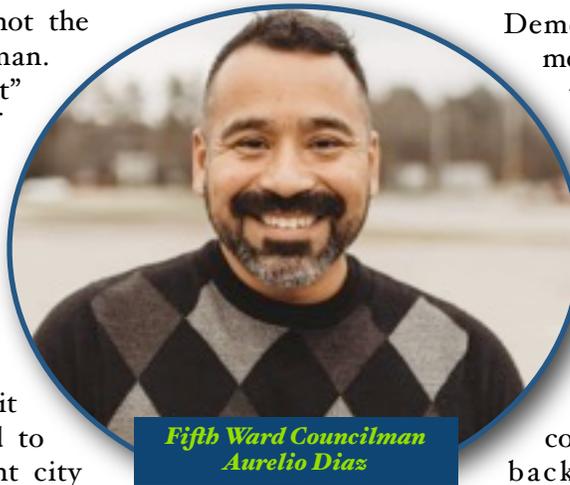
# Aurelio Diaz Not Your Typical Councilman

Aurelio Villa Luna Diaz is not the average Mansfield city councilman. He's definitely not the "stuffy suit" you think of when you think of people who hold public office. With his creative, artistic, tattoo covered self, he is as eccentric as you can get.

"People are starting to be more open," Aurelio said. It's who I am. I'm not going to wear a suit and tie to council. Although I take it seriously, I don't think you need to change who you are. Our current city council is the most colorful council yet."

The Mansfield Senior High School Class of 1995 graduate said he never dreamed of holding public office. Some of his main interests are in music, art, and social services.

"When I came back to Mansfield in 2004, I had no interest," he said. "I even lived above the local



Democratic headquarters at that time. I mean, I'd vote but not locally. I think it was when I saw people being mistreated and people in the neighborhood not being represented is when I wanted to get involved, but I'm not a politician."

Aurelio is part of the Mansfield Rising committee, which is made up of local folks from all walks and sectors of life who want to improve life for the residents of Mansfield. That committee of people went to a conference back in 2018 called SxSW (South by Southwest). The group came back from Texas inspired with many ideas on how to get people, residents and businesses in Mansfield to rise to something greater.

"All of us wanted to see good changes," he said of the Mansfield Rising committee. "We saw a lot of the same

## **Aurelio Diaz Continued From Page 6**

leaders doing the same things and they weren't really welcoming diversity to the table at all."

A true advocate at heart, Aurelio also worked for Richland Newhope at that time, a local agency that supports individuals with disabilities, so it helped fuel his passion for inclusiveness in local government. He also founded Troupe Flow, a dance group made up of individuals of all abilities that performs throughout Ohio.

"I think it was just a combination of wanting to see people included," he said.

Aurelio led a very grassroots campaign which was and still is centered around his fifth ward community and the Mansfield community at large. He has helped his neighbors get long standing trash removed, helped them shovel inches of snow off their sidewalks and is very accessible to offer real help to his constituents.

"I wanted to do something more. I've always been involved, but I thought city council would be a good way for people to actually see different faces on the council and that are in touch with the area."

With Aurelio being at the beginning of his elected term, he said he is excited to continue being an asset to the Mansfield community and to the city council.

---

# **NECIC Hires New Housing Manager**

Alan Mitchell is NECIC's new Community Development & Housing Manager.

He joined the non-profit agency in October 2021 and will primarily focus on the safe, fair and affordable housing possibilities on the North End.

"NECIC is technically a CDC, it's a community development corporation, but my understanding is that the focus hasn't really been in housing so that's something that we definitely want to do," Alan said from his office.

NECIC wants to buy and rehab homes to eventually help North End residents have more safe and stable housing, Alan said.

"When you look at rust belt cities and you look at the stage of gentrification that this urban core is in, it's in a state called displacement," he said. "So that's when all the houses come down because they are older, they might be making people sick or they might be older homes. So what you find with that older housing stock is you have affordability and with the absence of affordability you start to see things like we're seeing now which is a large homeless population."

In addition to all of the other work NECIC does in the North End, Alan said it's incumbent upon the agency to also advocate for fair housing opportunities and "address the issues that are facing us today, so if that means affordable housing, it means perhaps taking a good look at those issues that may be ongoing and it means trying to build back better, block by block."



*Alan Mitchell NECIC Community Development & Housing Manager*

Alan is a Oberlin, Ohio native and has had quite an impressive and varied career. He started his collegiate studies as a "Morehouse Man," then had a stint in the Navy and he finished his college career at Excelsior College. After college, Alan started his career in Community Development. He taught school for a "hot second" during the Trips to Teachers program, then he started working in charter school development. He did some work in social services as well.

**Continued On Page 8**

---

**Alan Mitchell Continued From Page 7**

Alan also said he was the executive director at a faith based community development corporation called Zion, where they worked on affordable green homes.

“We were focusing on energy efficiency and that’s where the basis of my qualifications for this particular job probably lie,” he said.

After that Alan dabbled in philanthropy at the Richland County Foundation then he started his own small business doing social enterprise consulting.

Alan said he and Deanna West-Torrence, executive director of NECIC, have talked for some time about a need for affordable and safe housing on Mansfield’s North End.

This position will “allow me the opportunity to build some capacity within this organization, to try to provide some people with affordable housing slowly but surely” he said. “It’s not something that we’re going to reinvent Mansfield or its housing capacity, but we want to support those micro-businesses we have been incubating for some years and some of those businesses find themselves squarely within the housing arena - whether it be construction, rehabbing houses or a handy-man business.”

Since he began his employment with NECIC, Alan has partnered with the City of Mansfield’s Community Development Director to do a seminar on fair housing. “We definitely want to take a look at working with the city to make sure we’re moving forward in lock step.”

As far as future plans, Alan said he hopes to be a part of ongoing conversations with all entities and individuals involved in safe, fair and affordable housing. He also commented on the need for ongoing financial investments which help to spur growth in the North End.

“I want to make sure we’re responsible for those parcels that we own,” he said. “I also want to make sure we’re good neighbors, good friends and good citizens and keep working to make the North End the place that people want to live, work and invest.”

Alan is married to his wife Tiffany, who is a Mansfield native and they have two beautiful daughters, Aliyah, who is a junior at Ohio Northern University and Alana, who will graduate from St. Peter’s High School this year.

---

NECIC  
134 N. Main St.  
Mansfield, Ohio  
44902

Address Label Here